

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? ?Season?s Greetings?? Which season?

In what seems like another lifetime, when your humble correspondent was firing off daily columns for some major newspapers, I began to gather the inevitable flood of political ?Christmas? cards for my yearly rant about what Dec. 25 really is. Even then ? and it's much more noticeable now ? fewer and fewer of these cards actually featured the word ?Christmas? on them. I love Christmas. I really do. And the tendency to avoid using the term, apparently in fear of offending somebody ? although I've never been sure who would supposedly be offended ? really does get up my nose. I know. I know. It's Christmas. Time to be happy and joyful and stop carping about political correctness and all that. But really. Whenever I get one of those ?Season's Greetings? cards, I want to ask the sender ? and sometimes do ? just exactly which ?Season? we're celebrating. Is it winter? Fall? Spring? Summer? Obviously, it's none of the above. It's Christmas. Then, of course, there are the predictable bozos who deem that a ?Christmas? tree isn't really a ?Christmas? tree at all, but instead is a ?Holiday? tree. Which holiday, exactly, I would ask? If not Christmas, then what? And every year we get the inevitable stories from some classrooms where an overly-do-gooding-incurable-liberal-twit decrees that Christmas isn't officially the reason why that particular teacher is about to enjoy his or her annual ?Christmas? break. Please. Now some people observe it as a deeply religious occasion, i.e. the birth of Jesus Christ, and others, likely more of them, not so much a religious celebration as a deeply imbedded cultural recognition of our roots. Still others simply love the hustle and bustle ? not to mention the food and drinks ? that go with the holiday. Fair enough. Whatever causes you to recognize Christmas ? or not, if that's your preference ? is fair ball. What isn't fair ball, however, is to attempt to dilute Christmas into something else, a safe, generic celebration of ? what? ? nothing in particular. That annoys me. There was an advice column recently in another newspaper responding to a mother whose daughter sings in the school choir. She was concerned that the annual school Christmas pageant featured strictly Christmas songs ? both religious and secular ? even though a large number of the pupils there were from a culture other than the dominant Christian culture. She was applauded for her concerns by the writer, who concluded that ? to repeat one of today's most annoying buzzwords ? we must all be more ?inclusive.?' Bull roar! At least not if by using the word ?inclusive? you mean ?excluding? the more traditional beliefs and values which, in fact, is what the champions of ?inclusiveness? really mean. I have no problem ? none at all ? celebrating any culture or special holiday in the schools or on the public square. Why not? The more we learn about each other's beliefs and values, the more likely it is we'll all get along. That having been said, however, there is no reason to modify ?Christmas? in order to appease some phantom among us who may ? or may not ? be offended. Why would somebody be offended anyway? As a lifelong Presbyterian myself, why on earth would I be offended by somebody who celebrates, say, the Jewish holiday of Chanukkah (or ?festival of lights,? commemorating the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem) or Eid Al-Fitre, a Muslim feast at the end of Ramadan's month-long fasting period? Yes, Christmas is far more a part of our cultural fabric than other holidays. But that's because of our history, not because Christians are doing their best to stop non-Christians from enjoying and worshipping in the way they chose to. (Certainly there was a time when that was true ? no religion is free from some sort of historical and/or current bias. But it's not generally true today, at least not in Canada.) Given the remarkable changes over the past few decades in Canada's demographic makeup, the number of non-Christian celebrants of various holidays has skyrocketed. That's a good thing as far as I'm concerned. And the proper approach to celebrating their different major holidays is surely to encourage them all to do just that, rather than to discourage the celebration of one event, i.e. Christmas, for the preposterous excuse that it just might hurt somebody's fragile feelings by making them feel excluded. That line of thinking gives no thought whatsoever to the feelings and/or convictions of the rest of us who actually do celebrate Christmas and do so without the slightest intention of offending anybody else. So let's get over this nonsense, shall we? I'm wishing you all a Merry Christmas. Period. End of story.