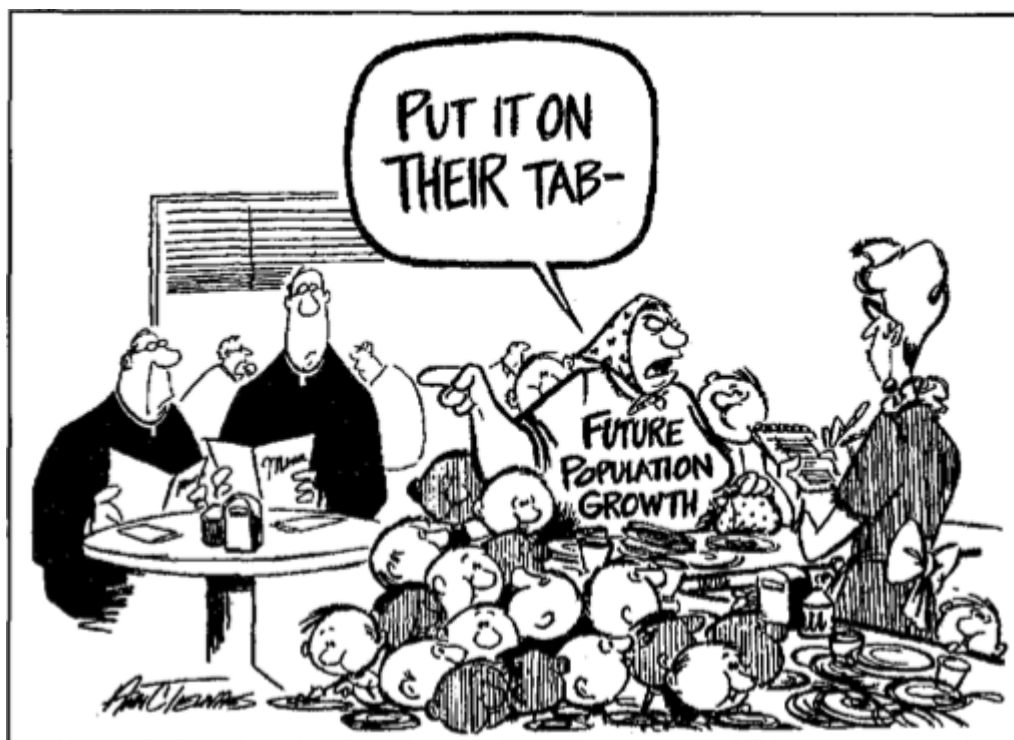


# Catholic Bashing at the United Nations

We received copies of this gem from members across the country.



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, 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 delegitimatize 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 less 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."

In a letter to President Clinton, Pope John Paul II called the

U.N. draft document a "disturbing surprise," because it violates several consensus positions developed in past conferences.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights called the traditional family "the natural and fundamental group unit of society." The population draft emphasizes individuals' rights in choosing parenthood, seeming to promote child bearing outside of marriage. In 1984, the U.N. Conference on Population in Mexico City agreed that "in no case should abortion be promoted as a method of family planning," but the language of the new draft implies that abortion is bad only when it is unsafe or unwanted.

In writing to President Clinton, the pope is clearly acknowledging the key role played by the United States in the creation of the U.N.'s population policies. The Catholic-bashing atmosphere of the recent meeting gives clear indication of polarization and further confrontation to come.