

Doctor blasts Planned Parenthood

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — Dr. Leo Holmsten has an unique perspective on the debate over the activities of Planned Parenthood of Rochester and the Genesee Valley Inc. and its newly opened abortion clinic.

The Rochester obstetrician and gynecologist served in Planned Parenthood clinics in the 1950s and 1960s, and as the local agency's medical director from 1969 to 1973.

From the time he began working with the agency to the present, Holmsten said he has seen the focus of Planned Parenthood change from helping married couples understand birth control to encouraging sexual activity, including among teenagers.

And along the way, Holmsten reported, Planned Parenthood has shifted its stance on abortion from opposing it to providing it.

These were among the observations Holmsten shared at the Mapledale Party House Nov. 6 during a benefit breakfast for the Rochester Crisis Pregnancy Centers, which offer assistance to women with unwanted pregnancies. Holmsten, one of the speakers for the breakfast, serves on CFC's advisory board.

Also speaking at the breakfast was Herbert London, a professor of humanities at New York University and the 1990 Conservative Party candidate for New York state governor.

In an interview before the breakfast, Holmsten, a graduate of the University of Rochester Medical School, explained that he first began working at Planned Parenthood clinics in the 1950s to supplement his income during serving his residency at Highland Hospital. He continued to work at the clinics until he entered the Army in 1966, then began again when he left the service in 1968. In 1969 he became Planned Parenthood's medical director.

When he began with Planned Parenthood, "They were just simply mostly helping married couples to understand how to use birth control," he said.

At that time, Planned Parenthood opposed abortion, the doctor asserted. In fact, Holmsten claimed that in 1963 the agency published a brochure stating: "Abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun. Abortion is killing someone and is not a good thing for anyone to do."

Holmsten did not have any contact



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Dr. Leo Holmsten spoke at a benefit for the Crisis Pregnancy Center in Rochester at the Mapledale Party House Nov. 6.

with Planned Parenthood during his stint in the Army. When he returned to Planned Parenthood, and especially after becoming the agency's medical director, he said he noticed a shift in the agency's focus.

That shift finally became clear to him in 1971 during a meeting with Planned Parenthood officials from New York City.

"They were talking about birth control, kids getting more active in sexual activities," Holmsten reported. "I asked, 'If a person wanted to be celibate or practice abstinence, wouldn't that be acceptable?' They just laughed and giggled. I was later told that it was immoral to tell a girl that it was not OK to be sexually active."

The consequence of encouraging, or at least seeming to condone such activities, Holmsten argued, is that teenage pregnancy has increased rather than decreased, and venereal disease is rampant.

Also in 1971, agency officials talked about opening an abortion clinic in Rochester. As medical director, Holmsten stopped the effort.

Meanwhile, Planned Parenthood had become increasingly involved in lobbying for less regulation of abortion. The agency also encouraged sexually active girls to keep what they were doing hidden from their parents, he said.

"Kids were basically told not to listen to their parents on these issues," the doctor claimed. "I was a witness to it."

He remained with the agency for two more years, attempting to sway its course. But by 1973, Holmsten realized he would not succeed in that effort, so he resigned and entered private practice in Rochester.

Over the years, however, Holmsten has continued to watch Planned Parenthood's activities. Among those activities, he contended, is providing in-school sex education that encourages sexual activity, lobbying for laws that reduce regulation of abortion, joining the pro-choice side in court cases, and putting increasing pressure on pro-life groups and activities.

Indeed, Holmsten reported that this summer he received a letter from Planned Parenthood warning pro-lifers that the agency would make use of "legal machinery" to deal with them.

Holmsten said he supports efforts to oppose abortion through laws and the courts, and encourages speaking out in public. But such efforts will only partly succeed, he said.

"Unless there is some kind of religious revival in our area, unless our hearts have been regenerated by Jesus Christ, there cannot be any understanding of what is going on," the doctor concluded.

St. Mary's to host retreat on marriage, family life

AUBURN — St. Mary's Church, 15 Clark St., has scheduled a mission retreat for Nov. 13-18. It will be conducted by Father Bill Gaffney, CSSR, and John and Kathleen Colligan, co-directors for the Family Life Education office in the southern region of the Diocese of Syracuse.

The retreat will begin with the weekend liturgies Nov. 13 and 14, with Father Gaffney preaching. A special youth session has been scheduled for Nov. 14 at 7:30 p.m.

