

...Psssst



In Search of Christmas

enough, a few minutes later, right after “Let it Snow,” “The Christmas Song” came on, or as it is generally known, “Religion-free Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Secular Fire.” I heard no carols, though, and saw no “Merry Christmas” banners. Just some trinkets and two tiny fake evergreen trees decorated with tiny people holding Bloomingdale’s shopping bags.

Federated apparently ignores Christmas because it doesn’t want to offend anyone, though at least 80 percent of Americans say they are Christian, and 95 percent observe Christmas in some way. Presumably, if America were 95 percent Druid, the canny folks at Federated would obliterate major Druid holidays and tick off as many Druid shoppers as possible, referring to this process as “inclusion.”

The sensitive executives at Federated are victims of the growing campaign to make people feel uncomfortable about Christmas, not just the religious feast but all the secular trappings, and even a mention of the word *Christmas* in conversation. Some public schools have been banning “Silent Night” and other carols from school concerts, though no court has ever ruled that these songs can’t be sung. In West Bend, Wisconsin, the school district announced that students could not distribute religious Christmas cards. No law or court has ever ruled this way. The school district backed down when Liberty Counsel, a religious-liberties group, threatened to sue. The anti-Christmas lobby implies that schools can’t teach about Christmas and says crèches can’t be placed on public property. Not so, as long the teaching purpose is educational and the crèche is part of a broad seasonal display.

“Illiterates or Cowards”

Some P.C. people have begun to argue that even “Jingle Bells” is a church-state no-no. Santa Claus, a totally secular figure, is controver-

sial because he was originally based on St. Nicholas. *Horrors*. Then let’s ban the word *goodbye*, which evolved from “God be with you.” In Newport Beach, California, red and green lights came under fire because some sensitive types thought they were communicating a Christmas message. If so, one wag said, Newport Beach should scrap its traffic lights as well. Harold Johnson, attorney for the Pacific Legal Foundation, said, “Administrators who try to make their schools Christmas-free zones are either constitutional illiterates or cowards in the face of P.C. bullies, or pushing personal agendas that have no grounding in the law.” Sounds right to me.

Jill Stewart, a California-based columnist says her state’s “intolerance toward Christmas is just another reason why Californians and residents of other blue states are viewed by the heartland crowd as hostile, godless types who can’t stand regular folks.” Stewart is not religious, but in protest against anti-Christmas campaigns, she says she will skip saying “Happy Holidays” at Christmas parties this year and just wish everyone a “Merry Christmas.”

Defiance of the P.C. police may be catching on. In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said the state “holiday tree” would be called a Christmas tree while he’s in office.

In Winnipeg, Canada, last year, columnist Tom Brodbeck wrote that he was surprised and pleased that the musical event at his daughter’s school was a Christmas concert, not a “winter celebration” or an “international celebration of the holidays.” It wasn’t a “sunny solstice” or “dandy December” concert either, just a euphemism-free Christmas event. He thinks the word *Christmas* is slowly making a comeback. “It’s beginning to feel a lot like Christmas again,” he said. Let’s wish. □

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This column’s far-flung staff has just visited two of the big anti-Christmas or post-Christmas stores here in New York. First stop was Macy’s where the formerly famous feast day has pretty much been obliterated.

Nothing on the main floor. But high up in the store’s nosebleed section (ninth floor, furniture) shoppers may notice “Holiday Lane,” a collection of generically decorated Christmas trees, or former Christmas trees. The forbidden “C” word is hard to find, though sharp-eyed column staffers noticed it twice, in little nooks labeled “A Country Christmas” and “A Traditional Christmas.”

Sadly, some minor Torquemada of the Macy’s Christmas disposal unit will probably lose his job for failing to rip down these noninclusive signs. Not to worry, though. There’s nothing religious here. No carols. No music. Not much indication of what holiday might be occurring along Holiday Lane. Hanukkah is suffering the same fate as Christmas. Two years ago, the store had a huge Hanukkah banner and display. This year a few menorahs sat forlornly in a tiny unmarked area, far away from Holiday Lane.

The purge of Christmas is also in full bloom over at Bloomingdale’s, which, like Macy’s, is owned by Federated Department Stores. A minuscule Christmas section is tucked away on the fifth floor. “Any Christmas music?” I asked a clerk, as a sad Billie Holiday song filled the air (just the thing for holiday lanes). “Oh, it goes in cycles,” the clerk said. “Just wait.” Sure