

B.C. Anti-Prohibition League

Newsletter

Issue # 34

September 2001

Editor for this issue: Henry Boston

P.O.Box 8179, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3R8 e.mail: henryboston@bc1.com

Web site: <http://www.bcapl.org>

The British Columbia Anti-Prohibition League respects the right of adult Canadians to chose what they consume, and advocates the repeal of the Controlled Drugs & Substances Act.

PURPOSE OR ACCIDENT

Is life designed to fulfill a purpose, or does it happen by accident, or is there some other explanation? Do we fulfill a purpose by obeying laws, or by expressing what we want, or is some compromise needed? Is there a place for law controlling what we do to other people? Has law gone too far when it controls what we do to ourselves?

Please write and give us your opinion. If what you write is printworthy it will be printed in the next newsletter unless you ask us not to. Part of what I think is to be found in the article which follows

DO DRUG LAWS PROTECT US AGAINST CRIME OR ARE THEY A CAUSE OF CRIME?

In the Times Colonist for September 1, under page B1, there is an article by Kim Westad headed "Mother doesn't buy bandit's drug defense". We agree that a need for, or a desire for, an illegal drug does not justify breaking a law, but we want to raise the question whether the law should prohibit any drugs, whether it should have been there at all? After all this is what our masthead says "we believe in the right of adult Canadians to chose what they consume."

We also believe that laws should control what we do to other people but we are opposed to laws that decide what we do to ourselves. We believe that if we consume an illegal drug we are **doing something to ourselves?** We need to distinguish between violence against another and violence against oneself. The critical question is whether Governments, or individuals, should decide whether a particular substance may be consumed.

We believe that this is not a decision for governments but for individuals over voting age, or for their parents .if they are under voting age.

Kim Westad's article concerns a twenty four year old, Scott Williams, who had been using alcohol and drugs since the beginning of his teens. Now he enters a gas station masked, carrying a gun and demanding money. He needed money because the drugs he wanted to buy were expensive. He is given \$310, but another assistant phones the police and he is captured and given four years. .

The cause of the crime lies in his need for money caused by his addiction. He needs money because the substances he wants are illegal and this makes them very expensive. If the substances were legally available he would be able to buy what he feels that he needs, without committing a crime. Why do we prohibit various substances? The answer appears to be that we see the substances as causing irrational behavior and therefore as causing crime. But is not this something which people need to find out for themselves?

THE WAR ON DRUGS

(from pages 5 & 6 of Peaceful Measures by **Bruce K. Alexander**)

The origin of the American War on Drugs can be traced to the Temperance movement, which popularized the idea that the American social problems can be controlled by attacking a particular drug, namely alcohol. There was nothing resembling a 'war' on alcohol until early in the nineteenth century, when the temperance movement appeared (Levine 1978,1984) The movement quickly evolved from urging moderation on 'inebriates' to militantly demanding universal prohibition of alcohol (Levine 1984)

As well as pressing for prohibition , the temperance movement promoted physical coercion and propaganda, which were represented as 'treatment' and 'education'. Benjamin Rush, arguably the father of the American Temperance doctrine recommended 'fight, bleeding, whipping and aversive therapy with emetics as treatment for alcohol addiction (Aaron and Musto 1981,139) although in those days treatment for more conventional diseases was often as horrendous. The Women's Christian Temperance Union had a 'department of scientific temperance instruction' which clearly equated education with propaganda: 'Under its aegis, an elaborate curriculum was developed that school systems all across the country soon made mandatory...[It taught that] the majority of drinkers die of dropsy... When alcohol passes down the throat it burns off the skin leaving it bare and burning...Alcohol clogs the brain and turns the liver quickly from yellow to green to black' (Aaron and Musto 1981, 147)

By the turn of the century the American temperance movement was dominated by the militant Anti-Saloon League, which specialized in warlike rhetoric and heavy-handed political pressure tactics. In this context, the famous prohibitionist Carry Nation and her supporters made a ritual of physically destroying saloons. For these felonious acts, Mrs.

