

SCHOOLS PLAY SCROOGE AT CHRISTMAS

By Don Feder

In Dickens' classic "A Christmas Carol," Scrooge wishes that "every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart."

Scrooge would make the perfect public-school bureaucrat -- except he'd insist on calling it a *holiday pudding*, playing "Winter Wonderland" as background music, and doing it all in the name of inclusiveness, sensitivity and church-state separation.

In the latest manifestation of what Rabbi Daniel Lapin of Toward Tradition calls "secular fundamentalism," the South Orange/Middlesex, New Jersey School District has banned playing the instrumental music of Christmas carols.

In the early 1990s, the district prohibited the singing of Christmas carols. However, in an embarrassing oversight, bands continued to play "Silent Night" and "Hark the Herald Angels Sing."

Such gross insensitivity and incipient theocracy shall cease forthwith, the district's superintendent decreed. From now on, the 40-member Columbia High School brass ensemble will be restricted to uplifting numbers like "Frosty the Snowman," according to the Newark Star-Ledger.

Furthermore, an October 29th directive provides that printed programs for holiday concerts "must avoid graphics which refer to the holidays, such as Christmas trees and dreidels." In the South Orange/Middlesex School District, they celebrate generic "holiday." Even under torture, they won't disclose more than that.

The public schools have become a major battleground in the war on Christmas ("Lookout, Santa, incoming!") and, by extension, Christianity.

- Last year, a kindergartener at a school near Portland, Oregon was told he couldn't bring cards with a religious message to a school Christmas party. When a teacher noticed that little Justin Cortez's cards contained the dreaded J-word (Jesus), she confiscated the offending items and forwarded them to the principal who sent them to the superintendent. Thus was the school's secularist early-warning system activated.
- The New York City school system allows menorahs and Islamic symbols in holiday displays, but not nativity scenes. Christians thereby are excluded from inclusiveness, presumably in the name of sensitivity.
- In 2002, the mother of a student in the Del Mar Union School District in San Diego was told she could no longer read a Christmas book to her child's 4th-grade class. Also, at the Sage Canyon School, teachers were

ordered to remove jewelry with a Christmas theme. First a flashing Santa pin, then a state church.

- Same year, instructors at an elementary school in Sacramento were told not to use the word “Christmas” in the classroom or in written material. A la “1984,” in public education, Christmas has become the un-holiday.
- In Yonkers, New York, public school employees were ordered to purge holiday decorations with religious themes. Silent-Night sanitizing?
- According to Rev. Jerry Falwell, a New Jersey middle school cancelled a field trip to attend a performance of Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol.” One supposes there was a fear the Ghost of Christmas Past would cause mass conversions – or worse.
- When a school displays a modicum of common sense here, secularist vigilantes threaten dire consequences. Last year, the Elbert County Charter School in Elizabeth, Colorado had a holiday program that included such proselytizing anthems as “Jingle Bells.” The ACLU and Anti-Defamation League threatened to sue unless the program was cleansed. A joint letter from the censors to the principal claimed, “Jewish students no longer feel safe or welcome” at the school. Islamist pogroms are going on across Europe, but in Colorado Jewish kids are threatened by jingle all the way?

The ADL/ACLU letter demanded that the Elbert County Charter School “take immediate steps to comply with the constitutional separation of church and state.”

Even if the First Amendment required the separation of government and religion (it doesn’t), no federal court has ever held that Christmas carols, Christmas decorations, Christmas cards, Christmas books or Christmas greetings constitute a violation of the Establishment Clause.

The closest the judiciary has come to a ruling which might effect public-school Christmas celebrations is the Three-Reindeer Rule, in which the Supreme Court held that that there must be a sufficient number of secular items in a Christmas display to allow religious symbols (crèches and menorahs) to pass constitutional muster.

Back in New Jersey, South Orange/Mapplewood Schools Superintendent Peter P. Horoschak explained the rationale behind the new policy, “Rather than try to respond to all the various religions and try to balance them, it’s best to stay away from that and simply have a nonreligious tone to them and have more of a seasonal tone.”

There it is. If we can’t provide equal time for every religion on earth (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, you-name-it), there can be no reference to -- or musical suggestion of -- the holiday that’s celebrated by 96% of the American people.

When liberals can't use their convenient misinterpretation of the First Amendment (reading church-state separation into the Establishment Clause), their fall-back position is multiculturalism, inclusiveness and sensitivity.

Little Omar will feel excluded by trees with tinsel. Myron may fear the onset of another crusade if he hears the strains of "O' Little Town of Bethlehem" drifting through the hallways.

But this hyper-sensitivity to religious minorities requires gross insensitivity to America's majority religion. You know, the one that begins with a "C."

Since at least 9 out of 10 taxpayers are Christians, they foot the bill for a public education system on a search-and-destroy mission against even the mildest expressions of their holidays.

America was founded by Christians and based on Judeo-Christian values. The signers of the Declaration of Independence and drafters of the Constitution all were Christians – not Buddhists, or Wiccans or Zoroastrians. Were it not for Protestant Christianity, we wouldn't have limited government, separation of powers, a Bill of Rights or religious tolerance. In short, without Christians, the United States of America would not exist.

Even in an age when traditional religion is driven underground, our currency still says "One nation under God" – not one nation under Allah or Shiva. On January 22nd, like all of his predecessors, George W. Bush will take the oath of office on a Bible that tells the story of the Nativity.

The brave men who fought and died for America in every war from the Revolution to Iraq, overwhelmingly were Christians. Count the number of crosses in Arlington National Cemetery (on federal property, no less). Add the Stars of David. Now compare them to the number of crescents.

Yet in a nation founded by Christians on Christian values, defended by Christians from Bunker Hill to Falluja, primarily populated by Christians, and whose public institutions are financed by Christians, most references to the holiday that celebrates the birth of the founder of Christianity have been expunged.

This isn't just a war over Jingle Bells and holly wreaths, but a war on Christianity, which in turn is a war on the Judeo-Christian ethic.

The public schools are busy inculcating other values – humanism, environmentalism, internationalism, multiculturalism, sexual anarchy and New Age spirituality. (In California schools, there's even mandatory instruction on the tenets of Islam, including I'm-a-Moslem role-playing.) The goal is to create a society the very antithesis of that envisioned by the Founding Fathers and the patriots who followed in their footsteps.

Reference to America's Judeo-Christian roots would interfere with the ongoing liberal re-ordering of our society – which, ultimately, will be neither jolly nor result in peace on Earth and good will toward men.

Now, if I had my way, every public school administrator who banned Christmas carols, Christmas decorations, etc. -- would be boiled with their own anti-Christmas directives and buried with a rolled up copy of the latest ACLU newsletter through their hearts.