

# CONTROVERSY MOUNTS OVER HEALTH BILL

Things are heating up in New York State regarding a health bill.

In the last *Catalyst*, we commented on how the New York State legislature was trying to pass a bill that would require all employers to provide contraceptive health insurance coverage for its employees. Now the bishops have entered the fray, voicing opposition to the bill unless it allows for a religious conscience protection clause.

The New York State Senate has no problem with offering this religious exemption, but the Assembly does. In the last month, things got really hot when Edward Cardinal Egan visited Albany to lobby against the bill as it stands now.

The Catholic League, of course, takes the side of the bishops. "Any bill which forces religious organizations to relinquish their doctrinal prerogatives and institutional autonomy is an expression of intolerance," we said. Then there is the issue of diversity. "The diversity that marks our nation's religious institutions is one of our most treasured assets," we emphasized, "and that is why attempts to impose a secular agenda—via the heavy hand of the state—is strikingly un-American."

What we found troubling was the opposition to the Catholic call for a religious exemption that came from other religions. Members of the clergy from the United Church of Christ, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and Reform Jewish communities proclaimed it "a matter of justice for women" that the clause is stricken.

This is a sad commentary on these members of the clergy. What this shows is that some men and women of the cloth are more

driven by an ideological commitment to the politics of feminism than they are to any real fidelity to the principle of separation of church and state. No wonder mainline Protestant denominations, and the Reform branch of Judaism, are in decline: they've all assimilated to the culture.