

Zichichi - Some restraint in Rome

Lawrence Solomon, Financial Post

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President George Bush meets Pope Benedict in June. Some Vatican authorities are lobbying the Pope to press the U.S. administration to act on global warming.

"It's not for me to say what the Pope and President Bush should discuss, but certainly they will discuss current issues and therefore I imagine and I hope they will [discuss climate change]," said Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Vatican organization charged with developing policy for the environment and social issues.

Cardinal Martino spoke at the start of "Climate Change and Development," a Vatican study seminar two weeks ago designed to "search for solutions to the phenomenon of global warming." The 80 scientists, politicians, theologians and bishops in attendance were asked to consider that: "Global warming may bring about not only the imposition of drastic corrective means to protect the natural environment, but also a grave threat that destabilizes the world."

By the seminar's end, the 80 participants had heard dire warnings from some experts, but they heard much more, too -- that global warming is natural, the cause of warming being primarily solar and that it can be beneficial.

During the two-day event, tensions were often high -- the Catholic News Service, which interviewed participants at the private event, described how one pastor needed to calm down a distraught participant in the corridor, and used words like "bitter" and "heated" to set the early mood at the seminar. No one left the seminar thinking that the science of global warming is settled. To the dismay of those hoping that the high-level group would inspire a Church-led climate change crusade, the Cardinal, in closing the seminar, urged caution in taking any position on global warming.

The man most responsible for quelling any potential call to action is one of the Vatican's own, Antonino Zichichi, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Dr. Zichichi, who made the seminar's most powerful presentation, set its tone. It amounted to a damning indictment of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the body responsible for most of the dire warnings that the press reports daily.

Dr. Zichichi demonstrated "that models used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) are incoherent and invalid from a scientific point of view," reported Zenit, a news service that acts as an extension of the Vatican administration. "On the basis of actual scientific fact 'it is not possible to exclude the idea that climate changes can be due to natural causes,' and that it is plausible that 'man is not to blame.' "

Dr. Zichichi has concluded that solar activities are responsible for most of the global warming that earth has experienced -- he estimates that man-made causes of global warming account for less than 10% -- and his conclusions have gravitas: This man is the president of the World Federation of Scientists, past president of the European Physical Society, past president of the Italian National Institute for Nuclear and Subnuclear Physics, and past president of the NATO Science Committee for Disarmament Technology.

He is also Italy's most renowned scientist, credited with the discovery of nuclear antimatter, the

discovery of the "time-like" electromagnetic structure of the proton, the discovery of the effective energy in the forces which act between quarks and gluons, and the proof that, despite its complex structure, it is impossible to break the proton.

"There is a need to do more work, with a lot more rigour, to better the models being used," he argued in a 60-page written paper that accompanied his speech to the seminar.

The Vatican seminar was extraordinary, participants agree: Faith and reason met in inspired discussion and debate about global warming, and despite the occasional heat, came away the wiser for it. How different from the debate on climate change conducted by environmental groups, or, for that matter, the Parliament of Canada, the U.S. Congress or the German Reichstag, where global warming discussions rely on faith alone, and result in one-sided dogma.

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CV OF A DENIER:

Antonino Zichichi, Professor Emeritus of Advanced Physics at the University of Bologna, has published over 800 scientific papers and 10 books, some of which have opened new avenues in subnuclear physics. He has received numerous awards and honorary degrees from academic institutions around the world, and is the subject of seven books published by others about his accomplishments. He founded and directs the Ettore Majorana Foundation and Centre for Scientific Culture, an organization dedicated to voluntary scientific service, the elimination of secret laboratories, and scientific freedom.

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