

# CATHOLIC-BASHING AT THE U.N.

The recently concluded three week Preparatory Committee meeting of the International Conference on Population and Development was marred by several incidents of Catholic-bashing. In a statement released today, Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, detailed his objections:

“The Preparatory Committee meeting of the International Conference on Population and Development was designed to facilitate the serious work that will take place at the U.N. Population Conference this fall in Cairo. While serious work was indeed done, the Conference suffered from an environment that was poisoned with the toxin of anti-Catholicism.

“It is not Catholic-bashing to vigorously disagree with the positions of the Holy See. But when anti-Catholic stickers are conspicuously displayed by representatives of non-government organizations, and anti-Catholic literature is widely distributed in the halls, it cannot be said that the atmosphere allows for serious dialogue. The sticker in question, a rendering of the ‘Ghostbusters’ symbol of a circle and diagonal bar superimposed over the words ‘Papal Control,’ was worn on the lapels of dozens of observers. This kind of Catholic-baiting is done expressly to delegitimize the standing of the Holy See. The literature, much of it found in the text and the cartoons of the publication Earth Times, is also an appeal to demagoguery.

“The ‘Letter To The Delegates At Prep Com III’—a document signed by the various Planned Parenthood and population control organizations around the world—went beyond atmospherics: it directly challenged the right of the Holy See to speak on the issue of population growth. **‘To impose one religious perspective on a whole continent or worldwide is imperious and unacceptable,’** the letter said. (Emphasis in

original.) The Holy See, of course, can only do what all other representatives of the U.N. can do, and that is exercise the art of persuasion. It has neither the desire nor the ability to impose anything on any continent, never mind worldwide. What the Letter is all about is nothing more than an attempt to silence the Holy See. Others, like Francis Kissling of the anti-Catholic front group Catholics for Free Choice, went even further by urging delegates to challenge the right of the Holy See to a seat in the U.N.

“It is, of course, perfectly legitimate for those who disagree with the Holy See’s positions to lobby U.N. delegates and exercise their freedom of speech. What is unacceptable, however, is to impugn the right of U.N. representatives to disseminate their views. There is a line between dissent and disparagement and it was regrettably crossed by some at the Preparatory Committee.”

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics-lay and clergy alike-to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.