

African-American leaders attack court ruling



State Rep. Larry Womble



The Rev. Carlton Eversley



U.S. Rep. Mel Watt

By JOHN HINTON
Chronicle Senior Staff Writer

Local African-American leaders roundly criticized the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling last week that the 12th Congressional District was unconstitutional.

The Rev. Carlton Eversley, spokesman for the Ministers' Conference of Winston-Salem and Vicinity, described the decision as "unethical, and unjust."

The court's 5-4 ruling was an awful moment in the history of North Carolina, Eversley said, adding that the ruling represented a radical right-wing reaction to the progress of African Americans in electoral

politics.

"It was a travesty," he said. U.S. Rep. Mel Watt, the Democrat from the contested 12th District, was disappointed with the Supreme Court's decision, saying that the justices have placed "another obstacle in the way of fair participation by all people in our democracy."

The court ruled that North Carolina's redistricting that created the 12th District was unconstitutional, because the state improperly used race as a primary factor in creating the district.

The court also stated that the North Carolina's reapportionment scheme was not narrowly tailored to serve a compelling state

interest.

The justices said none of the state's reasons, such as eradicating the effects of past discrimination for a compelling interest, were sufficient to sustain the 12th District.

The court also noted the odd shape of the district and said that congressional districts with a black majority must be shown to be "geographically compact."

The 12th District encompasses portions of Forsyth, Alamance, Davidson, Durham, Gaston, Guilford, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Orange and Rowan counties.

It generally follows the Interstate 85/40

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City/county school board fires teacher

By JOHN HILTON
Chronicle Senior Staff Writer

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education fired a fifth-grade teacher at Forest Park Elementary School after his principal confronted him in front of his physical education class in April, according to the schools' attorney Douglas Pungler.

The school board did not renew the

contract of Nathaniel Bennett for the 1996-97 school year, Pungler said.

The school board took the action after Bennett was insubordinate toward Herman Lane, principal of Forest Park Elementary School, officials said.

Bennett, 46, a former physical education and health teacher, met with school officials locally and in Raleigh to resolve the matter.

He wanted school officials to either reinstate him with back pay of about \$2,100 or fire him, he said.

After a meeting in May, Pungler suspended Bennett without pay. The school board also upheld Bennett's suspension, Pungler said.

"I am going to sue these people."

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Nathaniel Bennett



Donald L. Martin Jr.



Joseph Johnson

Clinton vows to catch church burners

Federal agents investigate attacks

By JOHN HINTON
Chronicle Senior Staff Writer

The Clinton administration will do everything it can to bring the suspected arsonists to justice for the burning of more than 30 black churches in the South, an aide to President Bill Clinton said recently.

"The president has sent a message to the nation to remind ourselves as Americans that we cannot go back to the dark days," said Alexis M. Herman, director of the White House Office of Public Liaison. "He called on every American citizen to speak out against racism."

Two more churches were burned this week in the South.

Herman, who accompanied Clinton to the rededication of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church in Greeleyville, S.C., spoke to a group of reporters of the black



President Clinton prays at the new Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church with Bishop John Adams, left, the Rev. Terrance Mackey and Johnnie Mae Burgess. Clinton attended the dedication of the new church building, which replaced one burned down by arsonists.

press last week in a telephone conference call.

She restated the president's call for increased federal efforts to solve the cases of church burnings, which have captured national attention.

More than 200 FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents have been investigating the firebombings and vandalism against black churches. They have solved 10 cases,

Herman said.

The U.S. Attorney General's office is following all leads, especially the racial epithets left on the charred remains of the black churches, Herman said. She acknowledged that many African-American ministers are frustrated with the lack of progress in solving the arsons of the churches.

"Some of their concerns have been assayed by the presi-

dent and federal officials," Herman said. "Many of them did not know the extent of the federal investigation."

During his remarks in Greeleyville, the president praised the congregation of Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church for rebuilding its sanctuary.

"We see in the rebuilding of

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Womble, Oldham back resolution condemning church fires, vandalism

By JOHN HINTON
Chronicle Senior Staff Writer

State Reps. Larry Womble and Warren C. Oldham, both Forsyth County Democrats, have introduced a resolution authorizing the N.C. General Assembly to consider legislation condemning arson, vandalism, and bomb threats against predominately black churches.

"These acts of malicious violence against churches cannot be tolerated," Womble said. "Hate has flared its ugly head in this state and across the country."

Nearly 80 African-American churches have been burned since 1990. More than 30 firebombings have occurred at black sanctuaries in the past 18 months, including a recent fire that destroyed the historic Matthews Murkland Presbyterian Church in Charlotte.

Oldham said state law enforcement agencies must take immediate action to investigate and solve these cases.

"We as citizens must do all we can to challenge the climate that creates this kind of hatred and racial intolerance," said State Rep.



The Rev. John Mendez

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Singer Ella Fitzgerald dies at age 79

From Chronicle Staff Reports

Ella Fitzgerald, 79, the forever girlish singer who melded jazz and pop to become the First Lady of Song, died last Saturday surrounded by family and friends at her Beverly Hills, Calif., home.

Fitzgerald's six decades of performance began in the swinging '30s and continued into the hip-hop '90s, even as fading eyesight and diabetes took their toll.

Fitzgerald underwent heart-bypass surgery in 1986. She had both legs amputated below the knee in 1993 because of diabetes.

Even when ailing, Fitzgerald could stun fellow musicians with her gift for mimicry and her perfect ear. She popularized scat singing creating fanciful flights of new melody in a way that blended perfectly with the

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Ella Fitzgerald

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This Week in Black History

June 25, 1935

Joe Louis defeated Primo Carnera at Yankee Stadium

June 22, 1949

Ezzard Charles

defeated Jersey

Joe Walcott for

the world

heavyweight

championship



Million Women's March draws 6,000 in Los Angeles

By DENNIS SCHATZMAN
Special to the Chronicle

LOS ANGELES - Undaunted by "sabotage" by some local elected and public officials and false media reports that the Million Women's March and Conference had been canceled, more than 6,000 attendees of the two-day conference marched despite being denied a permit and were reportedly treated to political and cultural presentations.

"Never mind that we drew only a few thousand participants," beamed a nevertheless proud Gwendolyn Hughes, chairperson of the affair. "We had a good time. There was plenty of food available, the speakers were dynamic, and the entertainment was first-rate. So take that, Mark Ridley-Thomas and Willie Williams."

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