

It was a pleasure to see your timely article "Pot is Hot: Marihuana makes a comeback" (Oct. 6). Tens of thousands of Ann Arbor residents use cannabis. We would like to see real facts in an area where discussion can be completely without facts.

Ann Arbor voters have shown their intelligence and independence by repeatedly enacting only minor penalties for cannabis use. We want the factual information about its medical use, past and present. Please show the damage that prohibition does to the lives and families of solid, contributing, tax paying citizens. Outline for us the myriad ways in which resources are wasted to have cops chase Americans whose only crime is that they demand to control the inside of their own head. And, above all, please explain how important it now is to use renewable, oxygen producing, American job producing cannabis hemp as our main source of paper, fiber, fuel, and (to a large extent) medicines, food, plastics, lubricants, etc..

It is important for people to understand that the facts are now in on "pot". They have been for a long time. Hemp was critical to most world cultures from their beginnings. As Carl Sagan noted "It would be wryly interesting if, in human history, the cultivation of "marihuana" led generally to the invention of agriculture and thereby to civilization". Indeed, what other plant is so incredibly easy to grow and produces huge amounts of amazingly strong fiber, excellent food (seeds), burnable fuel and oil. It was used in Europe, the Middle and Far East, in Africa, and even in pre-columbian South America.

Without it Columbus would not have had the ropes, sails, or charts that he needed to cross the Atlantic. England could not have ruled the seas. American colonists could pay their taxes in hemp - there were periods when refusal to grow hemp could land a farmer in jail. President George Washington wrote "Make the most of the Indian Hemp seed, and sow it everywhere" . Thomas Jefferson called Hemp a "necessity... to the wealth and protection of the country", even smuggling seeds from China while he was in France. Ben Franklin started our first paper mill using hemp. Later, Abraham Lincoln stated the only position which is compatible with our American Bill of Rights. "Prohibition", he said, "makes a crime out of things that are not crimes. ...a prohibition law strikes a blow at the very principles upon which our government was founded" . In fact, from the 1840's to 1900 cannabis made up one half of all medicines sold, with little fear of its "high".

Nearly any concern about cannabis can be answered by a reading of "The Report of the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission" of

1894 and the report of the LaGuardia Commission of the New York Medical Society in 1938. These were large, controlled, impartial studies. Cannabis was found not to be physically, mentally, or morally harmful. Every major study or Commission since then, whether British, Canadian, Consumers Union, Nixon Administration, City Bar of New York, National Academy of Sciences, State of California etc. has at least recommended decriminalization. President Carter wanted the possession of up to one ounce legalized. In 1988, after lengthy review of the data, the Chief Administrative Law Judge of the Drug Enforcement Administration called cannabis "probably the safest therapeutically active substance known to man". There is no known lethal dose. No D.E.A. official will debate on talk shows. The "Jamaican" and "Costa Rican" studies have shown no ill effects in people who smoked very heavily for over 40 years.

However, I don't really need this data. Most of my friends and I began smoking in 1968. Our brains, our careers, and our children are doing just fine, thank you. Our biggest fear is being destroyed by this un-american war-on-drugs Gestapo. We have seen what alcohol can do and do not want our children to become alcohol users.

I would love to exercise my free speech rights by signing my own name to this. However I would lose my job, my home, and maybe my family. Shades of the inquisition, eh?

So how and why did "pot" get outlawed? It was basically a Hearst/Dupont conspiracy.

First Hearst's papers created something called Marihuana, a new Mexican/Negro perversion that made people insane, violent, sexual. Americans were never told that this was their old medicine "tincture of cannabis". Cannabis Prohibition was carefully disguised as a tax act and very quietly slid through congressional committees. Hearst wanted scare stories to sell papers, he hated Mexicans, and he had vast timber holdings. Dupont held the American patent for Nylon and knew that machinery had just been invented which would make hemp fiber extremely inexpensive. The details of all this have been published in "The Emperor has no Clothes" by Jack Herer.

Mother Nature was squeezed out, not allowed to compete. "Better living through Chemistry" was the motto.

Now, however, Mother is dying. We can see it, smell it, feel it. God's greatest plant gift is being trampled.

Big petrochemical, timber, cotton, pharmaceutical, police, and criminal industries don't care that a solution to many of earth's major problems is at hand. They protect themselves. Booze and nicotine industries pump millions into "anti-drug" efforts as they kill 500,000 Americans a year.

Please step up your coverage of the current "pot renaissance" - and of the uses of hemp. Did you know that neither Henry Ford nor Rudolph Diesel saw any need to power cars with oil dug from the ground? Human civilization has huge problems now. Hemp can solve most of our problems, as it always has. I fear, however, that we will continue to poison ourselves until it is too late.

sincerely

Alfred E. Newman