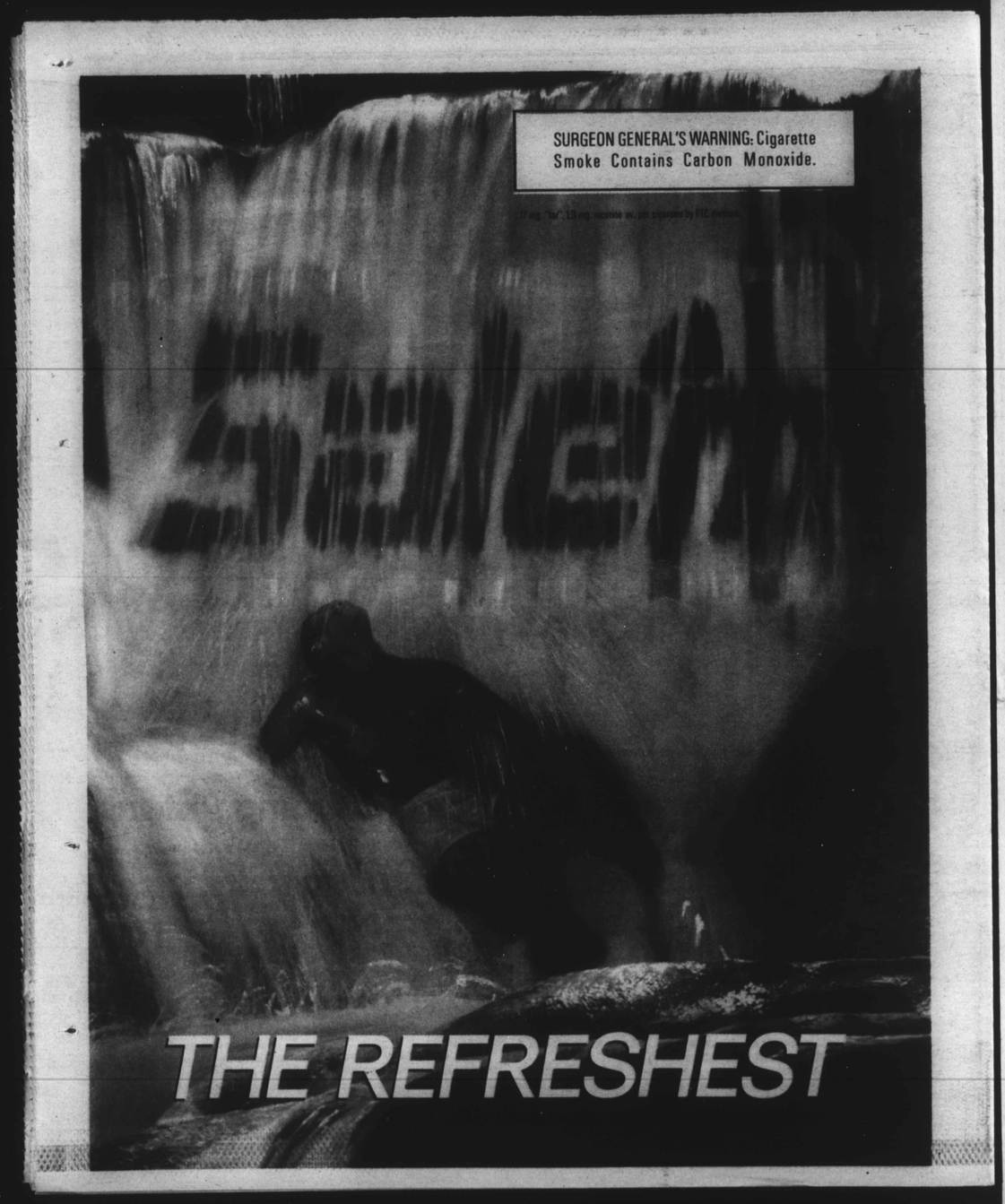

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DRUG EPIDEMIC — Pointing to a chart which illustrates the rising tide of youth drug use, Rep. Kweisi Mfume stresses the need for a new approach to the illicit drug problem. His behind-the-scenes efforts were instrumental in setting up a national debate on the drug issue which will be held in Baltimore.

Mfume key to drug hearings

By Alicia Benjamin
AFRO Staff Writer

The town meeting is an antiquated idea but one that U.S. Rep. Kweisi Mfume D-7th has brought back to life.

The congressman has held 10 town meetings since he came into office and he said it gives his constituents a chance to get to know him and voice their concerns.

Recently at the Woodmoor Elementary School, the latest of Mfume's meetings was held and most of the citizens' concerns centered around drugs.

Although Mfume talked of other issues such as his activities during the congressional session in Washington, D.C., his major emphasis during the meeting was fighting drugs in various communities.

He told the crowd of about 50 people about the role he is playing as moderator between Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke and U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel, D-N.Y. on the matter of decriminalizing drugs.

Schmoke has suggested

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Drug hearings to be held

By Alisha Samuels
AFRO Staff Writer

A national debate on the effects of legalizing narcotics in the United States to abolish the drug-trafficker's profit, which Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke brought to the nation's attention last month, is scheduled late this year in Baltimore.

On April 25, the mayor told a group of mayors in Washington, D.C. to consider a national discussion on decriminalizaton of drugs, comparing it to the country's 1920's ban on alcohol during Prohibition, which choked gangster's powers and pocketbooks.

The mayor was immediately faced with criticism and opposition, including opposition from Rep. Charles B. Rangel, D-New York, who heads the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control.

