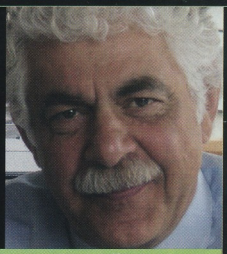
Evidently I have underestimated the cruelty of the democratic process here in the United States. Or maybe it's not the process; it's just the processors. I'm talking about medical marijuana. Sure, you don't have to limit yourself to medical pot cases to hear the tales of torture. Most of the 800,000 or so pot busts each year in this country are accompanied by personal catastrophe and tragedy. Suffering is the almost inevitable consequence of getting caught pursuing the giggles or the munchies.



words: Jeffrey Steinborn

A MAJOR MEDICAL MARIJUANA MESS

But the medical users, – the real ones – and those who serve them sincerely, are consistently the most moving stories of all. The patients are for real. They are suffering. They get relief, often dramatic or even startling, from the use of cannabis. Many are able to abandon their addiction to disabling pharmaceutical drugs with the aid of cannabis. Nowhere in my practice have I met such a group of brave and suffering people.

So I supported medical marijuana from the beginning. I agreed that this was the place to start. The patients were compelling and their need was more pressing than the needs of the recreational users. The citizens – voters, politicians, police, judges – these folks would see the need and react in a humane and compassionate way. I never dreamed it could be otherwise. Evidently I have underestimated our species' capacity for cruelty. Since Washington overwhelmingly passed a medical marijuana law, things have deteriorated to what many would now call "precipitous decline." Police terrorize patients and make fun of their medical authorizations. Courts regularly convict patients who have done everything in their power to comply with the law. Several of the recent court of appeals cases in Washington involved patients who had consulted lawyers and even attempted to coordinate with the police. There is no situation so desperate that the police cannot make it worse. The same police they went to for help arrested them. The same justice system they had attempted to consult and adopt made them felons. The appellate courts applied judicial logic that many would describe as cowardly.

Then there's the distribution system. The law doesn't provide for a distribution system. Co-ops have proliferated. Some are just fine, but the universe of medical marijuana dispensaries is a broad one indeed. In it you may encounter a fairy princess in the company of an armed biker bandit, and the spectrum between. With the good and the dedicated come the carpetbaggers. As long as there is a prohibition there will be huge profits involved in the distribution of pot – even if the market is limited to medical use. Look how well the pharmaceutical industry does working the exact same market. As long as there is cash there will be carpetbaggers. People who are just plain capitalists. Now, there's nothing wrong with capitalism. It's just that the medical marijuana movement is so wedded to its righteous cause that even one or two profiteers is all the hostile press and the other patrons of prohibition need to point to scuttle the ship.

What am I saying? It's simple: patients beware. No matter how hard you try to comply with the law, there is no guarantee you won't be arrested. There is no guarantee that you and your family won't be terrorized in your home by anonymous masked swat teams who would just as soon kill you but will settle for inflicting a few hours of abject terror and humiliation. You are not safe behind the protection of the current medical marijuana laws. I advise you to continue to act as though what you are doing is a serious felony. Serious enough to subject you and your family to trauma from which they will never, ever, recover. As with all other liberties, there is only one way to protect this one: you have to protect the others as well. In this case it means we must all seek legalization of responsible adult use of cannabis. Period. Not just patients. Not just outlaws. All adults.

We are always saying: "Let the Law take its Course" but what we really mean is: "Let the Law take OUR Course. - Will Rogers