

“CONDOM CHRISTMAS TREE” FAILS; CHRISTMAS BASHING CONTINUES

Levi Strauss, the San Francisco-based apparel company, wanted to put up a giant Christmas tree in New York’s Central Park, adorned with thousands of condoms. But it ran into opposition from the Catholic League and lost.

The denim manufacturer thought that its “condom Christmas tree” would be a fitting tribute to World AIDS Day on December 1, and sought to erect its tree near Wollman Skating Rink in Central Park. When the league learned of this, it immediately contacted the Makkos Organization, the private owners who operate the rink, and asked them to nix the plan; the league also contacted the media. With support from Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Makkos said no to Levi Strauss.

Meanwhile, as Fidel Castro was making Christmas an official holiday in Cuba, atheists in Cincinnati were seeking to challenge the constitutionality of a federal statute that declares Christmas to be a federal holiday. The difference seems to be that the pope hasn’t visited Cincinnati.

From coast to coast, there was a concerted effort to ban the public expression of religion. Led by the ACLU, American Atheists and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, attempts were made to bar crèches on public property and to alter Christmas concerts and festivities. Those efforts yielded mixed results.

The Catholic League received no opposition from anyone in erecting its crèches in Central Park and in Philadelphia’s Independence Park, and it was successful in its effort to have a crèche installed alongside a menorah in the Cortland Manor (NY) Community Center, but the outcome was different

elsewhere.

What the league found most objectionable was the privileging of Judaism that occurred in places like St. Ann (MO), Las Vegas (NV), Little Rock (AK) and Somerset (MA). In all four towns, those who challenged crèches on public property said they found no problem with menorah displays, thus exposing their agenda to engage in Christmas bashing (in Somerset, a crèche finally did appear).

Victories were recorded, however, in Port St. Lucie (FL), Marshfield (WI), Concord, (NH) and Pittsfield and Worcester (both of MA); Jersey City (NJ) continued its fight with the ACLU, and another battle waged in Eddy County (NM). The Supreme Court needs to end this madness by offering detailed guidance on the distinction between government accommodation of religion, which is legitimate, and government sponsorship, which is not.