Nation became the hero of much of the nation and an object of idolatry in the American press (Taylor 1966) National alcohol prohibition (1920-33) intensified the violence (Kobler 1973; Cashman 1981)

Killings by prohibition-era gangsters like Al Capone are well remembered, but the violence of the enforcement agents were as great. For example: 'In Aurora, Illinois, on March 29, 1929, six state enforcement agents invaded the home of Peter De King, a suspected bootlegger. One of them clubbed him over the head with the butt of a shotgun. As he dropped senseless, his wife Lillian sprang to his side. A blast from the shot gun killed her. When told of the atrocity, Ella Boole of the WCTU remarked, "Well she was evading the law wasn't she." (Kobler 1973,291).

It has been estimated that at least one thousand Americans were killed by prohibition enforcement agents between 1920 and 1930, along with about seventy-five enforcement agents (Kobler 1973). Many more people were beaten, wounded, or intimidated and large amounts of property was destroyed during illegal police raids.

SEX, DRUGS, VIOLENCE AND THE BIBLE

This is the title of a 500 page book by Chris Bennett. It is a pioneer examination of the Bible written from the point of view of someone looking for, and finding, evidence for the use of drugs such as cannabis. I recommend it for those who are interested in this aspect of the history of the use of these substances. It is published by the Forbidden Fruit Publishing Company and is priced at \$34.95. Copies can be obtained by writing to P.O. box 485, Gibsons. B.C. V0N 1V0.

The following is a message regarding the Coalition for Compassionate Leadership on Drug Policy

Coalition for Jubilee Clemency religious, civil rights, criminal justice, public health, and other organizations to join them in educating policy-makers and voters on the views of various nominees and the potential impact of their policy proscriptions. Current members include the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), the Council on Illicit Drugs of the National Association for Public Health Policy, the Sentencing Project, and the National Black Police Association.

The first priority of this new coalition will be educating Senators and the general public on the views of Bush's proposed "drug czar," John Walters. While the Coalition neither opposes nor endorses individuals for public office, they believe that nominees have an

obligation to fully state and explain their views to Congress and the general public before they are confirmed into leadership positions. To that end, the Coalition is working to ensure that the Senate Judiciary Committee scrutinizes Walters' record and carefully questions him on his views and positions.

While President Bush has hinted recently that he is willing to look at reforming mandatory minimums, eliminating racial sentencing disparities, and concentrating more resources on a demand-side approach to drug abuse, John Walters has not supported these positions in the past. Walters has also expressed views that the drug war does not unduly punish African Americans, Hispanics and other minorities; that our nation does not incarcerate too many nonviolent drug offenders at great taxpayer expense; that our Latin American drug policy is "cheap and effective" and should be intensified; and that treatment and prevention efforts should take a back seat to more expensive incarceration and interdiction strategies.

If you would like additional information, please e-mail Bill at bpiper@drugpolicy.org.)

THE MOST EXCITING DEVELOPMENT

Submitted by Paul Nelson:
from the Marijuana Policy Project www.mpp.org

To my mind, the most exciting development has been the progress made in four States after the May 14 Supreme Court decision:

- On June 14, Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn ® signed a bill into law that sets up a medical marijuana program similar to those in Hawaii, Oregon, and Alaska. (Significantly, the bill also removed criminal penalties for the non-medical use and possession of marijuana!) The medical marijuana part of this bill implements the ballot initiative that 65 percent of Nevada voters passed in November 2000.
- * On June 1, the administrative regulations for a similar program in Colorado took effect, as a result of the ballot initiative that 54 percent of Colorado voters passed in November 2000. The state government is now issuing ID cards to patients and caregivers who are permitted to grow and possess marijuana without the fear of being arrested by state or local police. This was despite the opposition of the governor and state attorney general, who urged federal authorities to prosecute anybody who sells, distributes, or grows medical marijuana, even if they qualify for the state program.
-
-
-
-

- * On June 6, the California Senate passed a bill that would expand upon the 1996 medical marijuana law by authorizing patients and caregivers to grow marijuana collectively. This is just one step away from authorizing medical marijuana
- distribution outright; the difference is that the exchange of money for marijuana or services would probably not be authorized by the California bill, should it take effect.

