

B.C. Anti-Prohibition League Newsletter

Editor for this issue: Henry Boston
Issue # 26 December 1999 P.O.Box 8179, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3R8
e.mail: henryboston@bcl.com

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.

F R E E D O M L O S T

Freedom has been taken from the human race by national governments, by the Christian Churches, by the League of Nations and by the United Nations. In their concern to protect and direct us they have taken away our freedom. We have to educate them so that they will give it back to us. We need keys to do this by changing laws.

National governments have sought to exercise control. They have tried to control religion: This has been abandoned in the West, which now turns its attention to what we put in our bodies. Back in the seventeenth century the Chinese prohibited opium. Individual states in the United States followed in the nineteenth century, New Zealand at the beginning of the twentieth Century, Canada in 1908. In 1912-13 the Hague Convention called upon nations to pass laws controlling the use of opium. In 1914 the United States passed the Harrison Narcotic Act aimed at controlling the use of opium, morphine and heroin. In 1920 they prohibited alcohol and reversed the decision in 1933. Canada prohibited marijuana in 1923 and the United States in 1937.

In 1958 the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations called "A plenipotentiary conference for the adoption of a single convention on Narcotic drugs to replace by a single instrument the existing multilateral treaties in the field and to make provision for the control of the production of raw materials of narcotic drugs."

In this action they rejected and cancelled the spirit and design of both the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and of the New Testament Church.

KEYS FOR REGAINING FREEDOM

The Christian Churches

The Christian Churches have been corrupted, consequently they are not recognized as an ally of freedom for the human race, but if they were to return to New Testament beliefs they could provided a key for changing laws.

New Testament belief was expressed by Jesus. Jesus said "There is nothing outside a man which by going into him can defile him; but the things which come out of a man are what defile him." (1)

The force of these words has been lost because churches have not accepted the dualism involved. Jesus makes a distinction between substances which

can harm the body and the decision to use them which “defile” the soul or the character. Churches have seen the statement in the light of New Testament discussion about food regulations and have applied them to that debate. This limits the meaning of these words. But Jesus said “There is nothing outside a man.” “Nothing” means “nothing”, not just prohibited foods, and “man” in the context of today means “person”.

To understand what Jesus was saying we have to appreciate that there is a difference between what a substance can do to a person’s body and what the choice of a substance does to a person’s character or soul. What corrupts people is what they do – their choices, not what the law chooses but what we choose. A substance can hurt your body without hurting your character, but if we knowingly choose a substance which hurts the body then we are responsible for that decision.

Alcoholics Anonymous understands this. It is significant that Alcoholics Anonymous did not begin until laws prohibiting alcohol had been repealed.

The error which has been made by churches is to suppose that people can be guided about the substances which they use for themselves by the law. That this is an error can be seen from the fact that it belittles human nature. It supposes that we can be guided regarding substances we use for ourselves by intimidation. The error is also exposed by the fact that police who enforce this law are driven to tell lies, to pretend to want or to sell the prohibited substance in order to make arrests. The will of God and the guidance of the church cannot be allied to deception. Deception is the way of Satan and not the way of God. (2)

Churches have been corrupted by money, by people who have money and influence, by political correctness. Jesus warned us against this when he said “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where

neither moth nor rust consume and where thieves do not break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also....No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other... or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (3)

This error has been made by church leaders who have been concerned about the financial security of the church. It is not the first time that the church has been led astray by its leaders as the psalmist noted when he wrote “The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing, it is marvelous in our eyes ”. (4)

People have been led astray partly because the leaders have made a mistake, but also because what has impressed the leaders has also impressed the followers: This has been a concern about externals, about the way things look regardless of how they really are. So while the Pharisees were concerned about externals. Jesus said of them “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate... First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate, that the outside may also be clean.” (5)

Jesus was looking for a cleanliness not of the body but of the heart. He said “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God,” (6). Because of this concern Jesus found himself at home with the outcasts of society, “The Publicans and sinners.” (7) We segregate outcasts in prisons. so that we can avoid them, and avoid their influence.

