

CANNABIS LAW REFORM RALLY 15<sup>th</sup> annual gathering

# Mardi Grass

## The Wash-up

and 2007 souvenir liftout pictorial

# Pigs, Pot and Politics

By Sophia Hoeben

At this year's Rally for Cannabis Law Reform, the Sniffer Pig and Straight Cops were big hits, providing all with the comical relief needed to relax any tension over another possible police invasion. The women in camouflage (much better looking than most cops) looked mighty tough as they handed out summonses to anyone still straight and the pig looked like no pushover either!

The Mardi Grass atmosphere was picking up by Saturday when I noticed everyone I saw was wearing an ear to ear grin, maybe due to a good harvest, or like me, revelling in the absence of the large numbers of uniformed 'nasties' we had in town last year. By late afternoon, I had even begun deluding myself into thinking they may have finally seen the light. On Sunday however, I was again disappointed as I watched the same variety of militaristic armed men amassing in clusters at the Cecil Street turn-off. Were they really contemplating staging yet another one of their inept unnecessary invasions of

our town at the expense of the taxpayer? (Last year's fiasco was said to have cost us all 4 million dollars!)

When another 'six-pack' strutting down the footpath across the road suddenly turned and began running towards Cecil Street,



I imagined something big was happening and went to have a look. From Mordang's I could see them arresting just one person, a docile bare-chested man, who in panic had run the opposite direction to the small army of sixteen police ready to pounce on him. I'm not sure there's many people who would have acted any differently!

A Nimbin shopkeeper related the story of a relative who had come in hope of enjoying the Mardi Grass only to find himself man-handled by the police when arrested for a small amount of the herb. As the cop pushed his arm up behind his back, he twisted his wrist. When he asked him nicely to release it a little to ease the pain, the cop

responded by first releasing, then quickly twisting it harder until the man's wrist was sprained and painful all the way to his shoulder for days later.

These 21st century 'Robocops' are completely immune to any niceties and very different to the relatively non-aggressive laidback Australian copper we all once knew. Back in those days, they didn't search your bag and question you if you happened to ask for directions, as one young Japanese tourist discovered to her complete dismay. These boys have an all-American flavour and are specially trained to project their malice so proficiently, they scare most people witless.

Amongst the many stories of alleged police brutality committed on friends and family in our communities are those committed on our visitors when arrested for extremely small amounts of the herb. Do the police and those in power really want Nimbin to cease being a tourist destination by wiping out trade of its local produce? Because with these sort of aggressive tendencies from the so-called Australian constabulary,



I can't imagine any other result but the tourist numbers dropping.

The bare-chested man arrested by the not-so-sweet sixteen was placed in Grafton Jail for seven days while he awaited his court appearance. Although arrested for only an ounce of the herb and a bong, the police opposed bail apparently on the grounds he had run away, he was from Melbourne and two officers had tripped over their own feet in pursuit of him. This kind of justice seems a bit lop-sided when the perpetrators of violent crimes such as rape and murder, and of course the Corporate criminals, are often inexplicably awarded bail after having ruined the lives of thousands of people.

Where is the crime in smoking marijuana? What does it do to anyone but the person consuming it? Perhaps Marijuana is not the real reason behind the increase of police on our streets (Nimbin is about to get nine of the darlings). Perhaps the reason for the crackdown has more to do with the real estate drive to develop the town so it will be more acceptable for the potential speculators.

In any case, Commander Lyons' mathematics is all wrong, because based on the statistics of the arrest of the Melbourne man at sixteen to one, with an attrition rate of two per arrest, then nine police will only be able to arrest half a dope smoker at a time.

