

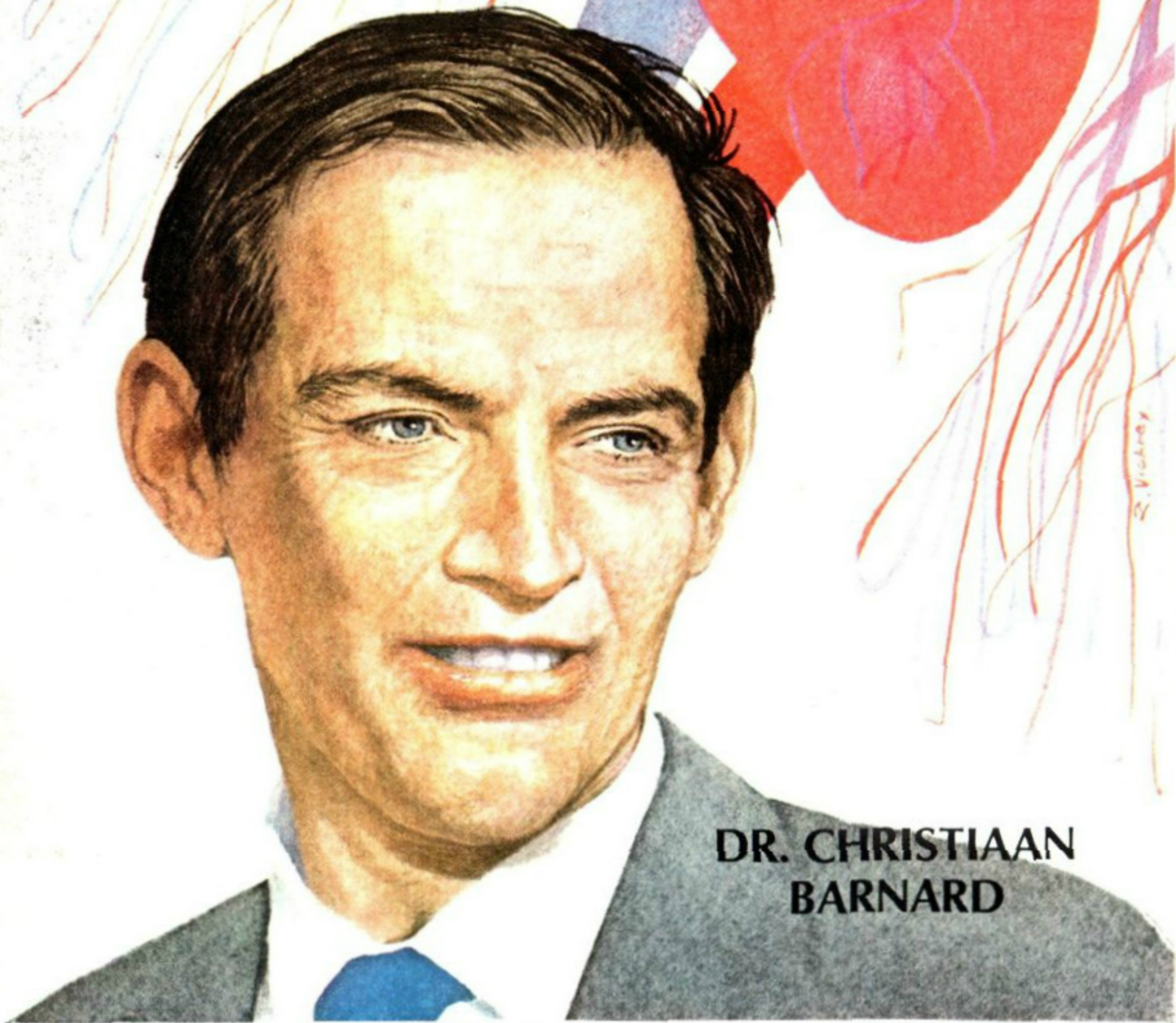
FIFTY CENTS

DECEMBER 15, 1967

THE TRANSPLANTED HEART

TIME

THE WEEKLY NEWSMAGAZINE



DR. CHRISTIAAN
BARNARD

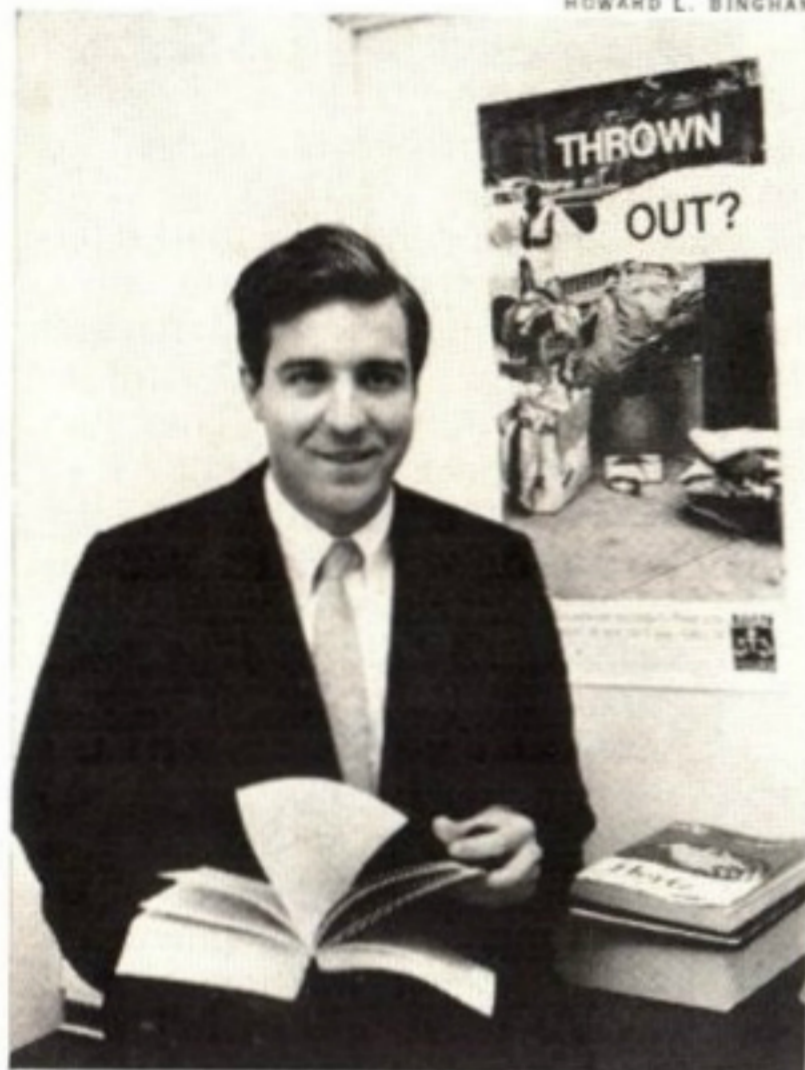
S. Vichay

LEGAL AID

Champion of the Rural Poor

By almost any measure, Los Angeles Lawyer Jim Lorenz had every reason to be content. The son of an affluent Dayton, Ohio, architect, he had sailed through Harvard Law School with honors and social ease. He was admitted to the California bar in 1965, and became a shining young legal light at

HOWARD L. BINGHAM



LORENZ

Blessed are the meek after all.

O'Melveny & Myers, Los Angeles' largest law firm. But he was troubled. "I was just making more secure the people who already had security. It was like walking on wet sand and leaving no footprints."

Lorenz could not quite put his finger on the cause of his discontent—until the Watts riots. He did research into the plight of California's poor, first urban, then rural, and the results made him angry. He learned that it was common practice among farmers to pay field hands and migrant workers less than subsistence wages, and fail to provide such minimal accommodations as toilets and running water. After personal inspection of farm areas and migrant-labor camps, he sat down in March 1966 and wrote a 47-page proposal to Sargent Shriver, director of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity.

He began it with four Beatitudes, three of them followed by the California rural reality. For example, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (the farm worker's average income is \$1,378 a year)." And "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Migratory Labor has concluded that the impoverishment and misery of the rural poor is 'shocking')." Winding up his proposal, Lorenz described in detail how his already in-

corporated California Rural Legal Assistance agency would tackle the problem, right down to the precise location of its farm-town offices. Many attorney friends of the poor had opened store-front law offices in city slums; what Lorenz proposed was the country's first statewide rural legal-aid bureau. Impressed, Shriver investigated and pondered for two months, then agreed to provide funds for a \$1,276,000 first-year budget.

Water for Indians. Today, at 29, Lorenz has a 130-member staff, maintains eleven offices. Most of the 35 lawyers who work under him are fresh out of law school and, like Lorenz, burning with idealistic fervor. Nearly a third of the work is focused on consumer and employment problems. Another third involves litigation against Government agencies, and the remainder centers on domestic relations and housing problems. In 1967 alone, C.R.L.A. has handled 9,516 cases, each involving an average of 2.5 persons, at an expenditure of only \$38.50 per person.