Rangel Adamantly rejects the idea of decriminalizing

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Handgun bill supporters facing shootout

Del. Ralph M. Hughes

By Alicia Benjamin
AFRO Staff Writer

Supporters and opponents of the recently signed law banning the sale of cheap handguns in Maryland are preparing for battle.

Gov. William Donald Schaefer signed the country's first law banning the sale of handguns termed Saturday Night Specials.

One of the chief sponsors of the handgun bill, Del. Ralph Hughes D-40, said he has received several calls from various state officials who would like the law implemented in their states. Hughes said he received calls from representatives from California, Florida and Pennsylvania.

The proponents of the law are meeting regularly to decide what strategy they will use to fight efforts of opponents, including the National Rifle Association and the Maryland Committee Against the Gun Ban.

Hughes said the gun group has been giving out false information about the recently signed law.

"Their petition says this bill takes away the citizen's right to own any type of handgun, but that isn't true," Hughes stated.

According to Hughes, the law prohibits the use of guns that are not adequate for hunting, protection or use by law enforcement officials.

"Any guns that are not good

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Murderer gets the death penalty

By Ejike Obineme
AFRO Staff Writer

Death is knocking on the door of John Ace Booth for the second time since his alleged involvement in the killing of an elderly Pimlico couple five years ago. Last Friday, in a Baltimore City Circuit Court, a jury of eight blacks and four whites returned a verdict of death penalty punishment for Booth.

At the first trial in 1984, Booth was convicted for the murder of Irvin Bronstein, 78, and his wife Rose Bronstein, 75, at their home in the 3400 block of Rockwood Avenue in Pimlico, in May 1983.

Booth and his partner, Willie "Sweetie" Reid were alleged to have tied up the couple and stabbed them to death during a robbery.

While he was awaiting trial for the Bronstein murders, Booth escaped from the Baltimore City jail along with a few other prison inmates.

But Booth was captured in a West Baltimore bar, Dec. 1983, in time for his trial under the death penalty structure. He was convicted and sentenced to death.

However, in June last year,

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Parks forms strategic alliance

By Charles Brown
AFRO Staff Writer

Taking the lead of other minority firms across the country Parks Sausage has allowed 45 percent of its company to be acquired by the food industry giant, Sara Lee Inc.

The move, intended to provide funds necessary for expansion, is not seen as a danger to the company's historically black control, said CEO Raymond Haysbert.

"We are going to remain a minority company," said Haysbert, who along with his son Raymond, Jr., possessor of 51 percent of the company's remaining stock.

Park is certified by the state's General Services Administration to operate as a Minority Business Enterprise. This standing allows Parks to bid for state contracts in the set aside category as well as be used by majority firms to fulfil their minority business quotas.

It was reported that an unnamed state official believed Parks was in danger of losing its Minority Business Enterprise certification due to the arrangement with Sara Lee.

"I don't know who that may have been or what may have prompted that but it certainly did not come from this office," said John Covert, Chairman of the State Certification Council.

"We have no problems with Parks. We do have firms that have changed hands and lost their status but this (Parks) is not one of them," said Covert.

The requirements for MBE status are apparently met by Parks in its present form. "As long as the principals are minorities and they still retain control of the company it will be considered an MBE," said Avon Evans, MBE

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Raymond Haysbert

City budget crunch felt at rec centers

By Alisa Samuels
AFRO Staff Writer

The mayor has reorganized an urban services fitness center under the Department of Recreation and Parks to save the city money.

The Baltimore Urban Services Health Palace, located on East North Avenue and Harford Road, was closed May 20, to prepare for the switch.

Health Palace was used primarily by black males for body building, who could not afford expensive health spas and fitness centers.

Dr. Lenwood M. Ivey, executive director for Urban Services Agency, said Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke decided the change for budgetary reasons and he supports the mayor's decision to close the almost nine-year-old center.

"It's a policy question and I support the mayor's policy," Dr. Ivey said.

Ivey said the three employees who worked for the facility will be placed elsewhere in urban services. The center's budget was $144,000, Ivey said.

This closure is one of several attempts by the mayor to meet his $1.9 million budget by July 1. He also wants to add more money to the city's educational system.

Already, the mayor has closed three fire stations and cut another's services to meet his budgetary objective, despite Baltimore City Council and community opposition.

On Monday, the First, Fourth and Sixth districts introduced legislation in the Council meeting to block the firehouse closing in their districts.

No exception to city budget cuts, is Ralph W. E. Jones, director of recreation and

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Columnist calls for end to Rights struggle

By Olive Vassell
and Darryl Elwood Owens
AFRO Staff Writers

It has been under congressional and legal fire in the last few months; first with a presidential veto, which threatened to rescind major legislation and then after a Supreme Court decision to review a 1976 ruling on discrimination in private schools.

Now, a nationally known syndicated columnist is pushing to have it retired.

William Raspberry told The AFRO, that the Civil Rights war had "already been won" and it "may be time to retire the Civil Rights Movement to a well-deserved place of honor and move on to the next phase of black development."

According to Raspberry, "Little of the problems faced by blacks had to do with Civil Rights laws. The Rights are on the book. They put us on the starting line. How much of our problems would disappear if the laws were perfectly enforced."

"There is no direct link between drug abuse, teenaged pregnancy, and the non-enforcement of Civil Rights," Raspberry said.

The most pressing problem for blacks is saving the growing underclass, which "threatens to throw us all down," and finding a way "to see to our economic development." That has "little to do with Civil Rights," he said.

Alvin Thornton, Howard University Political Scientist, said, "There is no distinction between Civil Rights and economic empowerment. As opposed to turning Civil Rights aside, we ought to complement it with a focus of economic empowerment. I just don't see them as being mutually exclusive."

Raspberry sparked off controversy recently when

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