



R. CRUMB

LETTERS

GRASS ROOTS

TO THE EDITOR:

Contrary to the wishes of the powers that be, the marijuana issue has not gone away. Although Ballot Measure 5, which would have partially legalized marijuana use and cultivation in the state of Oregon, was defeated last November, people are still indulging at the same or an increased rate. Illicit dealers are still making outrageous profits selling to adults and children alike with virtual immunity.

Al Capone was the first to discover that if you have sold enough to cover the fine then you are back on the streets in business again. But, caught in the crunch between the dealers and cops (a game) is the user, the person who for whatever benefit s/he perceives, chooses to use this euphoric substance over some other. The benefit must be there; s/he's paying upwards of three hundred dollars per ounce for the stuff consistently. S/he's not addicted; s/he simply likes it and has discovered that it is healthier and feels better than the legal euphorics like alcohol. So s/he pays and so does society.

Somehow, since 1937 when cannabis became the victim of industrial/political sabotage, this prohibition has got way out of hand. Cannabis was this country's most used agricultural product for its fiber, paper, oil, textile and medicine propensities. It is a truly amazing substance. A concerted effort by the DuPonts, Hearsts, Rockefellers and unemployed alcohol prohibition bureaucrats who lost their jobs when repeal reopened saloons and distilleries in 1933, all of whom had financial reasons for eliminating this industry, created "Reefer Madness." Where the truth could not be twisted to support prohibition they simply invented lies. These lies are still circulating today, and with enhanced technology some new ones have been created.

Today the Oregon Marijuana Initiative is asking for a retrial. We should look at the marijuana question again with the same fairness exhibited in Alaska twelve years ago. The facts should be put on the table. In the Alaska Supreme Court it was no contest. Prohibition lost by a five to zero vote.

In this country we are presumed innocent until proven guilty of a crime. Likewise, so should our lifestyles be innocent until proven guilty of criminal nature. We have established the precedents in this nation that substances that are as dangerous as alcohol, tobacco and caffeine are acceptable. Fairness dictates we abide by these guidelines. Show us, then, beyond doubt that cannabis is more dangerous than alcohol or drop the persecution.

Too often cannabis users approach this issue having to defend themselves for what they do. It is time for the law, the infringement on our freedom to defend itself. It should be a more solid defense than Nahasian type logic (example: asphyxiate a Rhesus monkey with cannabis smoke and then see if it has lost any brain cells!). Wild, poorly substantiated claims will not do. Every major government study done with openminded scientific procedure has found cannabis to be relatively innocuous (LaGuardia Study, 1944; Shafer Commission, 1972; UCLA Study, 1975; Jamaican/Costa Rican Study, 1968, 1974 and 1982; American Academy of Sciences, 1984; Crancer Study, 1969; etc.) but still a political hot potato. We also have more than thirty million case studies walking around the U. S. from whom we can draw information. The millions of cannabis users who do not go on to hard drugs can tell you cannabis is not a gateway drug. The healthy children of cannabis users can tell you cannabis is not mutagenic. How does cannabis affect these people? "Very well, thank you — But would you please get this policeman off my back!"

The worst danger to the cannabis user is the law. An opportunity to change this exists again with a renewed, rewritten Oregon Marijuana Initiative. OMI has faced some political realities and will present a ballot measure with changes that should draw a majority vote in 1988.

It is typical of this issue that it takes so much work by dedicated individuals because the state legislature runs scared from a workable solution. Let's hope that next time the public will see through the hysteria and respond to the facts, not the media amplified nonsense with which we are so often deluged.

STEPHEN FARISH, NEWPORT

LOW WAGES

TO THE EDITOR:

If you are thinking of going to work for Point Adams Packing Company, be advised that they will pay only \$4.05 per hour if they can get away with it, even if you are an experienced cannery worker. With three years of cannery experience, they paid me their inexperienced starting wage of \$4.05 and although I worked (slimeing black cod) almost six hours, they paid me for only five. After deducting money for my apron, hairnet and gloves, my net pay was \$14.26. So if you are seeking employment at Point Adams, you may want to reconsider.

GARY HILL, ASTORIA

FLAGWAVERS

TO THE EDITOR: Re: flagwavers (Times Eagle, July 1987).

Amen, Mr. McCusker! Exactly what I have tried to say for years. I commend you and hope you realize the anger and resentment that came from this issue proves your point. It was flagwavers who elected a man either pompous enough to break the law or incompetent enough not to stop his righthand men from breaking it. It was flagwavers who supported Castro in '58 and Contras in '87.

I was angered by your article. Angered that it wasn't published sooner! And angered that still people cannot see the truth — that blind faith in a flag or an ideal is just that, blind.

VINCE STAMPER, SEASIDE

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