This policy may be justified if people are a danger to other people, but the danger caused by “traffickers” can be avoided better by government regulations. Instead of prohibiting certain substances governments should ensure that purchasers are informed and old enough to make a decision.

The churches confusion over this predicted by Paul who detected that Satan himself adopts the strategy of disguising himself as a messenger of light. (8)

Mark 7.15 (1) John 8.44 (2) Matthew 6.19-21, 24. (3) Psalm 118.22 &23 (4) Matthew 23.25 & 26 (5)

Matthew 5.8 (6) Matthew 9. 10 (7) 2 Corinthians 11.14 (8)

Information about an attempt in churches in Australia to act charitably towards people addicted to heroin is included below.

The United Nations

Another key for changing the law and for giving us back our freedom might have been the United Nations had they remained faithful to the spirit and goals of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but these had been rejected by the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971 and the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988. These Conventions reversed the policy previously established by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This may have due to corruption by powerful forces wielded by the pharmaceutical companies. The power of these companies was illustrated in the Gulf War when American soldiers were required to take a pill every eight hours as an antidote to possible poisons which might be used by the enemy, This pill has subsequently been seen to be harmful to some. It was supplied by a pharmaceutical company.

After the second World War everyone's mind was on peace.. This was still the focus three years later when the General Assembly drew up The Universal Declaration of human Rights. The first article states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

The Conventions however deny that everyone has sufficient reason and conscience even to decide what substances to put into his or her own body. Equality is denied as a small group of people are give authority to decide for the rest of the world what they may or may not put in their bodies. This decision instead of being offered to free people in a spirit of

brotherhood is to be forced on them. Article 36 of the Single Convention rules that – "Serious offences shall be liable to adequate punishment particularly by imprisonment or other penalties of deprivation of liberty."

This same article of the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs also cancels the freedom proposed in article 3 of the Universal Declaration that "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person", and article 5 that "No one shall be subjected to ...cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment," and article 9 "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest detention or exile."

Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights rules that "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty." This reflects the kind of prejudice which generated laws prohibiting substances. It is assumed that someone who uses a prohibited substance will perform other antisocial acts. If it were not so there would be no reason to rule against these substances. So the assumption that someone who uses a prohibited substance will perform other anti-social acts prohibition is contrary to the legal principle that someone "has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty". This same presumption makes it impossible to obtain a "Fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal" guaranteed, in article 10 of the Universal Declaration.

The B. C. Anti-Prohibition League and the Newsletter

Another key for unlocking the door locked against human freedom is the B.C. Anti-Prohibition League and its Newsletter.

Thanks are due to the editors of the Newsletters who have given it to us: to Rob Rippengale who edited nine newsletters from the fourth, October 1992, to the fourteenth in July 1995. The seventh was edited anonymously. Rob set a standard of newsletter editing, which I can aim at but don't expect to be able to fulfill. Every newsletter which he edited was a work of art. In the 9th he reproduced a picture of Uncle Sam on the front page saying "I want you to defend liberty." And

in the 14th he reproduced a picture of the statue of liberty.

Rob discontinued a practice, which I had started in the first three newsletters, of printing a financial report. I still think a financial report should be included, and that some of our readers would like to know about our finances, and share in the responsibility of keeping us solvent. I intend to print a financial report in this newsletter and would like to know the view of readers about this.

Rob wrote, in the last newsletter he edited, about editing: "I do it for free because one of the most important facets of my life is in jeopardy – liberty. And not just my liberty, for I risk that gladly in support and defence of the greater liberty of which I speak – the liberty of Canada and of the human race." But in the end the pressure to be gainfully employed drove him to give up the newsletter and return to a salaried position.

The fifteenth newsletter, was edited by David Christie, publisher of the Millenia Press, a Victoria business, towards the end of '95. It contained a copy of a "Certificate of Recognition" which he had received the previous year, stating " This certificate is hereby awarded David Christie, Publisher of the Millenia Press in recognition of your dedicated service to secure Federal Legislation for the Native America Church" It is signed by Frank Dayish Jr., President Native American Church of North America on the 22 day of October '94.

