

POLITICIZING CHRISTMAS; REVOLT AGAINST INTOLERANCE

No religious holiday sparks as much controversy as Christmas. It's not because most Americans are anti-Christmas—they are not. It's because so many activists, public officials, and educators are working against them. Quite frankly, they have unnecessarily politicized Christmas.

Some of them are bigots; some are ignorant of what the courts have ruled; and some are simply cowards. No matter, the result is an annual mess. But the good news is that our side continues to push back.

We played a role in beating back the Christmas foes in several instances, but none was more satisfying than our input in the University of Tennessee (UT) case.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion at UT issued guidelines indicating which kinds of “holiday” celebrations would be tolerated, and which would not be. All parties, the multicultural gurus said, should be absent any “emphasis on religion or culture.” They did not say how it was possible to celebrate a holiday without also celebrating that part of the culture from which it springs.

Best of all was their admonition not to hold “a Christmas party in disguise.” They can hold gay pride celebrations all year long, but they cannot tolerate Christmas parties, even if held in a speak-easy.

Bill Donohue pulled the Catholic League staff to work overtime on this issue. We contacted every Tennessee lawmaker who has anything to do with education, as well as other public officials, calling for an investigation into the workings of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. We also notified all the other legislators—those who do not deal with education. We

blanketed the Tennessee media.

We were pleased to hear of the support we received from some of the lawmakers. We also were happy that the Tennessee media picked up on our work, including newspapers on the UT campus. Most of all we were delighted that our protest led to the guidelines being withdrawn; we were gratified that the person most to blame for this decision was removed from making such rulings again.

Last month we reported in *Catalyst* that we contacted town officials in Wadena, Minnesota, advising them that they could display a nativity scene in a “public forum,” such as a park. We are pleased to say that a local resident picked up on this idea and successfully erected a crèche in a park. It was also great to learn that residents of Wadena responded by displaying a record number of manger scenes on private property.

The Supreme Court needs to offer more clarity on what is constitutional and what is not. Until then, the controversy will rage.