

## Drug War Follies - Skunk Magazine Issue #14

Well, this stinks! There's still a goddamned drug war going on. Just did two months in the jungles of Peru, during which I didn't look at a newspaper. Returned home hoping to find that someone in a federally-elected position in the USA had reached into his/her pants, found their balls or ovaries and decided to make a stand to end the damned thing. No such luck. One sitting of several hours in front of this computer catching up on marijuana prohibition and all the mellowness from the trip had been sucked out of me. You would think, wouldn't you, that eight weeks would be more than enough time to get a good national discussion going on about how the new legalized marijuana—and all the rest—would be handled: who would be growing it, who would be selling it, whether there would be a tax, how to reintegrate all of those non-violent prisoners back into society now that it was a given that they'd be freed; what to do with the soon-to-be-out-of-work DEA boys and girls, the prison guards the extra police we wouldn't need and everything else that would have to be discussed.

But noooo! Nobody had even started the end-of-prohibition discussion much less gotten down to the nitty-gritty. Unfuckingbelievable!

So instead of some movement toward a kinder, gentler police state, I get this: hundreds of news stories from the US and Canada dealing with busts and seizures, medical marijuana people continuing to suffer at the bloodied hands of the Feds; stories explaining why Colombia is actually producing 50% more coke than was assumed despite six-years of Plan Colombia's brutality and the rest of the usual drug war filth.

Among those stories several stand out as particularly onerous.

--In North Dakota, Agriculture Commissioner Roger Johnson has been fighting to get hemp farmers licensed for some time. His state already leads the US in the production of 14 ag commodities, from lentils to barley, and he doesn't see why the farmers can't grow hemp as well. It's a fledgling industry, worth only about \$300 million a year in the US, but still, he reasons his people should be getting a cut of that rather than all US hemp being brought in from nearby Canada or faraway China. Reading his remarks one is tempted to think there might be light at the end of the tunnel. But probably not. The DEA just isn't going to step out of the way on this one. The closer people like Johnson come to legitimizing the growing of industrial hemp in the US, the more the feds will pump up their old stories about farmers sneaking pot plants into hemp fields—yeah, like we like smoking ditchweed!--and the more the media will race to publish them. Just as the media believed and published former Drug Czar General Barry McCaffrey's fears of hemp seed oil containing cannabis and people getting high from hemp cheese. McCaffrey, you remember, even once explained that the US might have to take serious issue with Canada for growing hemp because kids in the US were buying hemp shirts and boiling them down and then adding alcohol to the mix to make cannabis cigarettes&hellip;. Yeah, the light at the end of the tunnel is probably just cop-car lights.

--In Denver, police are still ignoring the city's ruling that possession of an ounce of pot or less is legal for adults, a law that was passed via initiative last year. Moreover, police are also ignoring the State law on medical marijuana. In late July a story broke when authorized caregivers and patients Larissa and Thomas Lawrence had two ounces of weed confiscated by city police during a routine traffic stop. They produced their medical proof but the cops still took it. Their lawyer got it back for them—Larissa said the buds were squished—a week later, but it shouldn't have happened at all: It's illegal for city cops to bother adults in Denver who possess an ounce or less. And the state law makes the medical pot legal. So why the hell were they harassed at all? Because the cops can. Somebody better start laying down some lawsuits there to make the city and state live up to its laws.

--In Alaska, at the urging of Governor Frank Murkowski, the state's Attorney General's office filed a notice with the State Supreme Court asking it to overturn a recent Superior Court ruling that found a new law that criminalized even small amounts of marijuana was illegal under the state constitution. In 1975 the Alaska Supreme Court ruled that possession of small amounts of cannabis in one's home was protected by the privacy clause of the state constitution and Manataska Thunderfuck became a legend (tip of the hat to High Times old Dean Latimer, who actually coined the name). Countless attempts to recriminalize personal possession in the home have been tried since then, but all have failed until the Alaskan legislature recently passed a law that not only criminalized even minor personal possession but made it punishable by jail. Fortunately the ACLU stepped in and filed suit to halt the new law's implementation and Superior Court Judge Patricia Collins ruled in July that the legislature could not make a law that attempted to supercede a State Supreme Court ruling. Hence the attempt by Gov. Murkowski and the AG to challenge Collins' ruling to the Supremes. Murkowski is on record as saying he wants personal possession criminalized because the cannabis of today is so strong it poses health risks that did not exist in 1975. Yeah, sure. I just bet that boy never smoked a spleef of Manataska Thunderfuck.

