



A Real Christmas War

BY KELLY HERTZ
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If it's war you want, then war you shall have. When I hear such ominous words at this time of year, they can only refer to the so-called "War on Christmas" that people like Bill O'Reilly try to prosecute each December. It's an effort to tap into the reactionary power that comes with feelings of victimization, compelling some of us to lash out at enemies that really aren't there.

If you look around now and notice all the festive Christmas decorations, the shoppers, the holiday music and the entire, infectious Yuletide spirit that reigns, and believe that all this is somehow being threatened — well, let's just say you're drawing a very interesting conclusion. But if it's a war, the assault on the holiday that launched it all has been an abysmal failure on every possible count ...

However, I wonder if O'Reilly is on to something. Maybe there really is a war going on. Perhaps the true opponent of Christmas may be Christmas itself, or at least one of the two very different spirits of Christmas that we tend to wrap together in one big package.

On one hand, there is the biblical "reason for the season": the birth of Christ and the promise of mankind's salvation. There are debates over whether Jesus was actually born at this time of year or if instead the holiday celebrating His birth was conveniently placed at a time when other religions held festivals basically tied to the winter solstice. But the timing really doesn't matter; it's the arrival and the impact that count, and that is the impetus for the day, the season and the spirit we dearly cherish as Christmas.

But then there's the other Christmas, the one with presents and merrymaking, with decorated trees and stockings hung with care. It's an alternative-universe Christmas in which a jolly and magical soul named Santa Claus, not the serious and miraculous Jesus Christ (although he's only a newborn in this scenario), is king. It's a holiday where people spend and spend and spend, where copious amounts of goodies are consumed, and where nothing is worshiped more than great bargains, sugar cookies and a spectacle of lights on dark, wintry nights. If you dropped in from another planet to study all this, you'd probably conclude that there are two completely different holidays battling each other right now for cultural supremacy. Well, perhaps you *wouldn't* reach that conclusion at all, having decided that the "Santa Claus Christmas" is pummeling the "Jesus Christ Christmas" in terms of popularity. If this were a war, Santa could name his terms right now.

These two Christmases try to coexist, but it's an awkward fit.



Kelly HERTZ

How much peace and goodwill do you see at a Black Friday sale? How often do you see kids crawling up on the lap of Jesus at the mall to reveal to Him the details of their holiday wish lists? How many times does Santa pop up in a Nativity scene? Consequently, whose image is far more visible and marketable in stores, on television, in ads and on seasonal decorations that come with this holiday? Here's a hint: He's fat, has a white beard and his disciples include industrious elves and flying reindeer.

There is very little overlap between these two Christmases, even though they occupy the same space at the same time. However, there have been scattered exceptions. For instance, in the classic television special "A Charlie Brown Christmas," it's Linus's recitation from the Gospel of Luke describing Christ's birth that brings poignant perspective to an over-commercialized Christmas. Another work, Dr. Seuss's "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," also teases on noisy holiday commercialism, but offers a vague hint that Christmas is really about "a little bit more" than horns and feasts. And the jingly holiday tune "Here Comes Santa Claus" includes the lyric, "... let's

give thanks to the lord above that Santa Claus comes tonight." A religious tie-in or a throwaway exclamation? So, Christmas, more than any other holiday, seems hopelessly at odds with itself. And if you see the image of Santa Claus as somehow trying to co-opt the true meaning of this holiday, you should be ready to take up arms. It's tantamount to war ...

But here's the funny thing: Few of us seem to mind the holiday's split personality. Christmas has so many traditions, secular and non-secular, that are borrowed from different cultures and time periods, it's no wonder they don't all fit together in a neat, cogent narrative. And yet, it all somehow works, at least in our hearts. We embrace it nostalgically and enthusiastically. We don't wage war over it, but feel joy and peace because of it. This is due in no small part to the few commonalities they do share: An extraordinary spirit of giving and the appreciation of family and good tidings.

Christmas really is a mighty fortress of a holiday, in spite of itself. If it can endure the myriad contradictions, legends, traditions and commercial temptations we have thrown into the stew of this season, it can certainly survive someone saying "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas." And it can even withstand the designs of those who would try to turn us against each other over such differences. Christmas is stronger than that, and as a happy consequence, so are we.

You can follow Kelly Hertz on Twitter at twitter.com/kelly_hertz

Misdirected Anger In Michigan

BY MICHAEL REAGAN
CagleCartoons.com

All those union thugs who were rioting in Michigan Tuesday were angry about the wrong thing.

