

# Officials study issues resulting from aging populations

## Developed world's birth rate declining

By Agostino Bono  
Catholic News Service

ROME — The populations of developed countries are getting older, causing church and government officials to worry over the resulting economic, health and immigration issues.

While experts praise medical and scientific progress that extends life expectancy, they do not welcome the accompanying decline in the developed world's birth rate. The trend is toward a growing number of retired people and a shrinking number of economically productive people to provide a country's financial backbone.

This has created strains on pension and health-care services, said a Vatican background paper on population issues. In some countries reduced work forces have not been completely compensated for by new technology, the document added.

The Vatican paper was made public at a March 23-26 U.N.-sponsored meeting in Geneva on population problems in Western Europe, the United States and Canada. Delegates met to draft a regional report for presentation at the 1994 U.N. Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt.

A Vatican observer attended the Geneva conference.



The regional report, made public at the end of the meeting, spoke of "long-term population decline."

Statistics presented at the meeting revealed that the fertility rate in Europe dropped from an average of 2.5 children per woman in 1960 to less than two at the present time. Other statistics showed that 25 percent of the population will be more than 60 years old by the year 2025.

Italian government figures show that already there are 1 million more people over 60 than there are under 20. Italy predicts that its 1991 population of 56.4 million will shrink to 52 million in the year 2021.

The developed world trend is in direct contrast to the situation in the Third World, where the United Na-

tions predicts that 90 percent of the future world population growth will take place.

This means that population is declining in the financially stronger countries, while it rapidly rises in nations unable to generate adequate economic and social development to meet needs.

One result has been major migratory flows from poor to rich countries. The Vatican paper and the regional report warned that this is not the best solution to replenishing the developed world's population.

Both documents supported controlled immigration policies protecting the

rights of immigrants, but noted the social turmoil caused in many developed countries by a large influx of people coming from different cultural, racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds.

"The imbalance in population structure can be alleviated only in a limited way through migration," said the Vatican paper.

"The economic will to have additional manpower to compensate for the aging of the general population clashes with an emerging political will that emphasizes the negative aspects of

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## Former NCCB, Catholic Golden Age figure dies

SCRANTON, Pa. — A Mass of Christian Burial for Thomas Hinton, a former official in three Catholic organizations, was held March 13, at Our Lady of the Snows Church in Clarks Summit, Pa. Burial was in Cathedral Cemetery, Scranton.

Hinton, former president of Catholic Golden Age, died at Mercy Hospital in Scranton March 7. He was 82.

He began his church career in 1942 with National Catholic Community Services, serving as executive director from 1948-71. From 1972-78, he was director of finance and administration for the National Conference of Catholic

Bishops' and its twin agency, the U.S. Catholic Conference.

He had also been vice president of Catholic Golden Age, an organization for Catholics over age 50.

In a 1986 address, Hinton said Catholic Golden Age "can and should be the voice for seniors" on business, health, community and housing issues.

Hinton was a Knight of St. Gregory the Great and a Knight-Grand Cross of the Holy Sepulchre.

Hinton is survived by seven children, 13 grandchildren, one great-granddaughter, one brother and one sister.

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