

The Thin Green Line

By Jeffrey Steinborn

PROHIBITION WORKS

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a Communist.
Then they came for the trade unionists
and I did not speak out
because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for me
and there was no one left
to speak out for me.

German Pastor Martin Niemöller, upon his liberation from Dachau Prison Camp in 1945.

With so much of my writing devoted to how to avoid the hand of the oppressive government, perhaps I have failed to talk enough about the need to keep our own hand in the democratic process. We can't just sit home, suck on a bong, and contemplate spiritual matters you know. The war on drugs threatens the freedom of everyone who reads this magazine. It's a dangerous entrenched sociopathic social policy. It's a conscious fraud. It's not about saving us from drugs. Not even about saving us from the munchies and the giggles. Really now. Is there some lawmaker, law enforcement officer, or judge out there who doesn't know that the inevitable result of prohibition is proliferation? Not just proliferation of the prohibited substance. Proliferation of the uncontrolled market – the "black market." Folding money in the hands of outlaws who pay no taxes. Cops corrupted. Minorities devastated, not just by the lack of honest answers to the problems created by the outlawed substance, but by the lure of the "easy money" of the black market. Think about it: neither education nor resume' needed. The black market is like reality TV. The ruthless and the luckiest make it. Why should a person with some competitive disadvantage resist, despite the danger of prison? In many neighborhoods the black market is more attractive than the Junior Achievement Program. But everyone knows this, no?

Keep that in mind. The Patrons of Prohibition know they serve an evil master while privately scorning the public good. It's all built on lies. The problem is, the voting public is ready to buy the lies. You can fool some of the people some of the time and that's good enough. Whatever happened to that instinctive (North) American distrust of and resistance to authority?

I know. My assignment is to write legal tips for the user of (un)"controlled substances." How to avoid the unconscionable consequences of the drug prohibition laws. I will continue to do so. Later. You have to pull a drowning child from the river.

That's what my advice is usually about – folks with immediate legal problems to be solved. But when you see that the river is full of drowning children, someone has to go upstream to see why they're all getting thrown in the river.

That's why today we're talking about saving tomorrow's potential defendants. We're talking politics.

Our leaders and most of the folks who would like to have their jobs know that prohibition doesn't work. Unless they have chosen to exercise the power of leadership ignorantly, they know what prohibition inevitably does and doesn't do. They also know that every government study for the last 150 years has recommended legalizing marijuana. Not just medical marijuana. Marijuana as a non-criminal choice for responsible adults. These well documented recommendations have been ignored. Why? Because the real goal of prohibition is not prohibition. The real goals are many. All are unstated. Look at the list of inevitable results. Those are the real goals. Who profits from prohibition? The pharmaceutical industry, which spends billions of dollars every year pushing drugs that kill more folks than all the (un)controlled substances in the world. The law enforcement industry, including cops, prosecutors, judges, jailers, jail builders, and so on. The politicians, who have found that getting tough about the voters' fears is a better way to get elected than to get smart.

Well, that's a beginning. I could, of course, go on and on and on But either you get the point now or you won't. If you are reading this, you are probably not in jail. Two million Americans are. The U.S. has 25% of the world's prisoners, with only 4% of the world's population. We are the world's jailer. And for what? Crimes that rock the planet? Crimes that rock the nation? No. Mostly minor drug crimes committed by the poor.

It's great to be free to read this mag and experiment with the substances it describes and explores. Want to keep that freedom? Are you smart enough to see that your freedoms are in jeopardy? That freedom is always in jeopardy? If so, why don't you put some of that brilliance, creativity, energy, stubbornness, or whatever you think your strength is -- put it to work every now and then for the common good. Put down the bong. Clean up. Leave the tie dye and patchouli home. Go out and get involved in educating your community and then your representatives. Your goal is preserving freedom – and that's how it's done.

First you may need to educate yourself. The Internet offers many places to do so. Start with NORML.org or POTBUST.com. If we just say home and enjoy the freedom we have, who will protect our freedoms? Who will stand up for you? If you are smart enough to appreciate this mag, you are probably smart enough to make a difference if you choose to get involved in the process by which freedoms are either taken or protected. If you don't, well. . . . Don't complain when it's your door that comes down. If you can't get off your butt and your bong to help protect the liberty you seem to treasure, what makes you think anyone else cares enough to protect it for you?

Sometimes I get clients who complain when they learn just how bad it is to be a customer of the criminal justice system. I ask them: "Did you vote? Do you participate? If the answer is "no," I wonder why they expected that someone else might have defended their liberty if they won't do it for themselves?

One lesson of history is indisputable: The only way to protect your liberty is to protect the liberty that is threatened today – no matter whose it is.

