

# Since when is it wrong to exercise religious traditions?

The voice on the other end of my telephone Wednesday morning was that of an outraged senior citizen.

"I'm disgusted," roared my good friend Ed Raymer, an unusually lucid and normally relaxed 88-year-old man of godliness and good will.

"Have you seen the front page

of the Toronto Star?" Ed belatedly, his anger building. "They've banned Christmas at Queen's Park! They're not going to allow any nativity scenes or anything related to Jesus Christ this Christmas. They're only allowing things with a seasonal theme. I can't believe it!"

Here we go again, I replied. The misguided NDP politically correct police smashing down time honored traditions in the name of trying to please all of the people all of the time.

Ed, still bristling, said he had tried to phone MPP Larry O'Connor, but had been forced to leave a message. In the

meantime, he was trying to figure out how he could get through to provincial Tory leader Mike Harris. He wanted to congratulate him for jumping all over the Queen's Park decree censuring a tradition that has been with us ever since the first load of immigrants settled here some 400 or



From Where I Live

Bruce Stapley

so years ago.

Ed's contention that Canada is still essentially a "Christian" country, while constantly being challenged by the liberal establishment, is essentially true. The April 12 issue of Maclean's magazine cited results of a nation-wide study conducted by the Angus Reid Group. The poll concluded that a full 78 per cent of the adult population of Canada described themselves as Christians. The NDP itself won an electoral victory in 1990 that was a resounding majority despite the fact they garnered only 40 some odd per cent of the popular vote. Surely 78 per cent support for one particular religion shouldn't result in the dismantling of the icons which have always been associated with it.

And while Ed acknowledged the rights to religious freedom of the other 22 per cent of Canadians are inviolate, he said it is surely a slap in the face to both serious and nominal Christians alike to attempt to abolish the origin of Christmas at Queen's Park. Ed insisted such a practice would never be tolerated in any other country in the world with such a pronounced national tradition.

He suggested the NDP government is applying the same code of discrimination to Christmas as it did to its recent hiring campaign. Both were done in the interests of recognizing the multicultural mix which has come to represent this country, he offered. But both were ultimately unfair and inflammatory.

The rage expressed by Ed Raymer, an exemplary Christian and a fair minded, dedicated Canadian, should be duly noted by those who would outlaw Christmas in the name of ethnic equality. I have yet to have a member of any ethnic community in Markham, Stouffville or Uxbridge express to me a feeling that he or she is being discriminated against by the Canadian tradition of acknowledging the origins of Christmas.

To display a nativity scene, or any other symbol of Christmas, is not to poke a stick in the eye of other faiths adhered to by the various minorities residing among us. An internationally accepted symbol of peace and love is not an imposition. Even atheists and agnostics accept the symbols of the tradition of Christmas, along with the singing of carols. It's only proper to show such respect for a custom adhered to by the majority of Canadians of all ethnic backgrounds.

But by trying to obliterate such a non-provocative tradition, the politically correct police are succeeding in inflicting painful blows against people like Ed Raymer, people wanting nothing more than a once a year recognition of the origins of what is still the majority religious faith in Canada.



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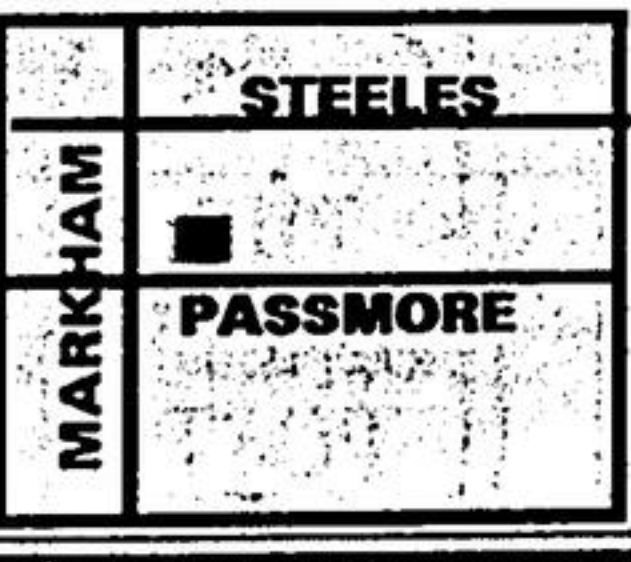
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