

DIOCESAN NEWS

Rights activists slam McQuaid-Nike agreement

By Kathleen Schwar and Rob Cullivan

A team sponsorship agreement between McQuaid Jesuit High School and Nike Inc. comes at a time when the Rochester Diocese is gearing up an anti-sweatshop drive with diocesan schools.

Nike will provide McQuaid with sports equipment for the 2001-2002 basketball season, the school has announced.

While the school was excited, according to a press release sent out Dec. 3, Mercy Sister Janet Korn, social justice awareness coordinator for diocesan Catholic Charities, was not.

"We're all very, very disappointed about their choice," she said, "most, in light of the efforts with all the other schools."

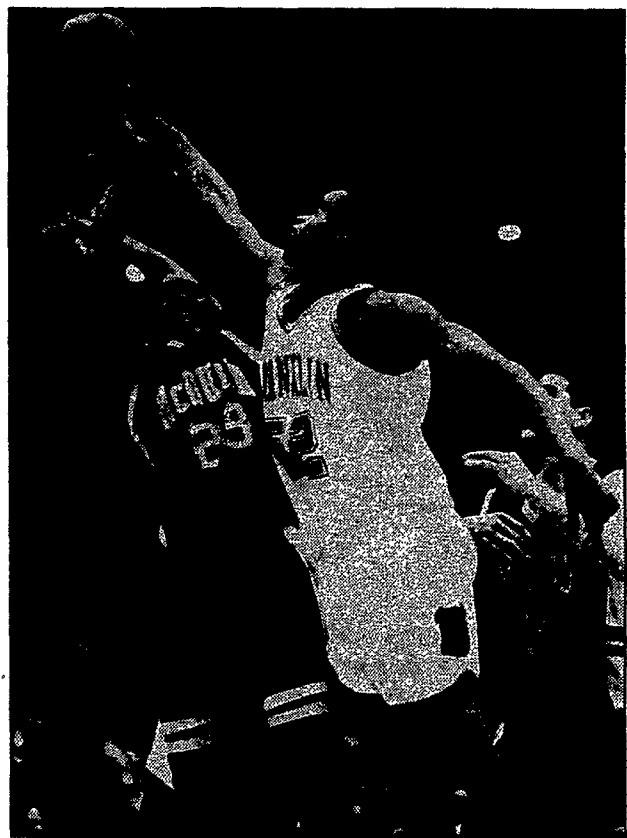
For more than a decade, Nike, along with other footwear companies, has been the target for criticism by human rights activists for its labor practices in such countries as Indonesia and Vietnam. Factories owned by Nike or subcontracted to it have repeatedly been cited for poor working conditions, labor rights violations and low pay.

In 1998, Nike pledged to make efforts to upgrade its workers' conditions, but the company has received mixed reviews for its efforts. As recently as this past February, in a report by independent monitors, which was funded by Nike, the company acknowledged facilitating worker exploitation in Indonesia. Nike said it would move to correct problems of sexual harassment and physical and verbal abuse at its factories.

Throughout the Rochester Diocese this fall, Catholic Charities distributed a form asking diocesan schools to list vendors/suppliers of their uniforms, gym shorts, sweaters, athletic equipment and other items. The forms were due back Dec. 7, after which Catholic Charities will pursue the labor practices of the manufacturers for the schools.

"Most of them were very interested and were happy we were looking into it," Sister Korn said. The elementary schools have done a lot of education on sweatshop labor, she noted, as have individual high school classes. "So there was a readiness in the schools. We really want this to be an awareness raiser for the schools and students about unjust labor practices. Especially in light of globalization now, where many businesses are going off-shore and seeking the lowest possible pay they can give their workers."

Dominican Sister Elizabeth Meegan had given each elementary school principal at an Oct. 17 meeting a letter outlining the joint school-Catholic Charities plan to pursue "sweatfree" Catholic schools. In it she noted that Gov. George Pataki had signed an anti-sweatshop bill in September, allowing school boards to refuse the lowest bid of manufacturers who use child labor or sweatshops. The legislation, she noted, puts the responsibility on manufacturers to provide information about labor standards, in-



McQuaid's Alfonso Evans (left) in a game against Franklin High March 2 at the Blue Cross Arena.

cluding employee compensation, working conditions, employee rights to form unions and the use of child labor.

A couple of weeks later, Sister Korn called each of the seven Catholic high-school principals to encourage their participation. It would be up to them, she noted, to decide what to do with the vendor information Catholic Charities returns to them.

"They'll have to decide either to discontinue their business with that manufacturer, or if they have longstanding relationships with someone, I don't know what they'll decide," she said, of schools that find they're dealing with a company using unfair labor practices.

Jesuit Father Philip Judge, McQuaid's principal, said Nike and McQuaid never discussed the company's labor practices. He declined to divulge all details of their agreement, but noted that it includes footwear. And he stressed that the company's "donation" does not include uniforms. McQuaid is not saving any money on its athletic program by accepting the donation, he said, nor did it have to agree to anything to accept the Nike donation.

