



Teams topple
Boys' and girls' basketball sectionals are underway, with Aquinas boys falling to Newark and the Notre Dame girls suffering an upset. Pages 10 and 11.



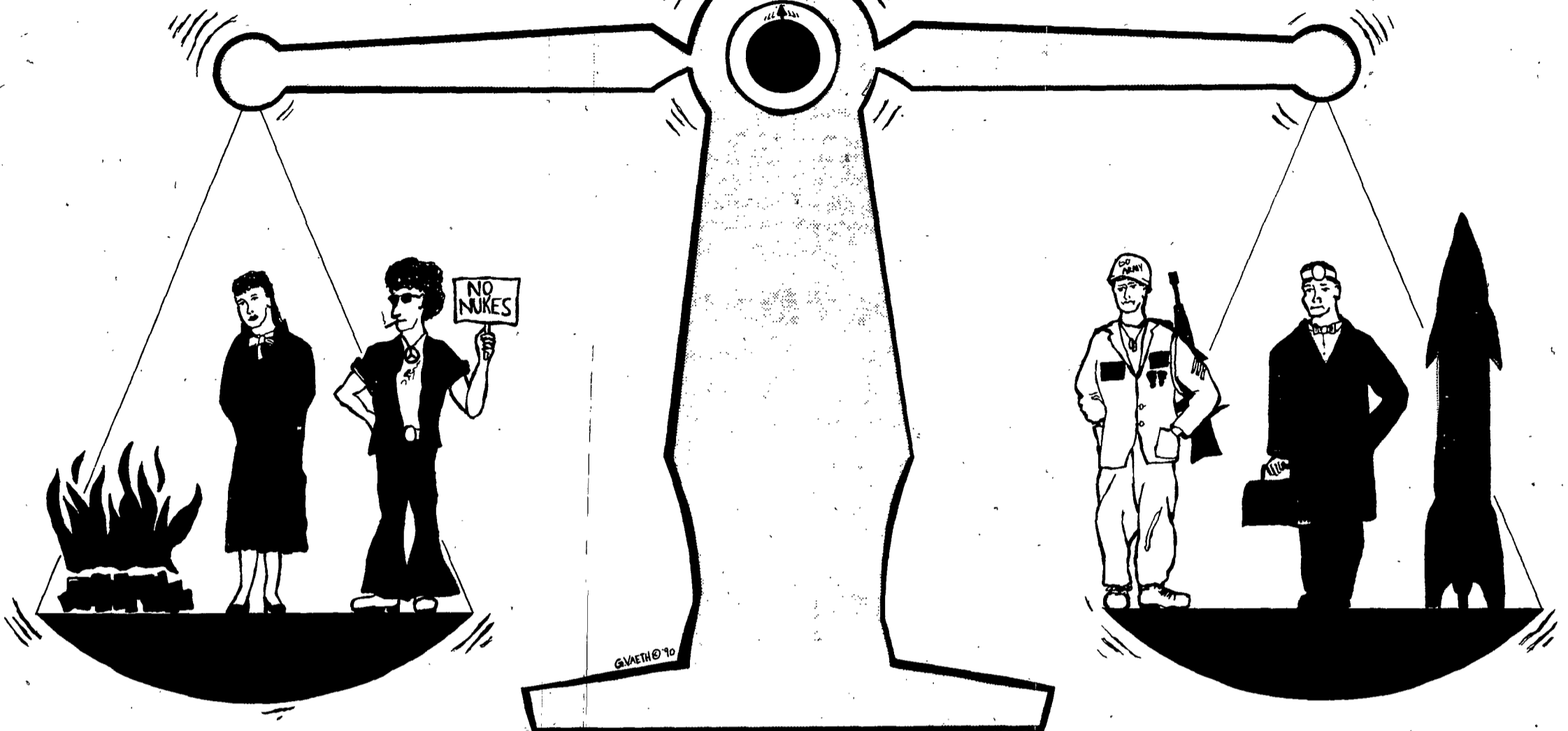
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Pro-lifers' civil disobedience tactics questioned

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Rochester City Court Judge John Manning Regan will be the first to tell you that civil disobedience "is not the national pastime."

Yet, like baseball, civil disobedience is firmly entrenched in the American way of life, he said.

Last April, Regan used a sentencing situation to illustrate his contention when a group of pro-life activists appeared before him after refusing to perform community service as ordered by the court following the activists' conviction for trespassing at Highland Hospital.

Regan directed the activists to write essays on 19th century American philosopher Henry David Thoreau's famous essay, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," and on Plato's *Crito*, which detailed the execution of Socrates.

The two essays represent the extreme approaches citizens can take when confronted with laws they believe to be unjust, Regan said. Thoreau believed in violating unjust laws in order to persuade society to change them, the judge noted, whereas Socrates accepted an unjust death sentence rather than defy the state, believing that the state's welfare and continued existence were more important than the needs of the individuals it encompassed.

Regan handed down the unusual sentence to show the community that pro-life activists engaging in "rescues" at abortion clinics are well within the mainstream of American political life.