* And, in Massachusetts, the legislature is considering MPP's model medical marijuana bill, which would allow patients and caregivers to possess and grow marijuana. Thankfully, while key legislators are aware of the Supreme Court decision, they do not view it as an insurmountable obstacle to passing a good state law.

All the news isn't good, however. In Maine, a committee had passed a bill on May 2 which would have authorized a pilot project to distribute medical marijuana. After the Supreme Court decision, the bill was pulled back into committee for further review, stalling all progress until the legislature re-convenes in January 2002.

Despite this setback in Maine, MPP is quite pleased that state legislators and other policymakers are not being deterred by the Supreme Court decision. This should bode well when 42 legislatures begin their 2002 sessions early next year.

SAFE INJECTION SITES

Vancouver – It is time for Canada to embrace a policy of safe injection sites for drug addicts, the authors of two new medical studies on the grim impact of injection drug use in Vancouver say. The studies, Published in Tuesday's edition of the Canadian Medical Association Journal, found that injection-drug users clog hospital beds and emergency wards at huge expense to the health-care system, suffer an appalling number of fatal drug overdoses and continue the risky practice of sharing needles, despite comprehensive needle-exchange programs.

“Safe injection sites are an investment to prevent medical problems that we would otherwise end up paying for downstream,” said Anita Palepu, an internal medicine specialist at St. Paul's Hospital in downtown Vancouver. “They make sense from both a moral and fiscal point of view.”

DECRIMINALIZE THE USE OF DRUGS

Ask police officers to guess how much drug traffic goes undetected, and many will roll their eyes. Whatever the benchmark—the number of charges laid, the quantity of drugs

seized, the property crimes committed to feed drug habits—only a fraction of the full picture is ever visible. Perhaps 5 per cent of the heroin, cocaine and designer drugs smuggled into this country each year is intercepted. A similarly dismal success rate probably applies to Canada's massive hydroponic marijuana industry, which each year dispatches hundreds of tons of the drug across our porous southern border.

That said, there is no avoiding the possibility that decriminalizing personal drug use might lead to wider experimentation. We would argue, however, that for most drug users, greater damage is incurred through being arrested, fined and possibly imprisoned. A bad drug experience may last only a day or two. The same is not true of a criminal record, or of the lasting damage incarceration commonly inflicts.

Pub.date: Tue, 21 Aug 2001 Source: Globe and Mail (Canada)

CANADIANS BRAVE ENOUGH TO GET IT RIGHT

Marijuana has a medical history that goes way back beyond the time when the straight-laced Queen Victoria took it for menstrual cramps. It was used widely in the West for pain and sleep, until aspirin and barbiturates came along. It was demonized in the 1930s with "reefer madness" propaganda and in the 1960s when Haight-Ashbury was covered in a stoned haze.

Here we get to the heart of the matter: the drug war in which marijuana has played a starring role, with 700,000 arrests in 1998. There is a fear that if grandma can smoke it legally for her health, granddaughter will smoke it to get high.

"We're seeing America's war on drugs being taken to an extreme that begins to make no sense," Politicians are so afraid of appearing soft on drugs they can't draw any distinctions. Compare this to morphine. We don't allow morphine on the street but we permit it in the doctor's arsenal for the treatment of pain. Imagine the uproar if we were to outlaw morphine. There is no logic in treating marijuana differently.

Pubdate: Tue, 07 Aug 2001 Source: Spokesman-Review (WA) Author: Ellen Goodman, Boston Globe

A SPECIAL REPORT: HOOKED ON SWAT

Fueled With Drug Enforcement Money, Military-Style Police Teams Are Exploding In The Backwoods Of Wisconsin;

On Oct. 5, about 50 miles north of Madison in the peaceful Green Lake County countryside of rural Dalton, the Olveda family was enjoying a quiet evening.