"These are items that the kids would have bought on

their own and have never been bought by the school," he said.

He added that Nike is not planning to fund any tournament trips.

Father Judge added that he had not been aware of any criticism of the agreement.

Tony Dorado, national manager of high school basketball for Nike, based in Beaverton, Ore., noted Nike does not share details of any of its contracts. However, in general, he said, Nike provides footwear to schools, and sometimes, additional equipment as well, such as uniforms.

Like Father Judge, he said that Nike and McQuaid did not discuss Nike's labor practices during discussions about the agreement. Nike has similar agreements with 150 other high schools in 32 states, he said.

"Nike has always been associated with the best in the game," Dorado said, when asked why a deal was struck with McQuaid. The school has a reputation for its quality athletic program, he said. Father Judge said Nike contacted the school in October after someone from Nike saw McQuaid athletes at a summer camp.

In addition to Sister Korn, other fair-labor activists expressed dismay at the McQuaid-Nike agreement. It was the topic of discussion among several who gathered when a state activist came to Rochester Nov. 30 to sign a new book, *Border Witness: Youth Confront NAFTA*.

"I just think that the Jesuits have a history in involvement in Catholic social teaching and social justice issues, and for them to throw that to the wind, it's unconscionable," said Deirdre McKiernan Hetzler, campus minister at St. John Fisher College.

Marv Mich, co-chair of the Rochester-area Labor Religion Coalition, said he was "surprised and disappointed." He said he presumed McQuaid officials weren't fully aware of the anti-sweatshop campaign, and that he intended to meet with them.

"I'm sure the terms can be reversed when feasible," he said. "Or at least they could send word to Nike they are concerned about issues here."

"My hope is that eventually the students at McQuaid would be studying these issues," said Mich, who also is director of social policy and research at Catholic Family Center. "Because Catholic social teaching says we have to be conscious of how our economic decisions affect the poor, Nike could be doing a better job at paying wages to its workers."

According to Father Judge, McQuaid incorporates Catholic social justice teaching into its curriculum. But he said the Nike agreement was seen simply as a donation to the school's athletes. The message that the school's acceptance of the donation might send to some people was not considered, he said.

"People wonder, why pick on Nike," Mich said. "The point we are trying to get at is consumers have to be aware."

New Diocesan Pastoral Planning Council to advise bishop

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

The Diocese of Rochester announced Nov. 30 that it is convening a Diocesan Pastoral Planning Council made up of representatives of various diocesan constituencies, to advise Bishop Mathew H. Clark on pastoral planning efforts.

Council members are to be chosen by Jan. 15, and the first regional meetings of council members will be held through February. The DPPC will hold its first annual plenary session March 22-23.

The council is expected to become a permanent body, according to William Pickett, diocesan director of pastoral planning.

Since 1997, groups of parishes have been drawing up plans to help them deal with the declining number of available priests as well as other issues of common concern. Since the pastoral planning process began, most of these planning groups have moved to share priests and resources; coordinate liturgy schedules; and, in some cases, have clustered into a single parish.

Pickett, whose office has overseen the work of these regional groups, was asked why the diocese felt it was necessary to set up the new council.

"The difference is that I am a diocesan employee and the DPPC is composed overwhelmingly of parish leaders both volunteer and paid," he said. "I always try to reflect accurately what I am hearing, seeing and sensing but there is an important way

in which people voice their own concerns directly."

Pickett said the bishop will annually set the agenda for the council, and will look to the council for advice and input on the second round of pastoral planning that will commence in fall of next year. As parishes begin the second round of planning, among the concerns the diocese wants them to consider is the projected availability of only 64 priests for the whole diocese by 2025.

Additionally, Pickett noted that the Rochester area, in particular, has been losing young people to other regions in the nation for some time now, and that parishes must begin to address how the church will find enough people to serve as the available pool of potential volunteers and employees shrinks.

The council will be made up of 65 members: 35 lay people representing each planning group, 11 priest regional coordinators, members from the Priests' and Stewardship Councils, local religious or-

ders, a deacon, a pastoral administrator, a pastoral associate, a director of religious education, a youth minister, and five at-large members to be selected by the bishop.

The new council is the latest in a series of diocesan bodies that have been created since the Second Vatican Council to gather input in a formal manner from various diocesan groups, parishes and faith communities, according to Pickett.

For example, the now-defunct Diocesan Pastoral Council, which was founded in 1975, and the 1993 Diocesan Synod (with the parish and regional meetings that preceded it) were examples of how diocesan administration tried to gather input and advice from the grassroots on the diocese's goals and concerns.

Likewise, the pastoral planning process itself since 1997 has similarly exemplified how the diocese has worked with regional and parish representatives on common goals, he noted.

Pickett, however, drew a distinction be-

tween a body like the old Diocesan Pastoral Council and the new pastoral planning council. The old DPC could voice concerns of its own along with recommendations to the bishop, he said, whereas the agenda for the new council will be set by the bishop.

"Now, over time, I think we might see a wider range of interest by the bishop and the DPPC, but for now the issues and the agenda are those raised by the bishop," he said.

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