



MARK WILSON

MARIJUANA MANIFESTO

One early afternoon in late August, Michael Miller sat on a chair on the lawn of the Clatsop County Courthouse underneath a homemade sign, *Marijuana For Sale*. He had in his possession three bags of brown Mexican grass. His intent was to be arrested in civil disobedience to what he considers unjust narcotics laws. Arrest came an hour later when he "sold" a bag to a county courts employee the sheriff sent outside

to make the purchase. The Daily Astorian quoted the sheriff that he "needed proof that (Miller) was actually selling drugs." Bail was set at \$70,700 (for 3/4 of a gram of marijuana) but he was let loose on conditional recog; he had never been in jail and as a matter of fact has never used marijuana. When the sheriff asked if the bag contained marijuana, Miller said, "Yes, I think so, but I've never smoked it before."

BY MICHAEL MILLER

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*First they came for the drug producer
and I did not speak out -
because I was not a drug producer.*

*Then they came for the drug distributors
and I did not speak out -
because I was not a drug distributor.*

*Then they came for the drug users
and I did not speak out -
because I was not a drug user.*

*Then they'll come for you -
and there will be no one left
to speak out for you.'*

I have thought, questioned, and thought again over the act of civil disobedience I have committed. I remain firmly convinced that the laws heavily against narcotics are both a denial of our civil rights and a major instigator of the violence and abuse surrounding narcotics. This conviction is drawn from two sources first that frail human faculty called reason and second my own inner voice. It is impossible to define in totality all that constitutes these attributes of my will. I do however wish to give my best effort to communicate sincerely and directly what I am able. It is my ambitious hope than in doing so as effort to clarify and resolve the ignorance surrounding this issue will be made by the community. That is the nature of this article.

Only a few within our country should need to understand all the complexities of the law, but all should understand the principles the law is properly guided and shaped by. The Declaration of Independence, a beacon in the fog of ignorance and superstition, directs us to the belief in inherent rights, among which are the preservation of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our forebears cast off a government by warfare for violating these rights they so cherished. Our government has been delegated certain powers by people to ensure the protection of these rights. Laws are an exercise of these powers. However, 'Experience hath shown, that even under the best forms (of government) those entrusted with power have, in time, by slow operation, perverted it to tyranny.' (Thomas Jefferson) As history testifies, laws are often unjust, severely unjust. It is therefore necessary to try the law before the person.

The difficulty that arises in questioning any law is that one most often does not consider individual rights but is more inclined to question it from the perspective of their own moral values. We expect the law to punish those who have committed immoral acts by our own standards, but the protection of rights is

what allows us to have our own standards and not to have our own moral conscience dictated to us by tyrants. 'For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?' (Paul, 1st Corinthians 10:29)

What does the government's powers extend to then if not immoral acts? 'The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others.' (Thomas Jefferson) Looking at the issue of narcotics from this perspective it seems unjustified for our government to outlaw narcotics. If a person decides to use a drug who are they injuring except perhaps themselves? Now it can be surmised that if one sells a drug that may injure another, then the seller of the drug is responsible and hence has injured another. The sale of alcohol and tobacco are situations of this nature and have been resolved by mandating that the distributor place a warning label on the substance's container. Why then does the government prejudice itself against certain drugs, but not others? The answer is that some portion of this society views either these drugs as immoral or believe that the government is responsible to protect the individual from himself. Both of these I have already given argument against, but is it not possible that the government does have a responsibility to protect us from injuring ourselves? 'Our government exists to protect us from each other. Where it has gone beyond its limits is in deciding to protect us from injuring ourselves.' (Ironically, Ronald Reagan) Thus, rationally, I am drawn to the conclusion that the government is either enforcing a moral, which is not its charge, or attempting to protect the individual from himself, and both violate his rights.

My inner voice has always prompted me to refuse the use of drugs. My aversion to their use has been absolute with the exception of a mild use of alcohol. As much though as the abuse of drugs repels me I am even more repelled by abuses to our liberties. How many liberties can we have wrested from us and still consider ourselves free? For myself, not one. I believe it is my right to have the free choice to choose between using narcotics or not using narcotics. I believe it is my right to own my life and not have it rented to me with a list of *does* and *don'ts* subject to change at the whim of the moral Mafia. I will not choose to live passively in a prison no matter how elaborate that prison may be and I will not condone these abuses with inaction or silence.

It is only most recently that I have so fully felt the need to act against this injustice. My previous opinion on the issue of narcotics was swayed by my own moral apprehension toward their use. I felt that not only were narcotics inherently negative, but those who made use of them supported the violence surrounding drug trafficking. During my adolescence my witnessing of drug use often to excess only reinforced this opinion. However, as my years of young adulthood progress I have befriended a continually increasing number of people who

do not abuse the drugs they use and are active, caring and responsible people of the community. This caused me to reconsider my previous opinion.

My friends' use of marijuana is what specifically clarified my current feeling towards illegal narcotics. One night a small group of my friends gathered for dinner and during the evening a few of them began to smoke marijuana. I was struck by how calm, peaceful and serene the evening was and what an abrupt invasion of my freedom and privacy the law seemed. To outlaw our personal affairs that cause injury to no other person. I also realized how frequent the use of narcotics is. The vast majority of the people I know either use or have used illegal drugs. The law may not condone their use but it is evident that a large portion of our society does. Locking up this portion of society is nothing but a fascist attitude. It is also practically impossible as there are tens of millions of drug users after seventy-five years of suppressive legislation.

The first question of ignorance I am asked is, "Where in the Constitution does it guarantee us the right to use narcotics?" The same place it guarantees us the right to use toilet paper, wear the color red or eat chicken, the 9th and 10th amendments. The 9th: "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." The 10th: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

The Constitution specifically mentions those rights that are most essential in protecting freedom, but freedom consists of an infinite number of rights. Once again the guiding principle being if it is not injurious to others or their property, without their consent, then the people have a right to do it and should be left alone.

One cannot deny any right of the people without a toppling over of many other rights, for every right safeguards others. The denial of a person's right to use narcotics is no exception. The laws against narcotics not only deny our right to sell and use them, but also an array of other rights.

The right to privacy is severely abused by the illegality of narcotics as more and more legislation is passed to probe into the lives of potential drug users, persons such as those in lower income brackets. The police further break this right by using fear and intimidation to question and search where they have cause to.

There is also a condoned discrimination in our society against those who use narcotics. It is necessary to prevent their use where it might endanger the safety of others, but to say that if one uses drugs at all they are incapable of performing work and therefore should be denied job access is a blatant lie. They are already performing their tasks but are forced to lie about their life choices. Lies are inherently negative and subtly corrode



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