Wendy Olveda, five months pregnant, was on the computer preparing lessons for the fifth-

grade class she teaches at Markesan Elementary School. Jesus, her husband, was in the bedroom reading, and their 3-year-old daughter, Zena, was passing the time quietly on a couch. Suddenly the door burst open and several armed men in black uniforms burst into the home. Within seconds Wendy and her husband, Jesus, were thrown roughly face down to the floor and ordered to put their hands behind their heads.

To sell local governments on the need for SWAT teams, police officials usually talk about preparedness for terrorist incidents or barricaded hostage situations. But once trained, SWAT personnel are most commonly used to serve drug warrants and make drug arrests. Criminologist Peter Kraska, one of the nation's leading authorities on SWAT teams, has a similar opinion. "It taps into a lot of masculine fantasies about being a warrior," says Kraska, a professor at Eastern Kentucky University. "Culturally, it can infect the mindset of the whole police department, or the whole police institution. It's insidious."
Pubdate: Sat, 18 Aug 2001 Source: Capital Times, The (WI) Author: Steven Elbow

SURFING

Internet surfers are far more likely to come upon Web sites with wrong and potentially dangerous information about illicit drug use than they are to find more reliable, informed sites, a new study shows. A study in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine found that popular Internet search engines tend to direct users to sites that appear to promote drug use and provide incorrect and even dangerous information.

Often overlooked by the popular search engines are those Web sites that provide reliable information on illegal drugs, including sites funded by the federal government, the study said.

Pubdate: Wed, 8 Aug 2001 Source: Arizona Republic (Az) Author: Gene Emery

SOME IN U.S. HUFF WHILE CANADIANS PUFF MARIJUANA

Canada's "medical" marijuana decision is another step toward drug legalization. In the past, the use of marijuana for medical purposes required a special government exemption. Now, Allan Rock, Canada's health minister, who alleges that he was forced by the courts to expand his country's marijuana program says, "This compassionate measure will improve the quality of life of sick Canadians, particularly those who are terminally ill."

Unfortunately, the United States is sliding down the same drug slope as Canada. Nine states have embraced the use of pot as medicine. Even though our Supreme Court recently ruled that the Controlled Substances Act made no exception for the use of marijuana by ill people, that decision was narrow and will certainly be tested further. More ballot initiatives aimed at "medicalizing" or decriminalizing marijuana will test our resolve.

For the sake of both Canadian and U.S. citizens, Canada must reverse its pro-drug direction.
Pubdate: Sat, 11 Aug 2001 Source: Sacramento Bee (CA)

POT DECISION TRULY CANADIAN

Throughout all this the eyes of the world have been upon us as we magically transform the devil weed into respectable medicine. The U.S. is particularly curious. There, a person can be sent to jail for a year for possession of a marijuana and five years for growing a plant. Medicinal purposes for the plant are on no public drawing boards. Health Minister Allan Rock said he isn't worried Canada's liberal medicinal marijuana policy might draw the wrath of the President George W. Bush's administration. He said in time and with further research other governments around the world will probably follow Canada's lead.

Pubdate: Wed, 08 Aug 2001 Source: Kamloops Daily News (CN BC)

Author: Peter van der Leelie

EUROPE GOES TO POT

Technically, it is still illegal, but so many cannabis users flout the law that governments opt to go easy. It used to be that Holland was Western Europe's only tokers' paradise, courtesy of 900 cannabis cafes where adults can legally buy five grams of marijuana or hashish. But now, all over the Continent, the weed has won a new level of social acceptance. And where voters lead, politicians are following, as they ease up on criminality. When 45 million people have broken the law, the law may not be an ass but it is certainly an endangered species

Pubdate: Mon, 20 Aug 2001 Source: Time Magazine (Canada) Author: J.F.O. McAllister

The Story of Float #62

By James E. Gierach

On Saturday, August 11th, a little boy was shot through the back of his head as he played in his room on the West Side of Chicago -- another innocent victim of a runaway drug-war society.

