

Policing Mardi Grass

Another day, another year in the Drug War



by Graeme Dunstan

Three aspects of the policing of the 2008 Nimbin Mardi Grass gave organisers cause for praise and gratitude.

First the policing of the alcohol ban in Cullen Street and the tight restrictions applied to the Nimbin Hotel not only reduced drunken behaviour in the streets but also reduced litter.

Second the incidents of assault in the crowd were low and everyone, cops, hempsters and residents alike, are happy about that. Police of course are claiming full responsibility, but maybe the key factor was a happy and peaceful crowd, stoned and grooving on the cannabis culture which the HEMP Embassy represents so artfully.

Maybe there would be less violence if the police presence was less heavy. For sure, given that some of the violence involved reactions to police officers.

Third we hempsters are grateful to the police for reminding us of our mission; to wit, to end prohibition and the 35-year old Drug War which has now evolved into a Terror War waged by police professionals against the rest of us.

Inspector Dave Driver, he of the eyes of glittering intensity and Duty Officer for the Nimbin MardiGrass, told me that my accusation that the police were warring against Nimbin citizens and their visitors was nonsense.

Maybe my eyes deceived me as I watched blue coverall para-militia patrols armed with Glockes and sprays moving through the Mardi Grass crowd like the SAS in an Afghanistani village.

Maybe the occupation of Nimbin streets and fields by parading mounted police (= anti-crowd cavalry) was meant as a friendly police contribution to MardiGrass, though it has never been an equestrian event, and the connection between horses and hemp remains unexplained.

Maybe I lack trust when I come up against police secrecy.

I asked Inspector Dave what his police were doing at MardiGrass - what their numbers, what their resources, what their tactics? - and was told it was secret information which if released

might compromise "operations".

If secret operations isn't war against the people, what is?

I have since read the evidence produced by police to get the Hemp Bar and Nimbin Museum shut down and it is a collation of undercover reports of cannabis dealing witnessed (indeed instigated by) police over six years.

Many, many hours of planning have gone into, much report writing and many meetings of police talking to police in secret - with maybe the odd National Party hack sitting in.

This is what local police culture has become under the aegis of Drug War warrior, Superintendent Bluey Lyons: police talking to police in secret and, so removed from community life has its command become, that it is blind to the aggression of its posturing and the arrogance of its presumptions.

The Nimbin MardiGrass is an international success story. Given that so much inspired effort and goodwill by so many local people goes into producing it as a pleasing crowd event, artful, joyful and safe, it grates with me that police presume that they have some divine right of intervention and presence at the Mardi Grass.



And it grates with me that Police Media Unit disinformation about 80 arrests gazumped the post-MardiGrass media nationally. A big and successful cannabis law reform rally had been had, thousands of people voting for an end to prohibition and yet the police claimed centre stage with their Drug War body count news.

The hypocrisy of their moral stance grates with me too.

Just over 10 years ago the Wood Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service found the organisation to be "endemically corrupt". Commissioner Wood recommended drug law reform as the means of restricting the prohibition profits that fuel police corruption and he recommended a major change of police culture.

Commissioner Peter Ryan was imported from the UK to achieve this end with what he called "community" or "embedded" policing.

But Ryan was soon undone by the



ruling Labor clique, drug law reform (remember the Drug Summit of 1999?) was sidelined and instead the NSW Police Service became the NSW Police Force and was rewarded with new weapons and new powers of arrest and surveillance.

At the time of Wood Commission, it was thought that academic training for police officers would lift their literacy and performance. Officers with long beat experience were retired to make way for these smarter young commanders.

But it hasn't worked out as expected. Academia has proven to be of little influence on police culture. A much more significant influence has been the War of Terror and the training up of a whole new range of police skilled in weaponry, marching up and down, secrecy and hit squad operations.

Drug War and crowd suppression operations suit these cops as snugly as their black leather gloves. This is what we got at Sydney APEC and it's what we got at Nimbin MardiGrass.

So this is what it has come to, friends, an endemically corrupt NSW State government served by an endemically corrupt police Force in search of a Terror War.

But oh, how Nimbin undoes all comers. All is not well in the ranks. While Bluey fronts the media looking like a frog on Valium, the ship he commands has sprung leaks.

The HEMP Embassy was tipped off about the Aprils Fools Day raids but no one believed the caller. How could we?