After that Alan Randell took over the work of editing the Newsletter, and fulfilled that role faithfully from the sixteenth issue , February 1996, to the 22nd issue , March 98. In July he reported that he was having trouble with his printer and I took the opportunity of publishing a decision of the Vancouver Island Human Rights Coalition that "on June 24, 1998 the Vancouver Island Human Rights Coalition approved the motion that: the Canadian Government and the United Nations be asked to include in their human rights codes that individual adults have the right to choose substances for their personal

use. This motion with supporting material was sent to our readers instead of the newsletter in a booklet, entitled "The Right to Choose," in the latter part of '98. The motion produced some negative criticism which I responded to in the next newsletter, edited by an anonymous editor early in 1999. The same editor published a further newsletter in October 1999 .

CLASS ACTION SUITS

Some people feel that their freedom has been curtailed by the prohibition of some substances. LSD, psilocybe mushrooms, some cactus plants and marijuana they regard as helping awareness. They call these substances psychedelic = "causing or having to do with an abnormal stimulation of consciousness or perception." (Funk and Wagnalls). Others focus on the object of the awareness: spiritual things or a divine presence, and call these substances entheogens. (Theos is a Greek word meaning God) They express this concern by regarding these substances as sacraments. LSD has been referred to as the supreme sacrament.

They see themselves as forming a class and some of them would like to approach the government with a class action suit which would represent their concern There are others who feel that they belong to a class which is victimized by the law, i.e. people who want to use marijuana for medical reasons and have not yet persuaded the government that they should have the use of it, and there are those who are addicted to a substance and can only obtain it from illegal sources.

If you have any ideas about how to present a class action suit, or if you feel that you belong to a group which is suffering because of government prohibition, you are invited to write to me, Henry Boston, at the League address.

The Cannabis Buyers Club

The Victoria News, in an article written by Matt Ramsey, informs that Ted Smith is founder of the Vancouver Island Cannabis Buyers Club (VICBC) Ted Smith claims that since 1996, the VICBC has provided marijuana to as many as 100 area residents who suffer from incurable medical conditions.

Ted has acted courageously as the Health Minister Alan Rock has informed that only sixteen Canadians are legally entitled to smoke marijuana to help them deal with chronic pain and other illnesses.

Ted comments "I want Health Canada to get the message that there are a lot of people concerned about this issue. Sixteen is a start but there are more people who have applied and need it for legitimate reasons. Two commercially available drugs contain THC which is the active ingredient in marijuana. They are "dronabinol {chemically synthesized THC} and nabilone (synthetic cannabinoid)." They "can be prescribed by doctors for patients suffering from severe nausea and vomiting and pain associated with cancer and other therapies." One of the problems encountered by users of these substances is that people suffering from nausea may not be able to swallow pills, but can smoke cannabis. The smoke entering the blood stream also provides a faster remedy for nausea than a pill which had to be swallowed.

The report also says that Ted is passing out free pot cookies in the courtyard of the library, as it is a learning centre, and "to send a message to Alan Rock that the Federal Government must move faster on allowing people with medical problems to smoke marijuana legally."

You

As a reader of the newsletter, and someone with vision and purpose, I appeal to you to help change the law back to freedom.

There are several things you can do: Inform others of your views 2. Let us know that you want the newsletter by sending us a subscription. 3. Provide input, Send us your views. .

Right now a handful of people, probably less than a dozen, are subsidizing the newsletter so that we can send it out to over a hundred readers.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Bal. Jan.1/99	\$197.09
Deposits	\$290.16
Interest	\$ 0.50
Total	\$487.75

Expenses:

Jan 18 J & L	\$105.10
Mar 23 Earth Walk	\$15.00
Apr 17 Earth Walk	\$10.00
Aug. 16 half P.O. Box	\$60.00
Oct. 4 J & L	\$141.36
Total expenses	\$331.46
Balance as of Nov. 24/ 99	\$156.29

Postage for Newsletters donated.

½ cost of mail box - \$60.00 donor sought.

Submitted by Eleanor Randell, Treasurer.

