

Legalize It

Even Olympic gold medal winners inhale

Even though Linn County finally chased Bill Conde out of Harrisburg, that darn cannabis issue just won't go away. Whether you call it pot, cannabis, hemp, ganja, weed or marijuana, the herb is here to stay.

So far 2009 looks to be a banner year for the cannabis folks. Consider for instance that we now have a President of the United States who not only admits inhaling but told us "that was the point." Consider also that the recent outing of Michael Phelps as someone who knows which end of a bong does what has just about blown the myth of the lazy stoner out of the water.

As always, however, in the shadows lurk those who maintain their loathing for the cannabis plant no matter what facts disprove their prejudices. Dan Harmon operates under the guise of a man with Oregon business and workplace safety in mind, but he and the group he apparently guides – Associated Oregon Industries – want to test the pee of every working Oregonian to make sure we aren't smoking any unapproved plant matter. Oh, and while he is at it? Mr. Harmon also wants to do away with the excellent Oregon Medical Marijuana Program (OMMP). He thinks that the OMMP "says something about permissiveness in this state, and we've got to stop this permissiveness."

Pot is a plant not of just a thousand uses but of literally tens of thousands of uses – a plant that has shadowed humanity since before we even began recording our history. It is food, fuel, fiber, medicine. It is also consumed for spiritual and, yes, recreational reasons. But not many these days are shocked by a bit of pot smoking. After all, 2009 has shown that peanuts kill more people than pot. Heck, even record breaking Olympic gold medal winners smoke it. One of the nice things about cannabis is that it is literally impossible to physically overdose on pot.

Here in Oregon we still dance around the issue even though we all know someone who smokes pot. I've met politicians, loggers, cowboys, doctors, lawyers, carpenters etc., etc., who consume cannabis. It IS safer than alcohol. A person can O.D. on booze, and we recently witnessed the horrific reality that booze and driving kills. While no one should drive under the influence of any substance that effects perception and reaction, the driver on pot will sit at the stop sign waiting for it to turn green. The drunk doesn't even see the stop sign.

Truly, the prohibition of pot is a scam of the highest order. Prohibition is a self-perpetuating bureaucracy which creates the very problems it is supposed to eliminate. If prohibition worked, would cannabis now be the nation's number one agricultural commodity? If prohibition worked, would Al Capone have become a millionaire?

There is no logic to pot's banning. No science, no fact or anything resembling truth was ever presented when the government outlawed a plant that had been a farm staple here since the very beginnings of our new nation. What did serve as the foundation for laws prohibiting pot were racial slurs and xenophobic scare-mongering. Which of course naturally then begs the question of the legitimacy of those laws and policies keeping pot illegal. The question no longer is "Should cannabis be legal?" The more relevant question is "Why is cannabis illegal?"

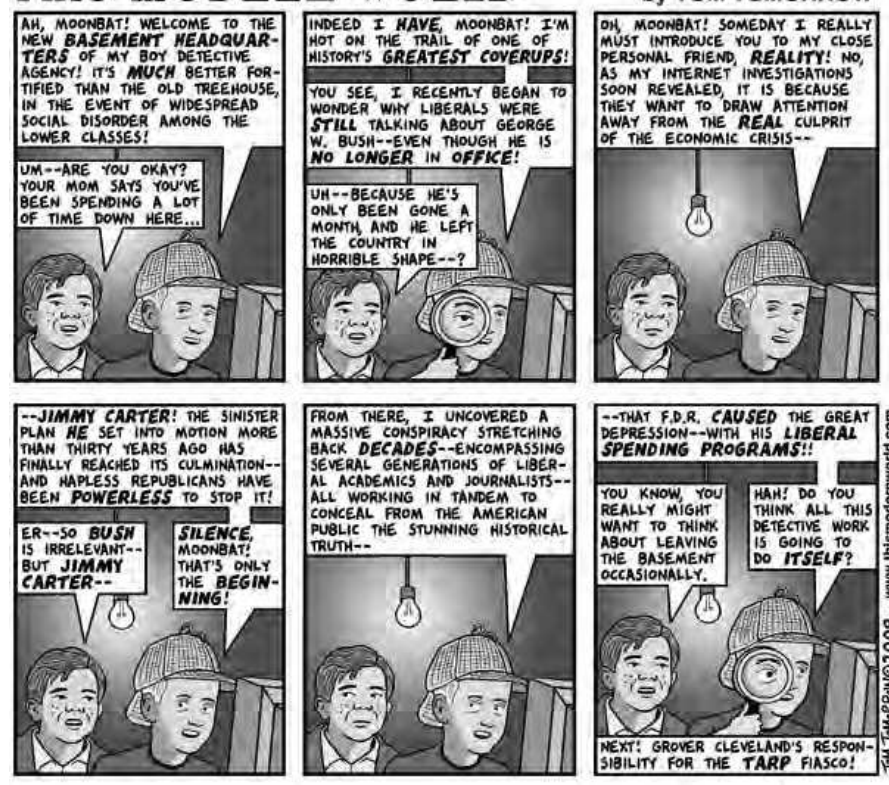
I'm all for safety and reducing harm. But I just have to point out to Harmon and his cohorts that since Oregon began the OMMP, workplace accidents have declined. I'm not claiming causation, I'm just saying... I mean, after all, it was the DEA's own administrative law judge, Francis Young, who in 1988 called cannabis "one of the safest therapeutic substances known to man." Stress and fatigue are and always have been the greatest threats to workplace safety. The medicine a worker utilizes for health issues is a private matter between a doctor and patient – not the employer, not the government and certainly not Dan Harmon.

