

Oregon NORML members localizing

By Harry Bielskis
News Editor

Clackamas Community College's National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML) has recently developed a sister club which will operate on an intra-state level.

Oregonians for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (ORML) was formed by Charlie Bennett, Associated Student Government president and former president of CCC's NORML club, in the hope of "bringing marijuana reform closer to home."

Bennett, the only lobbyist in Oregon working with NORML, talked to many legislators about state-wide marijuana reform but their concern with NORML seemed to be only on a national level.

Returning from a recent NORML conference in Washington, D.C., Bennett said, "I experienced a lack of interest by other NORML officers in Oregon marijuana reform. NORML wanted us to help with reform in other states before we could be helped."

Bennett said that NORML did make a huge breakthrough last month when Mississippi became the first state in the south to adopt decriminalization of marijuana. Under the new law, possession of less than one ounce of "pot" in Mississippi is now a civil fine instead of a felony.

"This is an important change," said Bennett. "National laws won't change until state laws do."

Bennett started ORML in conjunction with Dennis Ryan, a student at Southern Oregon State College in Ashland. Although there are five community colleges in Oregon working with marijuana reform, Ashland is the only four-year college taking a part in that action. ORML is believed to be the only organization in the country working with marijuana reform on a state level.

"One of our biggest problems right now," said Bennett, "is faulty drug education in the public school system." He cited effective drug education in schools from grade five through college as a means of combating drug abuse.

"There are too many old police chiefs running around misinforming the public about all drugs, not marijuana alone," he said.

Bikecentennial

Bikecentennial, the people who created the 4,500-mile TransAmerica Bicycle Trail, will host an audio-visual presentation featuring "Freewheeling across America" and an explanation of the recently developed Oregon Loop Trail.

The free presentation will be held Wednesday, May 4, at 8:30 p.m. at 53 Kramer Hall, Portland State University.

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Another priority of ORML is to improve the standardization of marijuana fines from judge to judge in Oregon. This limitation, according to Bennett, would prevent the law from being stretched or abused in order to obtain a conviction.

A third goal of ORML is to obtain the involvement of more adult Oregonians. Most involvement in state marijuana reform has centered around high school and college students.

Bennett sees the addition of a club-within-a-club as a needed boost to state-wide marijuana reform.

"We talked to some of the other NORML chapters in Oregon and they, too, were very enthusiastic about centering on Oregon's marijuana laws."

If a senate bill introduced to the Oregon State Legislature in March is approved, ORML will be well on the road to meeting its objectives.

Senate Bill 903 (Controlled Substance Act) was sponsored by State Sen. Stephen Kafoury (D-Portland), six other state sen-

ators and seven members from the House of Representatives.

If approved, the bill would arrest stemming from seed possession cultivation. Possession of up to six plants would be reduced from a \$100 fine.

The bill would also provide a discharge to those illegally possessing controlled substance, providing the is the offender's first drug offense.

Under Section 35 of the proposed "The Mental Health Division of the Department of Human Resources... shall educational programs designed to and deter misuse and abuse of controlled substances." The division will also the education and training of state law enforcement officials to aid in their efforts to control drug abuse.

In other related developments, NORML Club has appointed Ron K. its new president and Patty Payne president.

NORML will hold a dance on Friday, May 6, to aid its lobbying

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