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

CHURCH LEADER BACKS HEROIN TRIAL

Canberra Times. October 27, 1999

Liz Armitage & AAP

One of Australia's most senior church leaders, Reverend Gregor Henderson, has voiced his support for safe-injecting rooms and a properly conducted heroin trial.

The Uniting Church's national general secretary, Mr.Henderson also has called on the Federal Government to show leadership in the drug debate. At a remembrance ceremony in Canberra for those who had lost their lives to illicit drugs, he said, ' It is not right that people die when new approaches and treatments are available but governments lack the courage to permit them.'

Recognising one of the new approaches, a charge against a Kings Cross clergyman over a heroin shooting gallery' was dropped yesterday by NSW police. Uniting Church pastor the Reverend Ray Richmond, 61, was summonsed last August to appear in court charged with aiding and abetting the self-administration of a prohibited drug, after allegedly

helping two men inject heroin at the Wayside Chapel in May.

The chapel's so-called tolerance room became Australia's first church-run 'shooting gallery' when it opened amid controversy on May 3. It closed on May 13.

Mr. Henderson said the Uniting Church in Canberra had recently adopted a new drugs policy which supported a scientific heroin trial within a framework of community education, law enforcement, and rehabilitation. He would look at adopting a national drugs policy for the Uniting Church.

'It's time we stopped treating drug users as criminals and started treating them with compassion as people who need help,' Mr. Henderson said.

'By our attitudes we are forcing them into the back alleys.' '[Churches] probably haven't done enough in this area, too.' Church leaders had a powerful role to play in the drug debate because they could challenge their generally conservative constituency to think about the issues. They also had some capacity to influence politicians. Federally they could give a bit more leadership,' he said. 'There is no doubt about that.

'It would be excellent if the Federal Government [would at least] support community organisations - like churches - and state governments in trying new things to help drug users.'

UNDER ORDERS

Pub.date: Sat, 30 Oct 1999

Source: Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

Author: Paola Totaro and Chris McGillon

The Australian Catholic Church is reeling after the Vatican's order to the Sisters of Charity to abandon a legal heroin injecting room. Chris McGillon and Paolo Totaro report. On the face of it, the Vatican's decision to put a stop to the involvement of the Sisters of Charity in Australia's first trial of a legal heroin injecting room in Kings Cross reflects a straight-forward concern with "sending the wrong signals" about

drug abuse in the community, particularly the Catholic community. But scratch below the surface and there is a complex web of church political agendas at play. What these have produced is the Vatican riding roughshod over the Australian church, A shift of power (and the ideological persuasion that goes with it) within the local episcopacy, and the subversion of efforts to deal with the most pressing problem confronting the church - the absence of genuine dialogue between its leaders and its members, most importantly women.

The decision to support a NSW Government-approved injecting room trial stemmed from quiet but crucial talks in the boardrooms of St Vincent's Hospital in May. There, a Who's Who of Sydney's establishment, among them Ros Packer, David Gonski, Ted Harris, Dr John Yu and the chairman of the Sisters of Charity Health Service (SCHS), Peter Joseph, effectively rubber-stamped a decision that had been under formal discussion inside the Catholic Church for many months. Spearheaded by its most senior and vocal medical advisers, Dr Alex Wodak, head of St Vincent's Drug and Alcohol services, and Dr Tina Clifton, chief executive officer of SCHS, the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity had explored and quietly adopted the proposal's ethical and moral ramifications. The order not only approved the trial but crafted a carefully worded defence of its position, arguing that Catholic moral tradition affirmed that harm-minimisation strategies - even illegal acts - were ethically appropriate under specific conditions.. Under these provisos, the benefits of co-operation, they argued, outweighed the downsides, and the order's decision to manage the trial was announced in late July.

The announcement was widely greeted in Catholic circles as a heroic, indeed Gospel-inspired, reaction to the problem of the increasing number of avoidable deaths due to unsafe heroin injection.