On the same, sunny, beautiful day that the boy was shot, Martin Luther King Drive hosted the Bud Billiken Parade. Over two hundred floats, vehicles and marching groups paraded before thousands of people and maybe millions on television. The first two hours of the six-hour parade were televised.

To the creators of float #62, Saturday's parade represented the culmination of weeks of

around-the-clock problem-solving, design work, float construction, imploring and strategizing. The idea: to present to millions of Chicagoans, and particularly black Chicagoans, a solution to the myriad problems of guns, gangs, violence, killing and drugs. The story started on July 2nd when Greg Harris of the Chicago Defender newspaper called me to invite me to take an ad in the Defender. For \$1,500, I could buy two-inches of newspaper space for a message of my choice and \$700 of that fee would pay the entry fee for a charitable organization to put a float into the Bud Billiken Parade. I set my notes of Greg's call aside but did not throw them out.

For several years, I had encouraged community groups and political and religious leaders to march against the drug war, instead of drugs, to stop the violence and the killing. Too no avail, I hasten to add. Then, within a week or so of Greg's call, gang crossfire riddled an adorable four-year-old with bullets on Chicago's West Side, Robbie Anderson, son of Barbara Singleton.

We traveled through the suburbs at 20 to 30 m.p.h., east on 95th Street to the Dan Ryan expressway. Oh, Mayor Richard M. Daley would be furious. Rev. DeVille said that he had recently suggested to Mayor Daley that we have to legalize drugs and the mayor turned a reddish-purple color. After all, Daley made his bones on backs of drug-war cadavers, putting people behind bars for consensually buying and selling drugs. He helped turn America into a nation of prisons.

Drug war has turned America into the prison capital of the world, a country with the highest rate of incarceration in the world; formerly, the land of the free. Drug war is justification for prison slavery, the disparate incarceration of people of color to save our kids and provide jobs to economically depressed areas of Illinois. But we were on the way to a parade that catered to people of color, and we carried a message of hope. We were towing a float with hope.

As we marched, I studied the crowd. I searched for eye contact with someone bothering to read the banner [which read, "END THE DRUG WAR TO STOP THE KILLING"]. Without prodding, some people would raise their arm overhead or cheer to manifest agreement with the message. Others seemed unobservant or inattentive. I responded to the responsive by pointing at them, or raising my hand over my head and shouting, "End the drug war. Stop the Killing." Step after step and block after block, I scanned from one side of the street to the other, acknowledging support. When we passed a police officer, I raised my voice even louder. End the drug war. When someone really was tuned in or smiling in appreciation, I rewarded the attention with performance: Stop the guns, stop the gangs, stop the killing, stop the violence, fight AIDS, fight prisons, fight corruption, fight everything bad -- End the drug war!!! My hollering was cathartic, good for me, good for them. During the parade march -- television or not, newspaper photos or not, companions or not -- I was uninhibited. There was nothing between the people and me. Nothing to bar my all-important message from reaching those who needed to hear it. No editor, no producer, no photographer, no political boss, no media gatekeeper, no one could stop me from directly

proclaiming my message to the people! Proclaim I did!

These excerpts are from a much longer version of the article, which is available in its entirety at <http://home.att.net/~theyoungfamily/BILLIKEN.8.14.01.html>

PLEASE NOTE

NEXT MEETING OF THE BCAPL will be on
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17th 11.30a.m
JAMES BAY UNITED CHURCH
511 MICHIGAN STREET
FRANK SCHRODER HALL
(entrance at back of church)
Bring bag lunch

NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIPTIONS (\$8.00 per year) are our main funding source. If you value the work of the BCAPL please **SUBSCRIBE!**

.....

BC ANTI-PROHIBITION LEAGUE CONTRIBUTION

PO Box 8179 Victoria BC V8V 3R8

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ PROVINCE _____ POSTAL CODE _____
PHONE _____ EMAIL _____ CONTRIBUTION _____