

ACLU AND AMERICAN ATHEISTS PRIVILEGE JUDAISM

A 50-year tradition of having a crèche in St. Ann, Missouri came to an end yesterday when a federal judge ordered the Nativity scene removed; he said it represented government endorsement of religion. The order by U.S. District Judge Charles A. Shaw said nothing about the presence of a menorah in a City Hall window. Denise Lieberman, the ACLU's lawyer, said she did not complain about the menorah because it was small and located in an inconspicuous area. Therefore, she reasoned, it was constitutionally innocuous.

On November 30, U.S. District Court Judge Richard G. Stearns ruled that the 1997 Somerset, Massachusetts holiday display was unconstitutional because it included a crèche. The city immediately decided that it would add a menorah and a giant Santa. But now the person who filed the original suit, Gil L. Amancio, regional director of American Atheists, Inc., has said that after conferring with the ACLU, he wants to challenge the display again. Amancio said he will not contest the menorah and the "Happy Hanukkah" sign because unlike Santa Claus and the crèche, they do not convey to him a religious message.

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, took note:

"This settles the issue: there are those in the ACLU and American Atheists, Inc. who are prepared to privilege Judaism at the expense of Christianity. It is not the display of religious symbols on public property that bothers them, it is the public expression of Christianity that sickens them. Operating without principle and in utter disregard for fairness, these lawyers do not mind evincing their bigotry in public.

“The Catholic League is considering legal options itself. What it wants more than anything else, however, is to spread the word that these two cases indisputably demonstrate that anti-Christian prejudice is the real driving force behind these so-called civil libertarian efforts.”