The order's decision was even given a ringing endorsement by The Catholic Weekly - the official mouthpiece of the Archdiocese of Sydney. In an editorial published on August 8, it said of the trial: "For their part, the users will be recognised as what they are - victims, rather than perpetrators, of evil. Redirecting the blame for drug abuse in this manner

will represent a great step forward for human dignity. The decision is consistent with the church's teaching that human life must be respected in all its stages and conditions."

It is inconceivable that the editorial would have been run without at least the tacit approval of the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Edward Clancy. But others within the Catholic community vehemently opposed SCHS's decision. These included the small but highly vocal lay Catholics who have long thought that the church in Australia has run off the rails and have made their views known to Rome.. Also opposed to any church involvement with the heroin trial were powerful conservatives within the hierarchy, particularly Melbourne's Archbishop George Pell.

Two weeks after The Catholic Weekly endorsed the SCHS decision, its sister Melbourne newspaper, Kairos, carried an article by Father Anthony Fisher, the episcopal vicar for health care for the Melbourne Archdiocese, attacking church involvement with the injecting room. Fisher, described by one church source as "Pell's right-hand man", wrote that "no program set up to facilitate or condone drug abuse could be ethical - let alone acceptable for a church agency". Fisher's reasoning was consistent with other official church teaching on issues such as the use of condoms to combat the spread of AIDS - an activity that is intrinsically immoral is unacceptable even if it would reduce great harm. But this entire moral position is under debate among theologians and ethicists. Moreover, the Sisters of Charity had always insisted that they did not condone drug-trafficking or the use of illicit drugs, but believed that some drug users must be given every chance of recovery and rehabilitation. Fisher acknowledged this, but it was clear where his sympathies lay. In fact, his article was the first sign that the decision taken by the order - and at the very least not initially opposed in any active way by Cardinal Clancy - was under serious challenge. Two articles highly critical of the Sisters of Charity appeared in The Catholic Weekly last week. One, written by Fr

J.J. Walter, a founding editor of The Priest (a publication for Australian clergy), argued that the nuns' decision "considered as their free act of choice, immediately embraces all the necessities to facilitate drug abuse - bar the drugs themselves".

Another, by Waverley parish's Father John George, argued that the move by the Sisters of Charity contravened Australia's obligations to the United Nations. But church conservatives had another - and in Rome's eyes much more powerful - argument with which to use against the Sisters of Charity and the kind of socially activist church they represent.

The letter to Cardinal Clancy from Cardinal Ratzinger of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith expressing Rome's view that church involvement in the injecting room trial was "not acceptable" did not rely on a moral argument. It didn't have to.

In November last year, Ratzinger and other Vatican officials met secretly for four days with senior members of the Australian hierarchy and produced a document titled The Statement of Conclusions, setting out what was allegedly wrong with the local church and how Rome thought it should be remedied. In its section on consecrated life, the statement urged priests and religious brothers and sisters to return to communal styles of living and traditional forms of work: "It is not enough that religious engage in any work whatsoever, even if they do this 'in the spirit of the Founder'. It also warned that because priests and religious brothers and sisters occupied a prominent place in the eyes of the faithful and the secular media, what was required of them was "a more evident fidelity to [church teaching authority] than is required of ordinary faithful". In other words, priests and religious brothers and sisters are special people who must offer a distinctively Catholic witness to the world.

Whatever the pastoral needs the Sisters of Charity have identified and chosen to respond to in terms of the victims of drug abuse, managing a heroin injecting room is too far removed from the traditional role of a nun for the Vatican's comfort.

Given the controversy and division sparked by The Statement of Conclusions - even among the Australian bishops, many of whom hardly had time to

read it before they were required to give it their assent - Catholics could be forgiven for assuming that the document had been put on the shelf to gather dust. But Rome's decision on the Sisters of Charity is a sudden reminder that this blueprint for the Australian church is as menacing as ever.