In one instance, C.R.L.A. took up the case of an eight-months pregnant Spanish-speaking farm worker who was denied welfare aid for failing to use an official phrase on an application form. C.R.L.A. asked for a hearing, and the welfare agency approved the application and made back payments. C.R.L.A. challenged the constitutionality of complex Internal Revenue Service requirements that are either incomprehensible or impossible to fulfill for Spanish-speaking Mexican-Americans. The IRS not only conceded but also asked Lorenz for help in hiring bilingual employees to explain its requirements.

When a remote Indian reservation was denied an adequate water supply, C.R.L.A. discovered that a federal law was being violated. Now the Indians no longer have to drink polluted water. C.R.L.A. has fought for normal schooling of migrant workers' children, challenged the California Vehicle Codes' license-revocation provisions (the case is pending), brought suit to stop salesmen who entrapped the unwary in \$500 time-payment purchases of \$100 cameras, and filed countersuits against finance companies engaging in fraudulent collection procedures.

Stiffest Challenge. C.R.L.A.'s biggest case so far has involved a frontal assault on the state of California itself. Last September, when Governor Ronald Reagan ordered a cutback in medical services available to welfare recipients under his state's Medical Assistance Program (Medi-Cal), a C.R.L.A. lawyer, representing disabled Modesto Laborer Harvey Morris *et al.*, filed suit in Sacramento Superior Court. In effect, C.R.L.A. was battling for the rights of 1,358,200 welfare clients. Last month, in a five-man majority opinion, California's Supreme Court ruled that

the cutbacks denying "Morris *et al.*" medical benefits were illegal, thus informing Reagan that he will have to economize some other way.

Initially opposed by California lawyers who mistakenly believe that it would drain business away from them, Lorenz' C.R.L.A. recently faced its stiffest challenge to date: two proposed amendments to the federal antipoverty bill. One would have prevented any OEO-financed legal service (OEO sponsors 300 in the U.S.) from bringing suits against a local, state or federal agency. The other would have required local bar-association approval before any such legal service could begin operation. Both amendments were killed.