

'Doctrinaire Equality' Seen in Rights Amendment

Washington, D.C. (RNS) — An ad hoc committee of the U.S. Catholic bishops' conference warned in a report on the proposed 27th Amendment, which provides equal rights for men and women, that the Amendment's "doctrinaire character" may destroy the unity necessary for family stability.

"Many laws rested firmly in our culture and civilization will be subject to attack in the legislatures and in the courts," the report by the bishops' committee on Women in Society and the Church observed. "Some (laws) will be modified, others invalidated. The impact on our social structure will be substantial."

Copies of the report, along with a letter from the committee chairman, Archbishop Leo C. Byrne of St. Paul-Minneapolis, were sent to every U.S. Catholic bishop.

In the letter, Archbishop Byrne emphasized the "urgent need for ending prejudice against women at many levels of society," but he said the committee found "certain difficulties inherent" in the

proposed amendment, which was adopted by the 92nd Congress and has been ratified thus far by 20 states.

Archbishop Byrne made clear that the report is not intended to promote opposition to the amendment but, anticipating its approval, to alert the bishops to subsequent implications for legislation and litigation concerning women's rights, family life and other related concerns.

The ad hoc committee said in its report that the Amendment was cast in terms of "doctrinaire equality." It added:

"Under this mechanistic principle, laws creating benign quotas designed to protect women may not stand. The states and federal government will be required to reform their legislation to conform to the equal rights amendment."

The committee urged that implementation of the proposed Amendment in legislation and litigation "be closely watched" especially by U.S. Catholic agencies concerned.



Busy Pace

Showing no sign of slowing down, Pope Paul VI spent a busy week just prior to his 75th birthday Sept. 26. At left, the pontiff reads a prayer during a solemn Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, his first since returning from his summer residence at Castelgandolfo. Some 3,000 children from throughout Italy sang during the Mass. At right, Pope Paul reaches out to touch an African woman and her child during an audience before ending his two-month working vacation at Castelgandolfo. (RNS)

Viet Catholic Massacre A Myth, Study Reports

Ithaca, (RNS) — A Cornell University study has characterized as "myth" the long-standing charge that a three-year Communist land reform program in North Vietnam was a "bloodbath" in which at least 50,000 innocent people — a large number Roman Catholic — were massacred.

Noting that the charge, most recently echoed by President Nixon at a July 27 news conference, in which he quoted a Vietnamese Catholic prelate, has been a "major rationale for maintaining U.S. military presence in Vietnam," the study said the "myth of the 'bloodbath' ... fit deeply held prejudices common to most Americans."

The 59-page study also charged that the "bloodbath myth" was the result of a "deliberate propaganda campaign" by the South Vietnamese and U.S. governments to discredit the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Hanoi. It asserted that the central factor in the myth campaign was a book by Hoang Van Chi, a former North

Vietnamese now working for the U.S. government.

Written by D. Gareth Porter, research associate of the Cornell project on International Relations of East Asia, an advance copy of the study was released to the press "for immediate, widespread public attention," an IREA spokesman said.

During the news conference cited, President Nixon was quoted by the New York Times as saying that, "In North Vietnam, in the period from 1954 to 1956, in their so-called land reform program, a minimum of 500,000 were murdered ... assassinated; and according to the Catholic bishop of Danang, whom I talked to when I was there in 1956, in South Vietnam, in addition to the 800,000 refugees ... there were at least a half-million who died in slave labor camps."

The Cornell study denied, however, that the North Vietnamese land reform was aimed at liquidating whole social classes, that "quotas" were assigned to be executed in each village,

and that hundreds of thousands of innocent people were killed.

"Close examination of charges reveals that they are based on gross misquotation, fraudulent documentation, and Hoang Van Chi's own self-contradictory testimony," the study added.

"The evidence also indicates that probably no more than 2,500 landlords were sentenced to death — not a 'minimum of 500,000' as asserted by President Nixon ... The study added that the most frequently used figure was 50,000 cited by Bernard Fall, and American academic specialist on Vietnam. It added: "Over the years, this 50,000 figure has taken on an authoritative aura which was wholly unwarranted."