One of its leading proponents is Archbishop Pell. Rome's views fit in with his about what is wrong with the local church and how it should be put right. With good reason then, there is a strong suspicion that Pell (who is a member of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and is in Rome for the just-concluded Synod of Bishops for Europe) has been behind the intervention. The fact that church agencies in his archdiocese, including the Jesuit Social Services, were involved in discussions with the new Victorian Premier, Steve Bracks, about establishing legal injecting rooms in Melbourne strengthens this suspicion. But even if Pell was not involved in the Vatican's move, his position within the Australian church has been strengthened by it. After all, the big loser on this issue is the only person who effectively outranks Pell in the local hierarchy - Cardinal Clancy. He is due to retire within the next few months. But the way that his authority has been undermined over the involvement of the Sisters of Charity with the injecting room will be a salutary lesson for his successor.

Things have just got a whole lot messier - and nastier - in the Australian Catholic Church.

Sydney Morning Herald, internet edition Monday, November 1, 1999

Ban on sisters is no way to run the church
Like many Catholics, I was saddened and angered by the news in today's Herald that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) in Rome has ordered Sydney's Sisters of Charity, peremptorily and without discussion, to abandon their involvement in the proposed legal heroin injection room. At one level this is another instance of the powerlessness of women in a

male-dominated church, but in fact males would have been treated equally badly, since the CDF thinks it is its job to run the church. In fact, as any theologian will tell you, the church is properly ruled by its bishops, among whom the Pope, as bishop of Rome, has an important role as the touchstone of unity, but not as a chief executive officer. And if it is not the Pope's job to run the church, it is certainly not that of the CDF

This being so, is it not the proper role of Cardinal Clancy, as the local Ordinary, to protect his nuns, and to reject the suggestions (can they really be orders?) of the CDF? What harm could come to the nuns if, with the Cardinal's blessing, they were to ignore the order and go ahead with the room? Could they be excommunicated over a difference of opinion on propriety? If, however, such a course of action by the Cardinal is unthinkable, I wish someone would explain why.

Max Kelly, St Ives.

So the Vatican has vetoed the involvement of the Sisters of Charity in the trial of a medically supervised heroin injecting room. The decree from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith came in the absence of consultation with those involved in the complex moral decision to support the project. So much for the Vatican's observance of its own much-vaunted principle of subsidiarity: that decisions are best made at the level of those actively involved in and informed about an issue. I'd like to invite Cardinal Ratzinger to spend some nights on the streets of Kings Cross. Perhaps some exposure to the degradation and danger experienced by those addicted to heroin would open his mind and heart a little. It may help if he met some parents of young people who have died in toilets and alleys. I fear that Jesus, whose radical solidarity with outcasts so enraged the religious leaders of His time, would not be welcome here either.

Myree Harris RSJ, Petersham.

We should have known it would happen. Two years ago the Prime Minister intervened to squash the hope offered to drug users and their families by vetoing the ACT heroin trial. Now, dare I say it, an even greater power has stepped in to try to stop the injecting room trial. We must not allow this to happen.

Thankfully, the NSW Government is showing no signs of backing down from progressing the trial. Last Sunday more than 400 people attended our memorial service for overdose victims. Sadly there were representatives from more than 60 families whose loved ones were alive 12 months ago. We have no time to waste. One thousand preventable deaths each year cannot be accepted. We should continue to build on the work already done by the Sisters of Charity and continue to use their expertise in planning the facility - wherever its new location. As for the Catholic Church, I am sure this decision will cause much anger and grief among its members. This organisation epitomises so many aspects of our community's struggle to accept reality - one can only wonder what Christ would be doing with this problem were he around. Tony Trimmingham, Family Drug Support, Willoughby.

The Bible says: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." (Matthew 25:35-36). And today the Vatican adds: "I was addicted, and in danger, and you left me to perish." Maybe the Pope needs to do a little Bible study. Paul Kidd, Newtown.

Vatican is out of touch The Vatican's late and highly questionable interest in NSW public health measures shows how out of touch it is with its constituency. I recently certified a young man dead in a public toilet near my surgery. I would not have had to give his family such devastating news if he injected in an environment where help was available. And when he was ready for appropriate treatment, his chances of returning to a functional life would have been reasonable, according to research. But for this man any chance of rehabilitation has been lost forever. Injecting facilities have worked well in Switzerland and they may do so here. In eight years of the operation of about a dozen such rooms, Swiss death rates have dropped by 75 per

cent while ours have trebled. Every one of the 1,000-odd annual Australian heroin deaths is preventable. Non-fatal overdoses also cost our health system untold millions. Needle exchange was pioneered at St Vincent's Hospital long before it was proved to save lives and prevent viral diseases. The Sisters of Charity are the best placed to do this trial and I hope some means will be found to reverse the Vatican's apparent opposition.

