

New law preserves religious freedom

Although someone will undoubtedly try to abuse it, a new law signed by President Clinton on Tuesday to restore one aspect of religious freedom is a step in the right direction.

The bill, which would legalize the use of controlled substances in religious ceremonies unless there is a "compelling governmental interest" in forbidding that use, will do much to shore up one of America's most treasured personal liberties, freedom of religion, at a time when it is increasingly in conflict with the general laws of the land.

In 1990, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the state of Oregon could legally prohibit the use of peyote, a mild hallucinogenic drug, in the ceremonies of the Native American Church, despite the fact that the practice had been going on for centuries.

The court reasoned that the law did not infringe upon the church members' First Amendment rights to exercise their religion because the laws prohibiting peyote (and other drugs) were directed at all citizens, not specifically at those people who use peyote for religious reasons.

Prior to this case, the general rule had been that the state must demonstrate a "compelling governmental interest" in forbidding the use of controlled substances in order to bypass the protections of the First Amendment.

Exactly what constitutes "compelling governmental interest" has not been completely defined, but the same guideline had been in place for 27 years prior to 1990, and nothing too terrible happened.

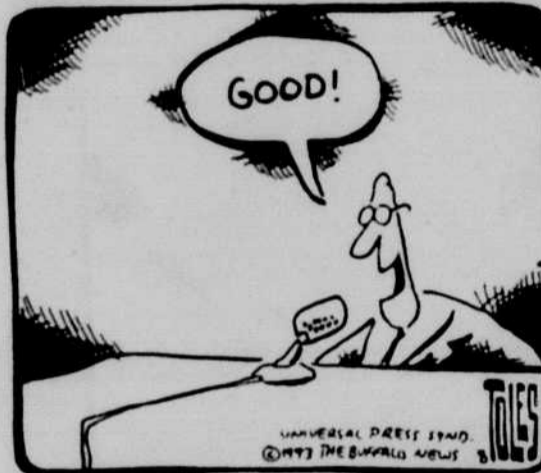
One of the main arguments raised against the bill suggests that legalizing the use of drugs for religious ceremonies opens the door for some screwball to found The Holy Spiritual Church of Heroin, or something else along those lines.

There is indeed a precedent for that possibility. In the late 1970s, a prison inmate named Harry Theriault founded the Church of the New Song and declared himself the bishop of Tellus. He claimed his First Amendment rights were being violated when the warden refused to provide him and his followers with items that he said were essential to his religious ceremonies — included among these were chateaubriand and Harvey's Bristol Cream.

The judge in that case called the Church of the New Song a sham, and threw the bishop out of court. Hopefully, judges will follow his example if and when someone tries to abuse the freedom granted by this new law.

At the very least, we can hope that the law contains provisions that allow the use of controlled substances only in those cases where they are a part of a faith, rather than that faith's sole reason for existence. Even if the law doesn't include such a clause, however, the courts may still impose those restrictions.

Religious freedom is one of the fundamental tenets of American liberty. This law may be abused; it will certainly be tested. But that doesn't mean it shouldn't be on the books.



OPINION

Economy turning global without NAFTA



MARIUS MELAND

On Wednesday night, the House of Representatives voted to ratify the North American Free Trade Agreement. Once approved in all three countries, this agreement will create the world's largest trading block, with 370 million people in Canada, the United States and Mexico.

Wait! Stop! Don't turn the page! I know you're tired of reading about NAFTA, but if you'll stay with me, you'll find that this column isn't about the North American trading block at all.

You see, the showdown in the House wasn't really about NAFTA. If you listened carefully to the arguments for and against the agreement, you could hear another, much more subtle, subtext.

It was Congress trying to assert itself. It was politicians shouting, "Look at us! Here we are! You shouldn't have counted us out! See, we've still got the power to legislate international trade!"

They're wrong, of course. The process of globalization, be it economic, technological or communicative, is no longer within the realm of politicians. They lost control of it many years ago, and since that time no legislative body has been able to keep up with the process.

Sure, NAFTA was a great victory for international trade. But NAFTA would have happened even if Congress had voted against it. It may not have happened on paper, but it would have happened in real life: NAFTA would have lived in the production plants, in the corporate

boardrooms and, high above our heads in the telecommunications satellites.

Now that the Cold War is over, military force is no longer the major power factor governing international relations. History has taken us from the paradigm of military warfare into the paradigm of economic competition. And in this paradigm, borders become less and less important.

