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Christmas Trees Too Christian for Climate-change Conference

As climate-change chicken littles gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark (temperature a balmy 41 degrees on Tuesday), there was one traditional aspect missing from the otherwise festively adorned cobblestone streets. This year, in respect of the United Nation's "neutral" posture vis-a-vis religion, the Foreign Minister of Denmark has ordered that all Christmas trees be removed from the capital's streets throughout the duration of the COP15 Climate Summit.



A public broadcasting station in Copenhagen reported Monday that representatives of the Foreign Ministry informed the nursery that annually donates majestic Nordmann fir trees as holiday adornment, that their sponsorship will not be welcome this year and that they were to keep the trees away from town during the summit.

Given the focus of the conference, it is ironic that fir trees have been banned from the landscape. Fir trees are widely known to be extraordinarily efficient at binding carbon dioxide and removing it from the atmosphere. Even among zealous global climate alarmists, it seems that such an environment-friendly feature of the fir cannot overcome its noxious association with the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Lest anyone believe that there were other less anti-religious factors bearing on the fir trees' banishment from Copenhagen, the Danish government spoke plainly and unapologetically on the subject. According to Sven Olling, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, Denmark recognizes that the "conference is a UN conference and, as the centre then becomes UN territory, there can be no Christmas trees in the décor because the UN wishes to maintain neutrality." As if that weren't clear enough, Olling emphasized that Christmas is a religious holiday and had no place at a United Nations function.

The provenance of Olling's understanding of UN sovereignty over host municipalities is unclear, but his eager accession to such a notion is certainly disquieting. The proscription of the traditional symbols of Christmas from Copenhagen is notable for many reasons. One reason for concern is that the Danish government took such action without an official request by the UN representatives managing the COP15 meeting. This endows the UN's imaginary religious "neutrality" with a deference not equitably afforded the free exercise of faith among the Christian citizens of Copenhagen. That is to say that wherever the blue and white flag of the United Nations is hoisted, then even the most innocuous of religious icons must be lowered and hidden so as not to offend the honored guests.



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