The daily schedule is: a 6 a.m. "Early Bird" special with Father Gaffney; Masses at 6:45 and 7:45 a.m., and 12:05 p.m.; addresses by the Colligans at 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.; a 2 p.m. Holy Hour with Father Gaffney; and an 8:30 p.m. social hour.

On Nov. 21, the parish will also hold a special Vespers/Benediction service at 4 p.m. Father Gaffney will return to the parish the weekend of Nov. 27-28 to preach again.

All talks and services are open to the public.

Loretta Doyle to perform benefit concert Nov. 14

ROCHESTER — Loretta Cisterna Doyle, accompanied by Teryle Maar, will perform musical selections from classical to sacred to Broadway favorites this Sunday, Nov. 14, at 2:30 p.m. Also featuring The Dady Brothers, the concert will take place at Corpus Christi Church, 864 Main St., E., across from the Auditorium Center.

This concert serves as the major fundraiser for the Problem Pregnancy Help Center, Inc., 3252 Lake Ave., which counsels women on alternatives to abortion.

Although the concert is free and open to the public, an offering will be accepted. Free baby-sitting services will be available. Refreshments will follow the concert.

Correction

An article on page 10 of the Nov. 4 *Catholic Courier* reported the wrong name of a Southern Tier parish.

The proper title is St. Mary of the Lake Church in Watkins Glen. We regret the error.

Press award honors Bishop Clark

PEORIA, Ill. — Bishop Matthew H. Clark was awarded the Bishop Arthur J. O'Neil award Sept. 30 for his service to the Catholic press.



The award was presented at the 1993 annual Midwest regional meeting of the Catholic Press Association. It is presented annually to a bishop nominated by a diocesan newspaper editor for his service to and support of the Catholic press.

Karen M. Franz, editor of the *Catholic Courier*, nominated Bishop Clark for the award, saying "I am without a doubt the most fortunate editor in the Catholic press" to have Bishop Clark as publisher.

Franz' letter of nomination noted that Bishop Clark has been a staunch defender and supporter of the *Catholic Courier*, even though it has published

"any number of news articles, letters to the editor and advertisements critical of the bishop" — including one letter that called for his removal from office.

"I can only imagine the personal hurt Bishop Clark has suffered by publication of some (of these) items," Franz wrote. "But he clearly recognizes the value of credibility in the Catholic press and how we would impair the *Courier's* credibility by omitting or playing down unpleasant news and commentary."

Bishop Clark was selected for the award by a panel of Catholic editors working in the Midwest.

Due to the Rochester diocese's General Synod Oct. 1-3, Bishop Clark was unable to travel to Peoria to accept the award. It was accepted on his behalf by Arthur McKenna, president of the Catholic Press Association and general manager of *Catholic New York*, newspaper of the New York archdiocese.

Recognizing...

★ Sisters of Mercy Miriam Nugent and Mary Alice O'Brien, who served on the planning committee of the Mercy Elementary Educators Network, which held its annual meeting in Erie, Pa., Oct. 8-10. The two women religious serve as principals of two Catholic schools in the diocese: Sister Nugent at St. Louis School, Pittsford, and Sister O'Brien at St. Andrew's School in Rochester.

★ Courtney C. Brigham, a sophomore majoring in journalism at Boston University, who served as a member of the Boston University Community Service Center's First Year Student Outreach Program. A 1992 graduate of Brighton High School, Brigham is the daughter of Thomas and Carolyn Brigham.

★ Father William Marceau, CSB, professor of modern languages and religious studies at St. John Fisher College, who has been accepted into Washington's prestigious Folger Institute. He will participate in the institute's semester-long series on "The World of Catholic Renewal, 1540-1770." The Folger Institute specializes in Renaissance and Shakespearean research.

★ The first recipients of Aquinas Institute's Wengowski Scholarship, established to assist minority students attending the high school. Father Dennis P. Noelke, CSB, principal, announced awards of \$670 each to Brandy C. Boller, Dawn L. Bruner, Shandralynn Joiner, and Steven M. Stokes.

★ Monica Bradbury, Michael Johnson, Christopher Miles, Richard Snell and Anne Wolpiuk, five Bishop Kearney High School seniors who have been named Commended Students in the 1994 National Merit Scholarship Program. Each will receive a letter of commendation from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation.