

LONDON DEMO FOR A SECULAR EUROPE

14 FEB MEET @ 2 PM outside the Natural History Museum March to the Italian Embassy in Grosvenor Square

This demo will be in solidarity with the demonstration happening at the same time in Rome against the Vatican and its intervention in Italian, European and world-wide politics.

www.facciamobreccia.org/london

www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=45329993350

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE VATICAN

This tiny State inhabited mainly by priests is extremely powerful and its "moral" crusades adversely affect the lives of millions of people in Europe and in the world.

Officially part of the UN, its "observer-state" status means it engages in UN debates on a variety of issues ranging from favourites, such as birth control, abortion and homosexuality, to the environment, war and global trade.

The Vatican has diplomatic relationships with almost all the Countries in the world (174 when John Paul II died) and in many EU countries they benefit from the support of Catholic politicians or in many cases of Christian political parties. Of the 27 countries of the European Union, 14 are bound to the Vatican by at least one treaty. No other religion has such a power in Europe and in the World, thus prompting the Economist to publish an investigation about the diplomatic service of the Vatican, questioning whether it deserves its special status in the UN (21/07/2007)

The Catholic Church is an extremely profitable business. They own businesses such as hotels, restaurants, shops and private schools and they DON'T pay any tax! On top of this, the Vatican receives public money in many countries: in Italy about 1000 million Euros from taxes is destined to the Vatican every year (930 millions € in 2006).

The Vatican wields considerable political and economic power. It uses its influence and privilege to impose an agenda on a variety of issues that affect our lives as European citizens, and limit our civil rights and our civil liberties.

THE POPE'S VIEWS ON WOMEN AND LGBT PEOPLE

The issue of women's rights and the Catholic Church goes way beyond the hierarchy of the church, where women are unable to ascend to priesthood as a result of their gender. Women who have had a divorce, women who want to have an abortion and women who are living as single parents in catholic countries are often victims of intimidation and discrimination. The Pope encourages us to view women as unequal to men, by consistently and publicly stating that the two genders are naturally different and that women are naturally inclined for domestic living. In some catholic countries, like Ireland and Poland, abortion is illegal. In others, like Italy, the right to an abortion is constantly under threat from the Vatican's pressure on the Government.

The Pope thinks being gay is an "objective disorder" and a "moral evil". In many countries in the world you can still get the death penalty for being gay. Recently, a proposal to de-criminalise homosexuality was opposed by the Vatican in the UN because it would mean that States where same-sex unions are not recognized would be discriminated against and unfairly subjected to international pressure.

WHY SHOULD IT MATTER TO PEOPLE IN THE UK

This is certainly a global issue, but it also directly affects people living in the UK. This country is regarded by many as fairly "secular" but in reality, Christianity remains strongly embedded in many British Institutions and continues to enjoy unfair religious privilege.

Although a limited right to abortion has been granted to women living in England, Scotland and Wales since 1967, in Northern Ireland it remains illegal. This anomaly is significantly due to religious influence. Christian lobbies are engaged in continual efforts to restrict a woman's right to abortion and have succeeded in reducing the time limit for an abortion in Great Britain from 28 to 24 weeks.

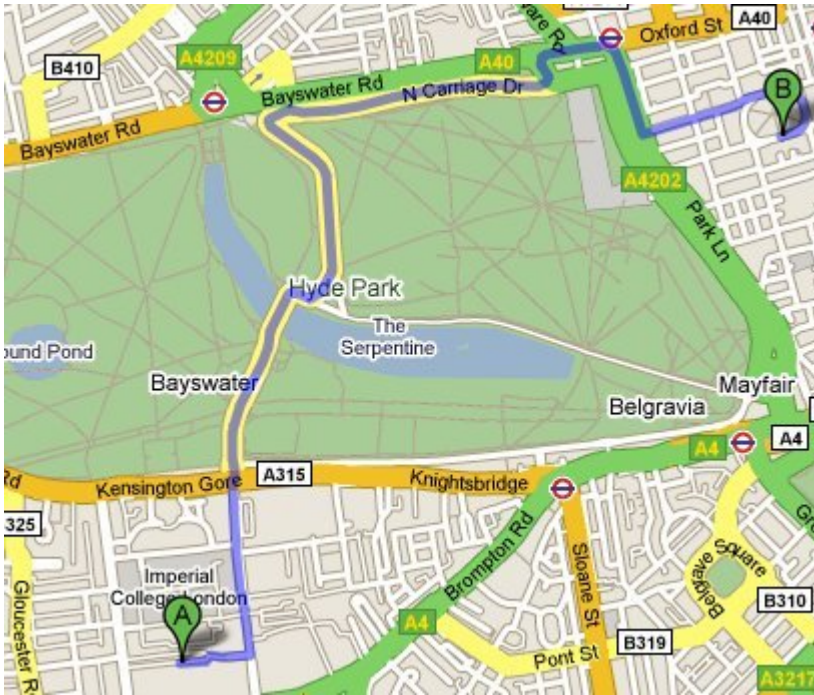
Religion retains undue influence and power in various ways. With increasing numbers of state funded faith schools (1 in 3 of all schools in the UK is either Catholic or Church of England), they continue to exercise a strong influence on young people.

With public opinion distracted over the proposal to refer to the Christian roots of Europe they made sure that the proposed EU Constitution – and now the Lisbon Treaty (article 16C) - dangerously commits the European Union to "an open, transparent and regular dialogue with Churches and religious organisations".

We need to protect democracy and to champion human rights against those who wish to retain undemocratic influence and privilege.

The Vatican has done this for years in the European Union, the United Nations and even in the UK Parliament without anyone paying attention. Why?

"Man in his arrogance thinks himself a great work, worthy the interposition of a deity...it is more humble and I believe truer to consider him created from animals" (Charles Darwin)



We will **meet at 2pm** outside the **Natural History Museum**, where the biggest ever Charles Darwin exhibition commemorates his bicentenary.
We will then walk through **Hyde Park**, towards the **ITALIAN EMBASSY in Grosvenor Square**.