They were demonstrating — which in union-speak means breaking things and punching people — against Michigan's decision to become a right-to-work state.

If you believe the union spin, or the mainstream liberal media's spin, or the Obama spin, which all come from the same propaganda factory, that means Michigan no longer cares about workers, the right to organize, living wages, etc., etc.

But what Michigan's new law really means is that the voters and a majority of the politicians in the state have miraculously decided that a citizen's freedom of choice should extend to the freedom to be able to choose not to join a union.

What a concept.

It's a great step forward for a troubled state that has seen its signature industry crippled to the point of near extinction by unions that had too much power over the lives of workers, American carmakers, politicians and the economy.

If those union thugs and their allies in the Democrat Party really had a clue, they would have been demonstrating — peacefully, if that's possible — against what has happened to the once-great, but now pathetic, city of Detroit.

The statistics are staggering. Detroit — a union town if America ever made one — is a socialist hell on wheels.

Its city government is broke and nearly \$50 million in the red, in part because it pays \$1.08 in benefits to municipal workers and retirees for every \$1 it pays in salaries.

Its population has fallen from 1.8 million in 1950 to about 700,000 as of 2011, and too many of the Detroiters who are left don't pay taxes, don't form traditional two-parent families, don't have jobs and aren't interested in having one.

Of the roughly 224,000 residents who actually have a job, only 190,000 work in the private sector. A third of the populace is on food stamps. Oh, and 99,000 of Detroit's 363,000 housing units are vacant.

Welcome to Obamaville — and the future Obama America.

If Michigan's union thugs want to demonstrate about something beyond their own economic interests as seen



Michael REAGAN

through the lens of union fundraising, they might try raising a fist to the sorry state of education in Detroit.

Among students in city schools recently exiting eighth grade, only 7 percent are "proficient" in reading and only 4 percent are "proficient" in math.

Maybe the unions are happy with those shameful numbers, because they will be guaranteed a steady supply of uneducated kids who are only qualified to join a union.

But what were all those parents doing, supporting the union thugs and excusing thousands of schoolteachers who took the day off in solidarity? Those parents, if they had a common-sense proficiency in double digits, would be protesting the lousy education their kids are getting.

It's interesting to see the left go wild in the streets to protest Michigan's giant step for greater worker freedom.

It seems the left only wants you to have freedom of choice when you're pregnant. After you give birth to the child, it's those on the left — not the right — that want to deny your freedom to choose, whether it's a school for your kid, the size of your soft drink, or to be in a union.

Michigan is going the right way — the opposite of the Obama Way that has doubled America's homeless population to 636,000 and jacked up our food stamp population to 47 million.

Detroit has been destroyed by its own bad governments and the kind of federal policies Obama wants to expand. It may be beyond saving, except for growing crops where neighborhoods once were.

But Michigan has taken a dramatic step toward resurrecting its industrial economy. It's no longer a union-made state.

It's a state where freedom of choice extends to people who will no longer be forced to join a union or pay dues to a bunch of thugs who'll spend it to elect more presidents like the one we're stuck with now.

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). He is the founder and chairman of The Reagan Group and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation. Visit his websites at www.reagan.com and www.michaelereagan.com. Send comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com. Follow @reaganworld on Twitter.

Sunday, Dec. 2. It was very generous of her to open her beautiful home to help raise more than \$3,500 cash and window restoration donations for the Dakota Territorial Museum Mead Building Project. The turnout was great and everyone had a great time.

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OPINION | WE SAY

Sailing On



arena project, and the university cannot really afford to lose ground on the fund-raising trail.

Great Donation



Jal and Laura Jacobs, wife of Avon native Ben Jacobs, co-authored the book "David's Journey" about Jal's life, with the proceeds going toward the Khor Wakow school. Last week's visit provided a chance for cross-cultural understanding as well as the opportunity for the Avon students to learn firsthand about the Sudanese children who benefit from the project.

Sounds Of Summer



they are receiving. The band's Christmas concert is always (at least when weather permits) a nice addition to Yankton's festive holiday music season, and this year, under the direction of Bon Homme band leader Kevin McLouth, it should be no different. If you get a chance, take in this free concert, which should serve up enough good sounds to tide you over until the band takes to Riverside Park again in six months.

Big Time Rush



And while still discussing music, **THUMBS UP** to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, which is finally set induct the Canadian supergroup Rush into its ranks. The 2013 inductees were announced this week, and Rush made the list along with the likes of Heart, Public Enemy, bluesman Albert King, singer/songwriter Randy Newman and disco diva Donna Summer. But Rush holds a special place in the hearts of many rock fans, especially in the Midwest, where the band has enjoyed some of its most intense American success. The Canadian trio has been at it for almost 40 years and has produced some defining rock anthems. The band's previous lack of acceptance into the hall was a conspicuous snub, but it is has at long last been corrected.

ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan's* Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

Do you think Hillary Clinton will run for president in 2016?	
Yes	48%
No	45%
Not sure	7%
TOTAL VOTES CAST	
The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.	

CURRENT QUESTION:

If no compromise is found before the "fiscal cliff" deadline, which party deserves the most blame?

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan's* Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Dec. 14, the 349th day of 2012. There are 17 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 14, 1962, the U.S. space probe Mariner 2 passed Venus at a distance of just over 21,000 miles, transmitting information about the planet, such as its hot surface temperatures and predominantly carbon dioxide atmosphere.

On this date: In 1799, the first president of the United States, George Washington, died at his Mount Vernon, Va., home at age 67.

In 1819, Alabama joined the Union as the 22nd state.

In 1861, Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, died at Windsor Castle at age 42.

In 1911, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen and his team became the first men to reach the South Pole, beating out a British expedition led by Robert F. Scott.

In 1918, "Il Trittico," a trio of one-act operas by Giacomo Puccini, premiered at New York's Metropolitan Opera House. (The third opera, "Gianni Schicchi," featured the aria "O Mio Babbino Caro," which was an immediate hit.)

In 1936, the comedy "You Can't Take It With You" by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart opened on Broadway.

In 1946, the United Nations General Assembly voted to establish U.N. headquarters in New York.

In 1961, a school bus was hit by a passenger train at a crossing near Greeley, Colo., killing 20 students.

In 1972, Apollo 17 astronauts Harrison Schmitt and Eugene Cernan concluded their third and final moonwalk and blasted off for their rendezvous with the command module.

In 1975, six South Moluccan extremists surrendered after holding 23 hostages for 12 days on a train near the Dutch town of Beilen.

In 1981, Israel annexed the Golan Heights, which it had seized from Syria in 1967.

In 1986, the experimental aircraft Voyager, piloted by Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager, took off from Edwards Air Force Base in California on the first non-stop, non-re-

fueled flight around the world.

Ten years ago: The Associated Press reported that FBI Director Robert Mueller said in an interview that nearly 100 terrorist attacks had been thwarted since 9/11. Jordanian police announced the arrest of two alleged al-Qaida members in the October killing of American diplomat Laurence Foley. (The two men were executed in 2006.)

Five years ago: A man accused of being the Phoenix Baseline Killer was sentenced to 438 years in prison for the sexual assaults of two sisters. (Mark Goudeau was tried in 2011 for the slayings of eight women and a man in 2005-2006; he was convicted and sentenced to death.)

One year ago: President Barack Obama, visiting Fort Bragg in North Carolina, saluted troops returning from Iraq, asserting that the nearly nine-year conflict was ending honorably. The House voted 283-136 to approve a massive \$662 billion defense bill (the Senate followed suit the next day). The NFL renewed its television deals with CBS, Fox and NBC for nine years through the 2022 season.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Clark Terry is 92. Singer-actress Abbe Lane is 81. Actor Hal Williams is 74. Actress-singer Jane Birkin is 66. Actress Patty Duke is 66. Pop singer Joyce Vincent-Wilson (Tony Orlando and Dawn) is 66. Entertainment executive Michael Ovitz is 66. Actress Dee Wallace is 64. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ronnie McNair (The Four Tops) is 63. Rock musician Cliff Williams (AC/DC) is 63. Actor-comedian T.K. Carter is 56. Rock singer-musician Mike Scott (The Waterboys) is 54. Singer-musician Peter "Spider" Stacy (The Pogues) is 54. Actress Cynthia Gibb is 49. Actress Natascha McElhone is 43. Actress-comedian Michaela Watkins is 41. Rhythm-and-blues singer Brian Kalymple (Soul For Real) is 37. Actress KaDee Strickland is 37. Actress Tammy Blanchard is 36. Actress Sophie Monk is 33. Actress Vanessa Hudgens is 24.

Thought for Today: "You can close your eyes to reality but not to memories." — Stanislaw J. Lec, Polish author (1909-1966).

FROM THE BIBLE

Have you never read, "Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise"? Matthew 21:16. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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YOUR LETTERS

Successful Open House

Yankton County Historical Society, Mead Building Project Committee and the Dakota Territorial Museum Staff

We would like to extend a very sincere thank you to Linda Stephenson for hosting an Open House on