

DIOCESAN NEWS

Unions knock St. Ann's contractor

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — Members of two local affiliates of the AFL-CIO are continuing their 2½-month-old protest of the use of non-union labor at the construction site of the Chapel Oaks, Inc., senior living community project.

The project is underway on the campus of St. Ann's of Greater Rochester, 1500 Portland Ave.

In particular, Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen Local 11 and Rochester Carpenters' Union Local 85 are complaining that LeCesse Construction Company, which oversees the project, has hired non-union subcontractor Lancet Arch, Inc., to work at the site.

Lancet Arch is a specialty contractor in concrete and masonry restoration and waterproofing work.

Members of the locals have been picketing the Chapel Oaks site since early August, but said they had received no response to questions they directed to St. Ann's officials about the project.

Eileen Ryan-Maruke, director of marketing and community relations with St. Ann's, told the *Catholic Courier* that St. Ann's sees the issue as a dispute between the contractors and the local unions, and she did not comment further on the matter.

The *Courier* also attempted to contact the offices of LeCesse by phone, and by visiting a LeCesse trailer on the Chapel Oaks site. An employee in the trailer declined to comment on the locals' picket, and no phone calls were returned to the *Courier* by the company.

Representatives of Local 11 said they were targeting the presence of Lancet Arch at the site because they believe it is an anti-union company that pays its workers substandard wages and does not provide adequate health and pension benefits.

"Our ultimate goal is to represent the company," said Ken Warner, a spokesman for Local 11.

William W. Farmer, Jr., president of Lancet Arch, denied that his company was anti-union, and that it paid substandard wages. He also said his company preferred to work out its employee benefits package on an individual basis with each worker.

"Some fellows don't want pensions. They would rather have the cash," he said. "Some fellows don't want health benefits. They would rather have the cash."

Warner and Ronn Pommerenning, a field organizer with Local 11, also pointed out that the union has filed two cases against Lancet Arch before the National Labor Relations Board. The cases charge Lancet Arch with such activities as inter-



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

David Alexander (left) and Don DeLorm (center) picket Oct. 14 at the Goodman St. entrance of the construction site for Chapel Oaks, St. Ann's new senior living complex, in a dispute over the use of non-union labor.

rogating job applicants about union sympathies, threatening employees with dismissal if they signed a petition seeking wage increases and denying applications to pro-union employees.

Sandra Dunbar, the NLRB's regional director based in Buffalo, told the *Courier* a decision was still pending in the cases.

Farmer said the NLRB has dropped previous cases brought by the union against his company, and he predicted Lancet Arch would prevail in these cases. He also, complained bitterly that the union's continuing legal actions against him were draining his coffers.

"If I weren't so busy defending myself and spending so many dollars against slanderous and frivolous attacks, I would be able to offer a higher quality of benefit," he said.

Farmer did acknowledge, however, that he had failed to pay more than \$38,000 in unemployment insurance this year, a charge that the locals have highlighted in their leaflets at the picket.

Farmer claimed that the picketers have thrown nails and other devices designed to flatten tires in the path of his trucks, and thrown coffee and eggs on job trailers. Farmer even wrote a Sept. 25 letter

complaining about such alleged activity to Pommerenning. Farmer reiterated those charges in an interview with the *Courier* in his office.

"The idea that this is a peaceful demonstration is just basically ridiculous," he said.

But Pommerenning and other representatives of the locals said that no union activists had taken any violent action against the construction site or its workers.

"I have no knowledge of any of my picketers doing any type of destruction to equipment or personal damage to anyone," Pommerenning said.

Pommerenning did say he was arrested last summer for refusing to return from the road to the sidewalk when picketing, but pointed out that no one in the locals had been charged with any other violation of the law. He also claimed that armed security guards have patrolled the site and had videotaped union picketers. He added that the picketers had requested and received the presence of Irondequoit police at the site.

In his letter to Pommerenning, Farmer acknowledged that there was security present at the site, but said he did not know whether they were armed.

Catholic school system celebrates its 25th year

A revolutionary consolidation of Southern Tier schools is celebrating the 25th year of its inception.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark honored the occasion by presiding at a Mass Oct. 4 at St. Mary's Church, Elmira. The Mass was attended by students, faculty, parents and other supporters from the three schools in the Holy Family Catholic School system. Other participants included pastors and staff members representing the nine Catholic churches in Elmira, and officials from Notre Dame High School.

The consolidation began in the 1971-72 school year and was then known as the Consolidated Catholic Schools of Chemung County. This process included the closing of St. Anthony's School and St. Cecilia's schools 1971, and St. Peter and Paul School in 1975.

Another consolidation took place in 1985 when St. Patrick's School closed and the present Holy Family system was formed. This configuration includes Holy Family Primary School (pre-K through third grades), located at St. Mary's; Holy Family Intermediate (fourth to sixth grades), at Our Lady of Lourdes; and Holy Family Junior High (seventh and eighth grades), at St. Casimir's.

Connie Brady, a teacher and administrator in the consolidated schools throughout their 25 years, noted that Elmira's efforts preceded many similar processes that have since occurred in the Diocese of Rochester.

"I guess we didn't realize we were pioneers, but we did it," remarked Brady, principal of Holy Family Primary School. "We kind of proved we could make it work."

— Mike Latona

'Rachel' open for calls

Project Rachel has activated its toll-free number and invites diocesan women and others affected by an abortion to call for a referral to a specially-trained priest or counselor. Activation was not possible Oct. 4, as had been scheduled, but was completed Oct. 8, according to Suzanne Schnittman, diocesan consistent life ethic coordinator.

The number is 1-888-9-RACHEL (722435).

Correction

A story headlined "Interfaith talks to follow 'Genesis'" (*Catholic Courier*, Oct. 10) reported that the PBS series "Genesis: Living Conversations" would be broadcast on Channel 21 (WXXI) in Rochester on Sundays from Oct. 23 to Dec. 18, at 8 p.m. The series will actually be broadcast at 6 p.m. on those Sundays.

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