"The local press characterized (the pro-lifers') behavior as outrageous," Regan said, explaining that he wanted the activists to realize they weren't "criminals." Instead, like suffragists and civil-rights demonstrators before them, pro-lifers are simply challenging "unjust" laws by breaking them, he said.

Local pro-choice advocates, as well as some experts on civil disobedience, do not concur with Judge Regan's views on militant anti-abortion activity. Pro-choice advocates, in particular, have condemned the

blocking and takeover of doctors' offices by anti-abortion protesters, who claim they are attempting to save the lives of fetuses scheduled for abortion.

Recently, representatives of the pro-choice religious and medical community have been meeting with diocesan representatives to discuss rescues at abortion clinics. On Wednesday, Feb. 21, Father John A. Firpo, diocesan director of the Division of Social Ministry, and M. Lourdes Perez-Albuerne, associate director for Justice and Peace, met for the second time with Dr. Eric Schaff, a pro-choice activist, and the Rev. Wendy Williams-Spalty, an Episcopalian minister and chairwoman of the Rochester chapter of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights.

None of the participants contacted would comment on the meeting, except to say that they were looking for potential facilitators for further dialogue. The diocese has been criticized recently by pro-choice activists for failing to condemn anti-abortion rescues, which — pro-choicers claim — impede medical care sought by patients.

"People have a right to protest in a non-violent way," said Schaff, who listed picketing outside abortion clinics and lobbying for anti-abortion bills as legitimate means of working to end abortion. But the physician drew a line at rescues in abortion clinics.

He asserted that women who have scheduled appointments at doctors' offices are endangered by the cancellation of their examinations when anti-abortion activists perform a rescue. For example, he said, it takes an average of two weeks to reschedule an appointment with an obstetrician/gynecologist following cancellation of the initial appointment.

Such a delay could result in complications in a woman's pregnancy — complications that might have been avoided had the woman been able to see her doctor on time, he noted.

Even the health of women seeking abortions should be considered by the pro-life rescuers, Schaff said. "We know that the health risks double every week (an abor-

tion is delayed)," he said.

Pro-life activists offered a variety of responses to Schaff's contentions. Gerald Crawford, director of Project Life, claimed that his group always takes precautions to avoid disrupting non-abortion-related medical care provided by physicians.

David Long, Project Life's former director, said the group has women call two to four weeks ahead of time to find out the exact time an "abortion shift" is scheduled. He also said that Project Life always performs rescues at offices within a two- or three-minute drive from a hospital emergency room, and that the organization concentrates on doctors who primarily or exclusively perform abortions at certain times.

Crawford blamed doctors for mixing abortion and non-abortion appointments, noting that his group contends most abortions are done in groupings. He said pro-life activists do not plan rescues to take place when abortions are scheduled simultaneously with non-abortion procedures.

"That situation is created by the abortionist himself by what I believe is an attempt to protect the abortion practice," Crawford said.

Schaff dismissed Crawford's contention that abortionists are to blame for rescues that inconvenience patients seeking other types of medical care. He stated that many obstetrician/gynecologists "mix" appointments, and added, "to block health care is a serious matter when you don't know what women are in there for."

Most obstetrician/gynecologists who perform abortions do "mix" appointments, according to Sara Frisch, coordinator of community affairs for Planned Parenthood of Rochester and Genesee Valley. She noted that abortions are generally scheduled at the patients' convenience.

The Rev. Spalty echoed Schaff's statements, charging that during a December rescue at Dr. David Gandell's Rochester office, a pregnant woman was denied care and later developed complications that could have been resolved if she

had been examined as scheduled. The minister noted that the incident had been treated on the editorial pages of the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*.

Although they have been portrayed as obstructing legitimate medical care, pro-life activists maintain that saving the life of one fetus is more important than ensuring access to medical care for patients not seeking abortions.

Women should consider the reasons they seek care from known abortionists, Long said. "If a woman (is) going to pick an abortionist for an obstetrician, she is taking a risk," he said, noting Project Life can refer women to obstetrician/gynecologists who do not perform abortions.

Patient inconvenience is no reason to stop rescues, according to Carol Crossed, a Rochester Catholic pro-life and anti-nuclear activist who sees parallels between her anti-nuclear and anti-abortion activity.

Crossed said that nuclear-arms production and abortion both threaten human life, and stopping the proliferation of each inconveniences those associated with it. She recalled that when she helped blockade a road to a nuclear test site in Mercury, Nev., she and other activists were criticized for closing down the town for a day.

"I think it's intentional that you interrupt business, and quite often you interrupt legitimate business," she said. "There were people going into the test site that had 'legitimate business' ... If people aren't angry, then what you are doing doesn't really matter."

Crossed's arguments are echoed by Father Anthony Mugavero, parochial vicar at St. Theodore's in Gates and a well-known participant in rescues at abortionists' offices. The priest drew an analogy between the actions of rescuers and those of civil-rights activists.

"If we say civil disobedience can not have any inconvenience to people we destroy the whole idea of civil disobedience," he said, noting that people were also inconvenienced when Rosa Parks

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