But information leaked to the HEMP Embassy from an anonymous source during Mardi Grass suggested that 30 undercovers were patrolling the crowd on Saturday and Sunday and setting up busts of known dealers for the patrols of paramilitia to take out of the crowd.

I announced it on the MardiGrass PA in Cullen Street. Inspector Driver heard me and when I met him 15 minutes later his first question was: "Where did you get your information?"

At first I thought he was objecting to misinformation and responded saying: "Sorry. Tell me the exact number and I will go back to the PA and correct my error at once." But no. In his eyes I saw that he was pissed off and that my figure of 30 undercovers was right.

Somewhere someone is laughing, and it ain't Bluey Lyons.

May a long time sun shine upon us all.



Nimbin's Cannabis Cup this year brought forth a bumper crop of top-quality high-yield entries that organisers have called 'The best of the North Coast'.

Each of the 53 large samples from nine different growers had a varietal name, some identifying their seed company source, but these details were kept secret for the blind test, which would rival the judging of produce at any agricultural show.

Points were awarded in two categories, for presentation and fragrance, and for flavour and effect, under the watchful eye of HEMP Embassy stewards and ganja faeries.

Cannabis activist Andrew Kavasilas (pictured) said, "This is a pretty big deal for the growers. They're all very proud of their efforts."

Experienced judges noted the presence of kitchen

garden aromas in many of the entries this year, including basil, thyme, chilli, papaya and strawberry overtones.

The whole process was filmed by a French-Canadian documentary film crew.

After exhaustive sampling and lengthy consideration, the final points tally revealed the best of show to be number 32, one of the smallest samples, with a complex peppery taste complimented by cedar aftertastes.

Its varietal name was

'Little Nimbin',

closely followed

by second place

winner 'Purple

Skunk' (no.

8) and third,

'Black Domina'

(no. 40), all grown

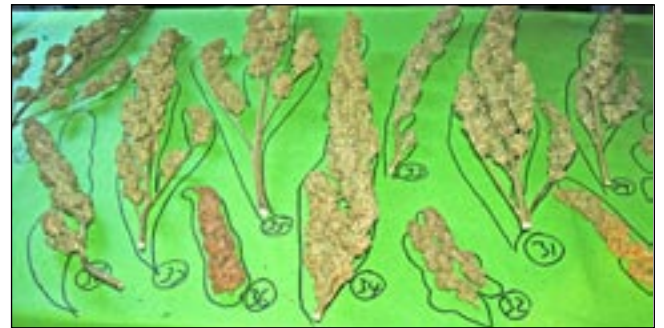
outdoors.

The best heads will

represent the North Coast

at the Sydney Cannabis Cup

later in the year.



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Medicinal cannabis plea

by S. von Eichland

After returning home on Monday from the Nimbin MardiGrass Festival, I was amazed to see the police claim on the local news that their operation in Nimbin on the weekend was a big success. However from personal observation, I believe their only success was to waste thousands of taxpayer dollars taking the riot squad to peaceful Nimbin where they are not required.

No, I feel the congrats and success belongs to the excellent, intelligent and cultured people of Nimbin and to everyone who attended and made it another great violence-free celebration of our diversity and culture. Everyone I spoke to, were somewhat amazed that the riot police were required and I wonder if the police will feel the need, to again bring the riot squad next year? What will this achieve?

For the police to claim that drugs seized was a success is also hard to believe, for it is the state designed, police enforced laws that create and fuel the underground industry, they then pursue.

True success also belongs to Dr Keith Bolton, presenting the results of many years work with hemp. He has proven the usefulness and viability of hemp with diverse products and the ability to save acres of trees and also to Ed Rosenthal, longtime medicinal cannabis campaigner from California.

Ed has succeeded in making available medicinal quality cannabis to people in need of relief and has worked for many years toward correcting California's laws so that medical patients can access effective medicare.

I have a question for Supt Lyons. I ask you to consider my position. At age 17, I crashed a motorbike at 100 kmh, suffering severe lower spinal injuries, since then suffering severe pain from sciatica and osteo arthritis brought on by the accident. My doctor assessed me as best the public health system would allow, gave me some prescription painkillers and said I could not work or injure my back again or I could end up a paraplegic

I didn't want to sit around for the rest of my life plus I had a family to support, so I continued to work and tried to manage my pain with increasingly stronger painkillers, with the inevitable result being severe stomach ulcers and then my body shut down so badly, I could not look at food and went from weighing 90 kgs to 50, at which point my doctor gave up, refused to give me more painkillers and told me I had to quit work, go home and if the pain got too bad, just lay down, there was nothing more he could do



for me.

