

R.I. SCHOOL DENIES GOOD FRIDAY OFF



Bill Donohue comments on the decision by school officials in Cranston, Rhode Island to deny teachers the right to take off on Good Friday:

We are delighted that the Cranston Teachers' Alliance has sued Cranston Public Schools and its board for violating their contract and civil rights. Unlike previous years, schools in Cranston are slated to be open on Good Friday this year, thus denying Catholic and Protestant teachers their right to attend church services in the middle of the day.

The reasoning put forward by Judith A. Lundsten, Superintendent of Cranston Public Schools, is specious at best and obnoxious at worst. "Based on information and belief, Good Friday has no required services," she said. But it is not the business of government agents to assess holy days, or religious traditions, weighing them on their state scale. Moreover, these same public school officials allowed Jews to take off Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. Did they really think that their attempt to stiff Christians would not backfire?

Cranston officials look enfeebled when they demand proof that Good Friday services are held at area churches. If they were practicing Christians, they wouldn't have to ask such a dumb question. Christian teachers in Cranston should simply call in sick on Good Friday and let the officials scream all they want.

If the issue is satisfying the minimum number of school days that are required by state law—not an unreasonable issue—why shouldn't all traditional holidays, secular as well as religious, be considered for reevaluation? Why not propose to keep the schools open on Labor Day or Martin Luther King Day?