

SAYING “MERRY CHRISTMAS” MADE SAFE IN SEATTLE

Thanks to the Catholic League, employees in King County, Washington, were allowed to say “Merry Christmas” this year. But if the Seattle-area county executive Ron Sims had his way, the ban he instituted would still be in place.

Sims, who is a Baptist minister, issued a memo on November 14 mandating that King County employees use “religion-neutral” language when referring to the holidays. He said it was okay to say “Happy Holidays” and “Holiday Greetings.” But all references to Christmas were regarded as taboo.

Sims explained that “we at King County want to ensure that any upcoming holiday celebration at the workplace is held in a *respectful, inclusive, and sensitive manner* that does not favor one religion over the other.” (His emphasis.) The following sentence, however, said that “Particularly in public areas, this means that any holiday recognition or celebration should be religion-neutral.”

William Donohue gave his advice in a news release that was picked up all over the country. He said the time had come for area Catholics to call the media, as well as the police, and then get arrested for saying, “Merry Christmas.” “What a show this would be,” Donohue said, “having dozens of Catholics being handcuffed by the cops for uttering what their boss regards as an obscenity.”

Donohue’s criticisms went to the heart of what has become a national problem: “The champions of diversity are the single greatest proponents of despotism in the United States today. Any expression that violates their crabbed vision of reality is subject to censorship. Indeed, in the name of diversity they promote ideological uniformity. Similarly, in the name of

inclusiveness, they exclude people of faith. The diversity despots are both a menace and a national disgrace.”

Because of the media pressure the Catholic League exerted, Sims was soon forced to reverse himself. But his attempt to say that he was misunderstood failed to convince anyone.

Sims said of his initial memo, “I believe its intent was to ask all of you to remember to be culturally sensitive...” Donohue replied, “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.”