

Boycott dialogue produces little 'sweet talk'

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — A forum intended to promote discussion between opposing factions in the current boycott of Nestlé products ended with boycott supporters voicing accusations of a biased proceeding.

"We really wanted to have a dialogue," noted Alison Clarke, local director of Politics of Foods and a boycott supporter. "(But) it was not set up to be a good dialogue. Some people became angry because they felt manipulated."

The forum, held Thursday, Sept. 13, at St. John Fisher College, was organized by P. David Finks, who had been active in numerous local issues before moving to Washington, D.C., earlier this year. After meeting with officials of Nestlé in Washington, Finks arranged for Thad Jackson, Ph.D., special issues director of Nestlé, to speak at the college.

The impetus for the forum was an advertisement placed in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle on Mothers' Day of this year. Sponsored by a coalition of 110 Rochester-area organizations and individuals, the ad promoted a boycott of Nestlé products.

The current boycott was started in 1988 in response to the company's policies of distributing infant formula in developing countries. According to boycott organizers, Nestlé has failed to adhere completely to 1981 guidelines established by the World Health Organization to govern the marketing of infant-formula products. Nestlé agreed to abide by those guidelines in 1984, ending an earlier boycott that had begun in 1979.

Finks, who supported the original boycott, said he had come to question the current boycott because of his research into



Meg Grindrod and her son, Gurney Bartram, were among about 100 people attending the Nestlé forum Sept. 13.

Babette G. Augustin/Staff photographer

the issue. "I was pretty convinced that while Nestlé wasn't perfect, it was doing a far better job than any of the other companies," Finks said.

In organizing the forum, Finks said he opted to have just one speaker, a format sometimes used for the Downtown Community Forums he had helped organize at St. Mary's Parish. But objections to the format were raised by several people who

spoke during a question-and-answer session following the speaker's presentation.

Isabel Morrison, of Downtown United Presbyterian Church, for example, accused Nestlé of violating the code, asked why the forum included only a speaker from Nestlé, and pointed out that Nestlé had paid Finks for organizing the forum.

Finks acknowledged that he was being paid, but said all funds beyond his ex-

penses were being split between two local charities — the Webster Avenue Resource Center and the Corpus Christi Neighborhood Outreach Center.

Finks' explanation did not satisfy Morrison. "It's still dirty money," she said.

That exchange set the tone for the night, with questioners from the audience citing code violations, quoting updated WHO and UNICEF reports clarifying the code, and claiming that the forum was a Nestlé tactic to "neutralize" the opposition.

That last accusation arose out of a plan developed for Nestlé by the advertising firm Ogilvy and Mather. The plan included a recommendation that Nestlé work at "neutralizing or defusing the issue by quietly working with key interest groups," and infiltrating groups that support the boycott in order to develop "appropriate proactive or reactive steps."

Responding to these accusations, Jackson said that a copy of Ogilvy and Mather's plan had been "stolen" from Nestlé's offices, and that the company had decided not to follow the recommendations. "It is not the way Nestlé does business," he said. "That is not the basis of our policy in the United States."

The original dispute over infant formula centered on the policy of several infant-formula manufacturers — including Nestlé — to provide free formula to hospitals and to mothers of newborns in Third World nations. The companies also engaged in advertising campaigns promoting the use of infant formula — a policy, Jackson

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Brighton judge disallows diocesan priest's appeal

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — In a written decision issued Monday, Sept. 10, Brighton Town Court Judge James Morris denied a request by Father Anthony Mugavero for reversal of a harassment conviction against the priest, stemming from Father Mugavero's attempt to stop a woman from having an abortion last January.

Judge Morris' decision states the motion to vacate the conviction is denied because defense allegations contained in the request for reversal are either unsupported or involve issues the defense has no legal standing to raise.

Father Mugavero's lawyer, John LaDuca, is appealing the judge's decision. "We're appealing both the original conviction and the decision," LaDuca said, noting that he had already submitted the necessary papers to the Monroe County Court. No date for that proceeding has yet been set.

The original conviction arose from an incident in which Father Mugavero,

parochial vicar at St. Theodore's Parish in Rochester, tried to dissuade Michelle Andrews from having an abortion. The exchange took place while Andrews — at the time a prisoner in Monroe County Jail — was being escorted by a jail guard to Dr. Morris Wortman's office, where the abortion was to take place.

According to the charges against Father Mugavero, the priest allegedly blocked the entrance to the doctor's office, and engaged in verbal and physical abuse of Andrews and of Patricia Carrigan, the guard escorting her.

Despite testimony from witnesses who contradicted the accusations — as well as Andrews' statements during the trial that Father Mugavero had counseled her when she was in jail, had not harassed her on the way into the doctor's office, and that she did not want to testify against him — Judge Morris found the priest guilty, sentencing him April 26 to 15 days in jail.

Father Mugavero served eight days of that sentence before being released for good behavior.

LaDuca appealed the decision, claiming that the prosecution had failed to properly subpoena Andrews and that she was forced to testify. He said he had not expected the Brighton justice to reverse his own decision, but that he believes the second appeal has a greater chance of success in Monroe County Court.

"There are things that were not part of the original case," LaDuca explained. One of those "things," the lawyer said, was the subpoena issued to Andrews. "The district attorney has offered to send a copy of the subpoena, but no one has received one yet," he noted.

In his decision, however, Judge Morris said Andrews testified during the trial that she had been subpoenaed, and that her testimony was sufficient evidence to contradict defense's allegations.

Father Mugavero is currently on sabbatical in Jerusalem. LaDuca said he had not been in contact with the priest to inform him about the appeal ruling, but said he had spoken with members of Father Mugavero's family.



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