In the study's only reference to North Vietnamese Roman Catholics, it said that although grievances caused by errors in the land reform program were widespread, the only documented case of open violence occurred in "four predominantly Catholic villages" in Quynh Luu district three months after the reform program ended.

It involved "violations of party policy respecting freedom of worship," the study noted, and further strained relations between the DRV and Catholics who were, according to U.S. and South Vietnamese sources, denied permission to emigrate to the South.

The study said, however, that "solid evidence" from the International Control (Geneva) Commission reports, shows "there was no pattern of violence against Catholics during the period of the land reform."

Election of Bishops To Be Discussed

Seattle (RNS) — The selection of bishops in the Roman Catholic Church will be the major topic for discussion at the annual meeting of the Canon Law Society of America (CLSA) here Oct. 23-26.

A spokesman for the 1,200-member society said the meeting will concentrate on issues of leadership in the Church under a "new working format" emphasizing service to the Church. A report by the CLSA Committee on the Selection of Bishops will be presented for discussion and revision by the membership.

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'Black Catholics Concerned'

Black Catholics across the country — about 1 million — are being asked to contribute to a special collection on Sunday, Oct. 8, as part of a "Black Catholics Concerned" program sponsored by the National Office of Black Catholics (NOBC). Some parishes of the Rochester diocese are taking part. The campaign is seeking to support several major programs being developed by the NOBC, including recruiting black vocations to religious life, developing black Catholic lay leadership, underwriting continuing education for black nuns, priests and Brothers, and the establishment of a national training center for black priests. This panel illustrates the aims of the campaign.

TOP LEFT — A black layman at prayer. One of the aims of the program is the development of strong black Catholic lay leadership.

TOP RIGHT — Brother Anthony Clark, SVD (center), tells two young men about the religious life at the Society of the Divine World's recruiting booth at Black Expo in Chicago. A successful campaign will enable black Catholics, for the first time, to develop their own direct effort to encourage more vocations from among black Catholics.

BOTTOM LEFT — Father Ivan Hughes, OSB, confers his first blessing after ordination to the priesthood at the Benedictine St. Pius X Monastery in Pevely, Mo. Through the establishment of a training center for priests, the program hopes to prepare black candidates for the priesthood.

BOTTOM RIGHT — Auxiliary Bishop Harold Perry of New Orleans (center), the nation's only black bishop, is principal celebrant at a Mass during a meeting of the National Black Sisters Conference in Pittsburgh. Black nuns bring the Offertory gifts to the altar. Continuing education programs for black religious is another of the program's aims. (RNS)

Divorced Catholic Data To Be Studied in Rome

Washington, D.C. (RNS) — Expressing "deep pastoral concern" for divorced and remarried Catholics, the Administrative Committee of the U.S. bishops' conference approved the transfer to Rome of a study on the question of admitting such Catholics to the sacraments.

Without divulging the contents of the study or its thrust, the general secretariat of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) announced that the U.S. study would be sent to the Vatican as a "contribution" to a study which the Vatican is conducting on the subject.

The NCCB's Committee on Pastoral Research and Practices, which conducted the study, has not adopted any position, the secretariat said.

The materials assembled argue "the different sides of the question" of admitting divorced and remarried Catholics to the sacraments, it added.

The U.S. study will go to the Courier-Journal

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which is conducting the Vatican study.

Several U.S. Dioceses had instituted official or unofficial "good conscience" programs whereby cases of divorced and remarried Catholics have been reviewed by priest-panels with an eye toward allowing remarried persons to receive the sacraments and take part in Church life.

However, in August, Cardinal John Krol of Philadelphia, president of the NCCB and chairman of its Administrative Committee, urged a moratorium on such programs because he said the question of admitting remarried Catholics to the sacramental life was under study in Rome and by the U.S. bishops' conference.

He said the "Holy See has made it clear, in a recent letter addressed to the conference, that since the discipline (regarding divorce and remarriage) is of interest to the entire Church, dioceses are not to introduce procedures that are contrary to current discipline."