

EMPLOYEES OF KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON, CAN NOW SAY “MERRY CHRISTMAS”

On December 10, the Catholic League issued a news release criticizing a November 14 memo by Ron Sims, the King County Executive in Washington State, that warned county employees not to say “Merry Christmas.” He has now reversed himself saying it is okay to say “Merry Christmas” and “Happy Hanukkah.” However, Sims, and his chief of staff, Tim Ceis, are now saying that the “intent” of the initial memo was never to ban these words.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

“We are delighted that freedom of speech has been restored to the employees of King County, Washington. The county executive, Ron Sims, wants us to believe that it was his ‘intent’ all along to allow freedom of speech. But the Baptist minister is being disingenuous. What he explicitly said was that ‘any holiday recognition or celebration should be religion-neutral.’ He then cited as examples, ‘Happy Holidays’ and ‘Holiday Greetings.’ In his latest memo he now says, ‘I believe its intent [the initial memo] was to ask all of you to remember to be culturally sensitive...’

“Whenever someone says of his own words, ‘I believe its intent was,’ it is a sure bet he’s engaged in spin control. Sims knows exactly what he meant and what he meant was to censor the speech of county employees. But he got nailed and had to back off. So now he’s sympathetically interpreting his own memo thinking he’s fooled us. That is why he unleashed his attack dog, Tim Ceis, to say that the Catholic League’s response to the gag rule was ‘absurd.’ What’s absurd is that

he actually thinks someone will believe him.

“We can’t help commenting on the noticeable absence of the ACLU in this fracas. That’s because the champions of free speech are too busy trying to ban kids from singing ‘Silent Night’ in the schools.”