However I still had to suffer excruciating pain and as a father, the hardest thing to do is to try and explain to your young sons why you can never run and play soccer with them.

Once a friend saw me stumble and witnessed me suffering several hours of pain. He left and came back with a joint. I smoked it and was amazed. Within five minutes, I had great relief, to the point where I could nearly walk normally again. I then get educated real quick, for once in my life seeing a light at the end of the dark, depressing tunnel.

I went to Nimbin where intelligent, compassionate people helped me and I found a variety of cannabis called Kali Mix that provided excellent pain relief with a clear effect, leaving my head clear to think and function. To get this level of pain relief from prescription medicines, I would be unable to function or be asleep. Sometimes now I can have a bit of a game with the boys when the weather is good.

After three years of the best therapy and treatment I could find, I now use cannabis and bee-stings as my only pain relief, am self-employed, now contributing back to society as well as providing for my boys as a single parent and this regained quality of life has only been possible because of cannabis used as medicine. So my question is this, Supt Lyons. Should I keep the law and give up my job and my quality of life and sit at home doing nothing but suffering or should I continue to smoke and work, look after my boys and try to have some sort of normal life? What would you do?

I call for an open intelligent debate on the medicinal cannabis issue, opinion polls or a referendum on the subject and government-sponsored national cannabis trials. We, the citizens of this country deserve no less. Politicians, it is time for some action.

See you at Mardi Grass '09.



Space has big hit with Tatt show

A large crowd crammed into the Nimbin Bowling Club during MardiGrass for the second annual Pot Art Tattoo Art competition.

The 45 entries were up from 31 last year, and were described by organiser, Space as "the highest quality Nimbin has seen."

The overall winner was Yugi, from Japan, who sported traditional Japanese style over most of his body.

There was a strong female contingent this year, with all female categories filled.

Among the local winners,



Sally took out best fairy, Tania won best small colour, Luke had the best hemscape, a Nimbin street scene, Kog had the best overall pot tattoo, and Donna best large colour with her new tattoo of the big joint, Chicken George and Cassie on her calf.

While the judges, Margaret, Elspeth and Helen deliberated, the audience was entertained by local punk rockers The Antibodies, which made it a fun show.

Prizes of T-shirts and Certificates were donated by Pete Davidson of Creative Tattoo Art, and designed by local artist Rick.

Proceeds from the event, some \$450, were donated to the NNIC's Friday Soup Kitchen.



Space makes the presentation to soup kitchen organiser, Gail M. Clarke



Legalise yeah, but how?

from the HEMP Embassy

Dr Alex Wodak stimulated considerable discussion in Sydney following MardiGrass and his idea to distribute pot legally through post offices. We have had a long up-close look at the cannabis laws and see a social insanity, resistant to correction. One day those laws will be recognised as a tool of discrimination, and a stand against a tide of change. What can be done?

Decriminalisation preserves all the faults inherent in prohibition, and is no solution.

A legal regulated market is the only remedy for the negative consequences of Prohibition, which include: a thriving black market, clogging of the courts and prisons with users, disproportionately adverse effects of drug law enforcement on poor and minority communities, diversion of police resources



David Peace=OneLove

from "real crime", corruption of public officials and loss of respect for the law by communities.

Legal regulated cannabis is the logical aim, and the only way that will end the black market is by offering better quality or lower price than the black market can supply.

When and if the day comes that power circles can see the benefits of such an approach it would be good for there to be coherent models, prepared in the hope that further legal

and social catastrophes can be avoided.

The Hemp Embassy are looking at available models, and sifting through these existing proposals from various countries and organisations, all coming to similar conclusions, but from varying approaches. Already a number of these same regulation proposals are available in pdf form at hempembassy.net

We invite comment on any aspect of these proposals from interested parties. How do you see cannabis traded and used in a world beyond prohibition? Please email the Embassy or put your ideas on paper and drop them in.

Should we adopt a cottage industry model, or the Government grows and distributes, or big business steps in as they do, or what? These are the sort of details that need broadly acceptable answers.





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