--In another utterly stupid take on the strength of pot today Antonio Maria Costa, director of the United Nation's Office on Drugs and Crime opined in the Globe and Mail that "Supporters of the legalization of cannabis would have us believe that it is a gentle, harmless substance that gives you little more than a sense of mellow euphoria," then went on to note that the "cannabis now in circulation&hellip;is many times more powerful than the weed that today's aging baby boomers smoked in college." Costa goes further, noting that "the characteristics of cannabis are no longer that different from those of other plant-based drugs, such as cocaine and heroin."

Would someone please get Costa in touch with a biologist to explain the human body and receptor sites to him? But it gets better, as he speaks of the "damage to mental health caused by cannabis use—from loss of concentration to paranoia, aggressiveness and outright psychosis" and the increase in demand for rehab treatment. Doesn't this fellow know that the demand for rehab is caused by laws that keep your record clean if you go to rehab? And unless he's talking about aggressive munchies, you got to wonder how the word "aggressiveness" got connected to pot smoking.

Costa goes on to talk about organized crime and pilots flying commercial airlines stoned and how drug control&mdash;read: The War on

Drugs&mdash;has worked so well and how we should keep it up. Yikes! Before he finished I nearly expected him to quote McCaffrey on melting down hemp shirts!

--In Faversham, England, a pilot project has been launched throughout the schools there to test children as young as 11 for drug use. According to an Aug. 1 story in the AP, the program was launched by Peter Walker, a former headmaster at the Abbey school in Faversham &ldquo;who has since gone on to become Britain&rsquo;s official ambassador for drug testing.&rdquo; Since the program began only one student has tested positive out of several hundred, which Walker attributes to fear of failing the drug test, which is conducted with a mouth swab. Talk about &ldquo;out of the mouths of babes&hellip;&rdquo;

--A new report on the use of SWAT-teams and paramilitary tactics in the War on Drugs has been released by Radley Balko, a policy analyst for the Washington DC Cato Institute, a libertarian think-tank. Among his findings are that SWAT teams raid &ldquo;more than 100 private homes&rdquo; in the US daily, and that most of those are &ldquo;no-knock raids&hellip;conducted on questionable intelligence.&rdquo; Specifically on the word of snitches looking to cut jail time or make a few bucks. And we all know how professional snitches would never lie, eh?

Balko notes that since the early 1980s, the number of SWAT team deployments has risen from about 3,000 per year to more than 40,000 per year in 2001 and is likely higher today. (Thanks to the US government which keeps giving local police forces all that shiny military hardware it doesn&rsquo;t need anymore.) Those deployments, initially intended for hostage situations and other violent confrontations, are now primarily occurring on routine drug warrants, &ldquo;many times for crimes no more serious than possession of marijuana.&rdquo;

Balko&rsquo;s report lists at least 300 wrong address raids, during which at least 40 innocent people were killed. Have I mentioned that I hate snitches?

--Last but not least was a story by Lynn Paltrow that was published on TomPaine.com in mid-July called Blaming Pregnant Women. In it Paltrow discusses an Arkansas proposal made by Representative Bob Mathis to make it illegal for pregnant women to smoke&mdash;anything. Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee lauded the idea and then suggested the proposal be expanded to include drinking alcohol.

Paltrow understands that alcohol and tobacco are not good for growing fetuses or children, but sees the potential harm from these types of proposals as much worse. She notes that in Alabama a woman was recently &ldquo;arrested and charged with child torture for giving birth to a baby that tested positive for methamphetamine,&rdquo; and that in California a jury recently deadlocked on a case in which a mother was charged with &ldquo;murdering her infant son by feeding him breast milk containing methamphetamine.&rdquo;

And in good old Texas and elsewhere in the USA they arrest mothers who test positive for pot when they give birth. Just perfect for the baby, don&rsquo;t you think?

It&rsquo;s stories like those above that make me scream. Is this really the world we want to make? Is this the best we can do?

There was, to be fair, one positive piece in all the trash. It was a story that ran in the Canadian Press titled: Wanted: Long-Term Medicinal Marijuana Supplier, Apply to Health Canada.

Seems Health Canada&rsquo;s five-year \$5.75-million contract with Prairie Plant Systems to produce medicinal and research cannabis is running out and they are willing to look at any and all proposals from potential suppliers.

Must be somebody up there who could do that job.

It would all be funny if people weren&rsquo;t dying and the jails weren&rsquo;t full.

## About the Author

Source: <http://petergormanarchive.com>