Dr. Andrew Byrne, Redfern

IN MEMORY OF GIL PUDER
July 11 1959 – November 12 1999

A Brave Man has Died
Tribute by Sandy Cameron

Officer Gil Puder of the Vancouver Police Department died of cancer on November 12 1999. He had been a police officer for 17 years, and in the past few years he had become one of the most intelligent and passionate speakers in North America on new approaches to drug control that have been shown to increase public health and safety, and save lives from drug overdoses and street violence.

It took two tragic events in Officer Puder's career before he was able to accept the fact that the war on drugs doesn't work. A fellow officer and close friend was killed on duty in an incident involving drugs, and officer Puder was forced to shoot an armed drug addict in self defence during a failed bank robbery.

Officer Puder might have left the police force after these traumatic experiences. He might have withdrawn into himself, or he might have become bitter and violent towards all those in the underground drug culture. What he did do was seriously study the global drug problem, and learn about positive approaches to drug prevention, treatment, harm reduction and law enforcement.

Officer Puder believed that the drug crisis, which involves both licit and illicit drugs, is a public health crisis. In an article in the Vancouver Sun he

wrote, "My hope for 1998 is that Santa has left a large measure of courage and wisdom in a number of stockings so that our children can mark this year as the one when we finally began treating drug abuse as a health issue rather than a criminal industry...At some point the policing profession must live up to its image, place public safety ahead of careers and take up the leadership challenge abdicated by elected officials. Decriminalization (which does not mean legalization) would not result in heroin sold at corner stores. Various drugs (think of alcohol, tobacco) require different forms of regulation, which could be phased in slowly. The windfall savings on law-enforcement dollars could be plowed into health care, education and rehabilitation, which are the only methods proven to correct substance abuse. Participation in treatment and harm reduction programs) would be much easier to encourage when sick people are not stigmatized by criminalizing their addiction. While millions of public dollars are squandered (on the war on drugs) people continue to die. "I'm tired of bringing their families the bad news." (1) Officer Puder was a brave and caring man who spoke and wrote eloquently for intelligent approaches to drug control, even when his superiors ordered him to stop. By following is example we will do honour to his name.

(1) "Dispatches from the war on drugs – decriminalized." By Gil Puder, Vancouver Sun, Dec. 31 .97.

Rev. Bari Castle, who conducted the Memorial Service at Ryerson United Church,

November 19th. said that about 600 people attended the service and that there were many police officers present.

An obituary published in the Vancouver Sun on November 16 th. states that "he was an instructor at the Justice Institute of BC/ Police Academy, and at the Langara College of Criminal Justice Department. Gil was a dedicated athlete. He played and coached basketball for the University of British Columbia Thunderbirds; he was a black belt in Canada Shotokan Karate participating in many local and international tournaments and he actively participated in youth sports, coaching both basketball and soccer. He was an accomplished writer who regularly contributed to professional publications. He is survived by his wife Christine, sons Jason and Brendon, and also his parents, two brothers and grandparents.

Next Newsletter February March 2000

I hope to include in our next newsletter, which I plan for February or March in the year 2000, information about anti-prohibition organizations in Vancouver.

BCAPL MEETINGS

At Norm Levi's 1330 Purcell Place., Monday December 6th.at 7.30 p.m. Purcell Place is the first turning to the left on Moss Street which turns off Fort Street, or the last turning to the right if you go up Moss Street.

BC ANTI-PROHIBITION LEAGUE CONTRIBUTION
PO Box 8179 Victoria BC V8V 3R8

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

PLACE _____ PROVINCE _____ POSTAL CODE _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____ CONTRIBUTION _____