

CHRISTMAS COPS ON THE BEAT; BIZARRE TACTICS USED

Just as the sun sets in the morning, we know that every December the anti-Christmas folks swing into high gear. And as evidenced by the articles in this issue of *Catalyst*, 2009 was no exception. Save, perhaps, for one thing: the tactics this time around were noted for their novelty.

Nothing gained the Catholic League more publicity this past Christmas season than our criticism of PETA's (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) campaign to exploit the religious holiday for profit. It featured an almost totally nude *Playboy* pinup "dressed" with Catholic symbols. Bill Donohue debated a PETA spokeswoman on CNN, making swift dispatch of her arguments.

Atheist organizations were up to their old tricks of seeking to criminalize Christmas by suing municipalities. Because of the bad economy, all it took were a few threats to scare budget-weary officials from challenging the intimidators in court. The anti-Christmas foes know this, and shamelessly exploited it to their advantage.

Dumb is the only way we can characterize some of what happened. By erecting a lighted Loch Ness Monster in lieu of a manger scene in Howard County, Indiana, officials got blasted from all sides. In some cases, school districts had policies in place that were sensible, but were never invoked. Hence, some of the silliest decisions were made, like changing the Christmas tree to the "Giving Tree."

More bizarre tactics included gay-themed Christmas plays and the banning of secular symbols like Frosty the Snowman and candy canes. Over and over again, we heard the refrain that censoring Christmas was being done to protect non-Christians

(from what we still don't know). It is one thing to complain about the effects of second-hand smoke, quite another to sound the alarms over the effects of second-hand Christmas cheer.

The White House had fewer ornaments and wreaths than usual, a fact that was nicely explained by First Lady Michelle Obama: this was done intentionally, she said, to show compassion for those who were hurting at Christmastime. We don't understand the logic, but neither do we understand why an ornament featuring the genocidal maniac Mao Zedong was hung from one of the White House Christmas trees.

Perhaps bizarre is too kind a word to describe such events. In any case, if there was one hero, it was Colorado's Larimer County Sheriff who advised all the Christmas cops to simply "Lighten Up. Just say 'Merry Christmas'" and "Wishing You a Loud and Politically Incorrect 'Merry Christmas.'" Touché.