

THE EASTER BUNNY BLUES

by Kathleen McCreary

Does anyone think that the Easter Bunny and his cheerful basket full of colored eggs pose a threat to the hallowed principle of separation of church and state? Apparently so, for last year the Scarsdale, N.Y. Board of Education refused to allow distribution of flyers announcing the annual "Easter Eggstravaganza" in its five grammar schools. Requiring the destruction of 2,500 flyers, the Board ordered the substitution of new ones with the offending "Easter" word excised.

Only re-labeled as the "Spring Extravaganza" could the event be announced. This year, the focus on eggs and bunnies was further sanitized to avoid the association with the blighted "E" word, as Bugs Bunny became a leading character and the event itself was moved to a Saturday, and not on Easter weekend.

The Easter Bunny should not feel any loss of self-esteem, however, because the Scarsdale Board of Education is an equal opportunity discriminator. Santa Claus, Rudolph and Frosty have all suffered the same fate. Two years ago at Christmastime, the Board's "Holiday Guidelines" banished "garlands, wreaths, evergreens, menorahs and caroling" because they had "become closely associated with religious celebrations." At the same time, the Board revoked permission to sing secular seasonal songs like "Jingle Bells." The word "Christmas" was taken off the spelling list at some grammar schools, and at the high school, candy canes were confiscated by a few zealous teachers. Even the color and shape of cookies became an issue: green and red sprinkles as well as bell and star shapes were all suspect.

In place of celebration recognizing Christmas, Hanukkah, or Ramadan, Scarsdale's Board of Education has revived pagan holidays such as Winter Solstice and invented new eco-holidays

such as "Bird Day." Problems posed by musical, dramatic and artistic recognition of the December holidays were deftly handled by moving grammar school assemblies to mid-January. In the high school, where students are of course more mature, music from Disney's "The Lion King" fit the holiday bill perfectly. It is Afro-centric, astrologically pagan (with Simba's father appearing in the stars) and ecologically "sensitive." The three "r's" of the Scarsdale Board of Education are Re-name, Re-schedule, and Reduce to Absurdity.

Not surprisingly, the local citizenry protested vigorously such religious and cultural "cleansing" of their schools. Retreating temporarily, the Board rescinded its infamous "Holiday Guidelines," but in form only. Now all holidays are reduced to homogeneous mush. The emotive, "feel good" and social welfare aspects of holidays—the sharing, caring and gift-giving—are encouraged, but the authentic cultural symbols that distinguish holidays of religious origin remain banished as insensitive, pernicious, even seditious. Last December there was no Santa, nor any evergreen, nor any menorah, nor any school-scheduled holiday songfest. "Happy Thanksgiving" appeared on bulletin boards, but not "Merry Christmas," "Happy Hanukkah" nor even "Happy Kwanza."

In an expansive spirit of multicultural political correctness, in one school the Board allowed the depiction of a Native American maiden on ice skates. She emitted the greeting, "Happy Holidays."

We might as well say, "Happy Snoopy," to which Charlie Brown would no doubt reply, "Good Grief!" Let us hope Charlie and Lucy enjoy a rollicking good Easter Egg Hunt.

Kathleen McCreary is a member of the Catholic League Board of Directors

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