Bill Clinton was right when he declared that with NAFTA "opening trade in our own hemisphere, we have the economic, the political and the moral standing to make the case that this can be done throughout the world."

The glory days of the nation-state are over. In the next century, the important political entity will be the geopolitical region. At this point, it seems that three regions will dominate economic, political and cultural affairs: North America, Europe and Southeast Asia. And if the process of globalization continues, maybe the next stage will be a global economic entity such as the one envisioned by Clinton.

But this process is not planned and carried out by politicians. Rather, politicians often stand dumbfounded and watch the process from the sidelines. Sometimes they resist, unwilling to accept their impotence.

If politicians aren't the drive behind the economic globalization, what is? The answer is simple: technology.

First, the technology of transportation has made it possible for us to eat fresh pineapples from Hawaii, drink orange juice from Florida, and eat pastries from New York. If you take a close look at your car, chances are you'll find parts from at least three different continents. Your computer is most likely produced somewhere in Southeast Asia, even if it was designed and developed in the United States or in Europe. And all of this was made possible because of fast, effective transportation technology.

Second, technological and industrial specialization has broken up the world into regions with different degrees of competitiveness depending on the product. The area of specialization could be determined by the region's natural resources; that's why they grow oranges in Florida and potatoes in Idaho. Or it could be determined by political and economic factors; that's why computers can be put together a lot cheaper with Taiwanese labor.

Third, communications technology has virtually created the proverbial "global village." Russians watch commercials for Pepsi-Cola on an MTV telecast carried by satellite, so they go out to the store and look for Pepsi-Cola. Japanese kids watch "Beverly Hills 90210" on television, so they go out and look for the latest Californian fashions. And soon, people all over the world may buy their Christmas gifts via a computer network linking up producers on one continent with customers on another.

The fact is, international trade borders are breaking down, with or without NAFTA. We're already very close to the creation of economic regions. In Europe, the European Community may soon expand eastward to become a market even larger than the North American trading block. And if Southeast Asian countries consolidate into a trading block, it would be the most populous and possibly also the most powerful economic region known to date.

There are two ways of meeting this challenge. You can either choose to let it run wild, making way for international economic and political anarchy. Or you can accept that the economy is becoming global and try to impose some international legislation to establish some sort of order.

On Wednesday, the House settled for the second solution. It was, in fact, their only choice.

Marius Meland is a columnist for the Emerald.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159 EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

Editor-in-Chief: Jake Berg
Managing Editor: Calley Anderson
Editorial Editor: David Thorn
Graphics Editor: Jeff Paslay
Freelance Editor: Jeff Winters
Sports Editor: Steve Mims
Editorial Editor: Jeff Pickhardt
Photo Editor: Anthony Forney
Supplements Editor: Kaly Soto
Night Editor: Scott Simonson

Associate Editors: Scot Clemens, Student Government/Activities: Rebecca Merritt, Community: Rivers Janssen, Higher Education/Administration

News Staff: Dave Charbonneau, Ricardo Davico, Meg Dedolph, Amy Devenport, Malia Fields, Martin Fisher, Sarah Henderson, Arik Hesseidahl, Edward Klopfenstein, Yin Leng Leong, Marius Meland, Trista Noel, Elisabeth Reenstjerna, Lia Saiciccia, Scott Simonson, Stephanie Sisson, Susanne Steffens, Julie Swensen, Michele Thompson-Aguilar, Kevin Tripp, Amy Van Tuyl, Daniel West

General Manager: Judy Riedl
Advertising Director: Mark Walter
Production Manager: Michele Ross

Advertising: Subir Dutta, Nicole Herzmark, Teresa Isabelle, Jeff Marion, Jeremy Mason, Michael Milette, Van V. O'Bryan II, Rachael Trull, Kelsey Wekell, Angie Winheim

Classified: Becky Merchant, Manager: Victor Mejia, Sim Tze Teck
Distribution: Brandon Anderson, John Long, Graham Simpson

Business: Kathy Carbone, Supervisor: Judy Connolly
Production: Dee McCobb, Production Coordinator: Shawna Abele, Greg Desmond, Tara Gaultney, Brad Joss, Jennifer Roland, Natt Thangvijit, Clayton Yee

Newsroom: 346-5511
Business Office: 346-5512

Display Advertising: 346-3712
Classified Advertising: 346-4343