

KENTUCKY EDUCATOR PENALIZED FOR HER CATHOLICISM

Last April, after learning that there was an opening for the position of principal at Atherton High School in Louisville, Kentucky, Nina Bedford asked the superintendent of the Jefferson County Public Schools to submit her name as a candidate for the post; Mrs. Bedford is the assistant principal at Atherton. For reasons which appear to be bogus, Dr. Stephen Daeschner did not do so.

In February, 1997, Mrs. Bedford was appointed by Louisville Archbishop Thomas Kelly as a board member of the Catholic Educational Endowment Foundation. Without delay, Dr. Daeschner asked the principal of Atherton High School to ascertain whether or not there was a conflict of interest between Mrs. Bedford's public school position and her Catholic post. Moreover, she quickly found herself cut from school committees and task forces that she otherwise would have been expected to serve.

Mrs. Bedford, who is African American, has filed a lawsuit against the Jefferson County Board of Education alleging religious discrimination. She is supported in this effort by the Kentucky Alliance Against Racism and the Rainbow Coalition. She has now won the support of the Catholic League as well. League president William Donohue explains why:

"Even after the search committee rejected the first round of candidates, Mrs. Bedford's name was not forwarded. This is strange given that as assistant principal Mrs. Bedford has received numerous awards and citations of achievement, including certificates of excellence from the Jefferson County Public Schools in 1996 and 1997.

"Nina Bedford is right to smell a rat in this process. The rat

is the stink of anti-Catholicism. Now that the new school year is about to begin, it behooves the Jefferson County Public School authorities to come to their senses and settle with Mrs. Bedford out of court. To do otherwise is to postpone justice."