The truth will be heard. Cannabis is indeed medicine, a very safe medicine. Those who buried the study in 1974 showing cannabis' potential as a cancer fighter have much pain and suffering to atone for. There are consequences for such deceitful abuse of government power.

Allan Erickson of Eugene is a member of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition and the Drug Policy Forum of Oregon and a OMMP cardholder.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAVING IS GOOD

I am writing this in response to an article in that other paper here in Eugene way back on Feb. 2 titled "Consumers' New Found Thrift Little Help To Economy." Instead of asking what is wrong with people saving money and being frugal, just perhaps we should be asking ourselves what is wrong with an economic system based on constant growth and spending, which we call progress. Isn't it finally time to step back from the abyss and take a real look at what we are doing with and to the earth and all of its blessings? Does anyone actually still believe this is all based upon reality or is at all sustainable? Is it not obvious how many things in our so called economy are propped up with subsidies, whether it is airplane travel, our car culture or big agriculture etc.... perhaps our scale of things is out of whack.

I understand it is scary, such full scale change, but I think we are fooling ourselves if we continue to prop up old ways that have failed for what appears to be good reason. Much of what our society has been doing is simply not sustainable. It has only seemed to be sustainable by being propped up on the backs of less fortunate folks elsewhere, using up and trashing our natural resources with no concern for the future and by money changers shifting things around in their Ponzi schemes.

From where I sit, it is the people beginning to save, who are making appropriate steps back towards sanity! It is everything else I wonder about. As they say, strange days indeed. Simple living, being closer connected to food, shelter and a warm place to sleep might be better goals than lots of automated gizmos and polluting toys. A smaller footprint on the earth, a closer connection to nature and a more locally oriented economy may make more sense.

*Tim Boyden
Eugene*

ENVIRONMENTAL MADNESS

This past week I have been shocked by the amount of proposed destruction throughout every corner of the state.

In southern Oregon the BLM is moving

forward plans to destroy more than 25,000 acres of ancient forest.

Here in Eugene Seneca sawmill proposes to poison our air in Eugene with 28 tons of particulates and 38 tons of sulfur dioxide per year from a so called "renewable" energy tree burning power plant. Here in Springfield, a mile from my house across from LCC along I-5, a new rock crusher manufacturing facility is proposed. This new facility will spew another 40 tons of VOC and 38 million tons of particulates per year.

The Oregon Department of Agriculture just announced plans to aerial spray a poison that will kill all moth and butterfly larvae in the Dillard road area.

ODOT announces plans to spend \$42 million to widen more highways and freeways instead of just fixing infrastructure that is literally falling apart.

I LOL. Is the whole world completely insane? Where are the voices of caution and reason? Where are our so-called leaders to reign in the madness?

*Shannon Wilson
Eugene*

HOMELESS & COP SHOP

Thank you for linking the proposed new cop shop to the homeless situation in Eugene! I have been harping on this to City Council for years. The money they have squirreled away is CDBG money, and they spent tens of thousands of dollars on an outside PR firm to sell the idea by holding community forums and focus groups, all very skillfully presented as if the new building was already a fact, and the city generously wanted to get community input on what it should look like, and where it should be located. Meanwhile, back in reality, the city allocated \$70,000 for a "Blue Ribbon" Committee on Homelessness that ultimately did nothing but ask for more money to continue to think about the issue.

What really galls me is that when I first arrived in Eugene in 2001, I was appointed to the Human Rights Commission, and watched City Council members and staff break their arms patting each other on the back for the city's "diversity" and "commitment to human rights." Indeed, our city code offers very

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