

No room at city hall for nativity



United Press International
DENVER — A federal judge ordered the mayor to get the manger, Mary, Joseph and Jesus out of City Hall. The mayor said he'd appeal. Clergymen said they were appalled.

U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch made his ruling Monday in a suit filed by the Colorado chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of Citizens Concerned for Separation of Church and State. The suit said the use of taxpayer dollars for the religious display violated the Constitution.

Matsch agreed and gave the city 48 hours to remove the Nativity scene, which made the Rev. Charles B. Woodrich wonder how many Christmas cards the American Civil Liberties Union gets.

"Christ may have lost in the courtroom, but he hasn't lost in the hearts of men and women," said Woodrich, pastor of the Holy Ghost Church and editor of the Denver Catholic Register.

Woodrich, whose downtown church is a few blocks from the elaborate decorations at the City Hall, said he was sad about the suit, but was optimistic people would retain Christ in their hearts.

"I think we have to pray for those who spend that much money to take God off the city steps when people are hungry and dying. But what we really have to worry about is keeping Christ on our own front steps, not the city's," he said.

In addition to ordering removal of the creche scene, Matsch ordered the city to pay all costs and fees in-

curring by the plaintiffs in filing the suit. Mayor William McNichols said the city was to appeal the order on Tuesday.

"It (the Nativity scene) has become a part of the city's tradition," he said. "I can't conceive of anyone being of the opinion that it constitutes a place of worship. It's been part of the decorations of this city for many, many years."

The Nativity scene includes a manger, Mary and Joseph, several wise men and shepherds, but is a small part of the city's display. Multicolored lights outline the building while numerous Santa Claus, reindeer, elves and stars grace the lawn.

Clergymen of several denominations expressed a uniform disappointment in the court ruling and questioned whether the decision

marked another step away from America's religious heritage.

"Christmas has become totally commercial and this says it better than anything I have seen. According to our culture, the holiday is not the birth of Christ, but a way for the merchants to make money," said the Rev. J. Langston Boyd Jr. of the Shorter AME Church.

"It really makes me wonder how much of a Christian country we have," said Father Kent Boman of the Catholic Archdiocese of Denver. "This country was founded so we could practice religious freedom."

By contrast, ACLU attorney Jonathon Chase said he was "extremely pleased" with the decision and expected it would be upheld by the appeals court.

Windy city struck by many strikes

United Press International
CHICAGO — All of a sudden, Chicago has become the city that isn't working anymore.

The buses, the subways, and the el trains are not running because transit workers went on strike Monday. At least a million people are left in the lurch.

The schools may close any day now. As of now, the school board cannot say how it will meet a \$41.5 million payroll Friday.

The city firemen say they are ready to strike if they do not get a contract. The cab drivers say they may go out.

Teamster tanker-truck drivers have been on strike against major gasoline distributors for a week now, causing shortages and lines at the pumps.

The city's credit rating, once pegged triple A and one of the proudest in the nation among municipalities,

is slipping. New York, Cleveland and Detroit might flirt with bankruptcy. Other big cities might be stymied by decay and stagnation. Chicago, under the rule of a seemingly benign political machine, appeared to proceed unperturbed, building and bragging. Until now.

Some Chicagoans are directing blame at their city's new mayor, Jane M. Byrne.

The city's mounting troubles have fallen upon her shoulders since she toppled Daley's old machine in last February's pivotal Democratic primary.

She promised confidently to settle the Chicago Transit Authority dispute, much as Daley, her political tutor, used to do. The difference is that Daley almost always delivered. Byrne did not.

Such considerations mean little to Chicago working people trying to get

to their jobs or to mothers wondering where or whether the kids will go to school again. They just want to get Chicago working again.



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Latest OPEC price increase reflected in gas price hikes

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Exxon, the nation's biggest oil company, Tuesday boosted its wholesale gasoline price by 6 cents a gallon to reflect the latest round of OPEC crude oil price increases.

"The reason is the recent crude oil price increase by several OPEC suppliers retroactive to Nov. 1," said an Exxon spokesman in Houston.

Exxon, which buys much of its crude from Saudi Arabia, also said it was immediately raising its wholesale price of home heating oil, diesel and kerosene by 3 cents a gallon.

Chevron, another one of Saudi Arabia's four American partners in the Arabian American Oil Co., boosted its wholesale gasoline prices by 6 cents a gallon on Saturday.

The other two Aramco partners, Mobil and Texaco, hiked their prices by 3 cents a gallon last week.

Amoco also announced a 2- to 3-cent a gallon average price increase for gasoline and a 3-cent hike in heating oil prices last Saturday. And Gulf raised prices by 1.5 cents for its unleaded gasoline and 2.5 cents for other brands on Dec. 11.

Retail gasoline dealers can pass the increased wholesale costs through to customers, along with a seven-tenths of a cent raise in their dealer margin permitted by the Energy Department, beginning last Saturday.

"The sad thing," said Frank Bradley, Chevron vice president, "is that it looks like there's more to come."

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