

RiverOpinion

The Grass Is Always Greener

Richard L. Hershatter
Contributing Columnist

*Ob, the grass is always greener
In the other fellow's yard,
Where air seems so much cleaner,
And life is not so hard;
But that is only how it seems;
The whole thing's just a joke,
When all the very happy dreams
Fade out in swirling smoke.*

News item (N.Y. Times): Cannabis Clubs Confound California

The west coast's largest and most liberal sovereign state, sometimes known as "The Duchy of Schwarzenegger," has come upon contentious times.

After the passage of Proposition 215 (California is noted for its propositions, and grammarians are careful never to end a sentence with one), the use and sale of marijuana to patients suffering from chronic pain, illness or infirmity became legal.

The change in the law, which is probably the most radical legal metamorphosis since Prohibition, instantly created three problems:

First, who among us does not suffer from "chronic pain, illness or infirmity?"

There may be a few healthy souls in the United States who do not fit the category, but certainly none in California.

And if there is a hidden cadre there who are not eligible, there is no dearth of doctors, acupuncturists and tattooed medicine men who, for a fee, would gladly certify a needy individual as suffering from chronic something-or-other.

The second problem is that marijuana, or "grass," as it used to be affectionately called, is still illegal in the United States, of which California, notwithstanding the regal Arnold, is considered a part.

In fact, the Supreme Court of the United States as

recently as last summer, upheld federal authority to prosecute the possession and use of the plant for medical purposes, in spite of the existence of laws approved by voters in at least a dozen states. (And that ruling came down even before Justice Alito took the bench.)

But the biggest obstacle, by far, to the establishment of the so-called "pot clubs," is that caused by the NIMBY principal. The majority of the California voting populace wants them, but "Not In My Back Yard."

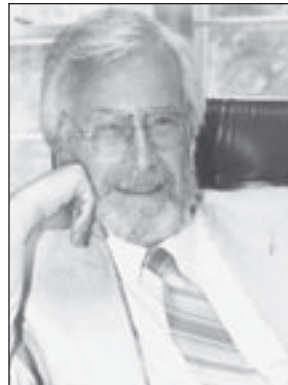
There has always been the concern amongst the citizenry that smoking grass is just the beginning of greater, more serious addictions, such as cigarettes, alcohol (drinking, not rubbing), cocaine, heroin, angel dust and chocolate.

Scientific research has actually proven that all alcoholics were originally babies, from which it can be deduced that childbirth leads to alcoholism.

San Francisco's zoning authorities have enacted a ruling that prohibited cannabis clubs from opening within 1,000 feet of a school or community center. Even with the restriction, the city has over 30 clubs serving approximately 25,000 patients, including a prime location on the famous Fisherman's Wharf.

Although the Wharf is a tourist attraction, far from any school or community center, protests have been voiced.

One woman complained that she walks in the area, with her 18-month-old son in a stroller, and dreads the thought of the child seeing the pot club. One can almost sympathize with the mother's plight, especially with the proliferation of Starbucks outlets in the city. If the baby is not traumatized by the sight of a green weed, passing a



coffee outlet could very well afflict him with the effects of second-hand caffeine.

A merchant in the area also complained. He approved of the sale of grass, but feared that smokers would congregate in the area and clog the streets with double-parked cars.

Now THAT'S a problem to give one pause, but presumably the FBI and CIA could be brought in to assist the local constabulary in maintaining freedom of the streets.

Another citizen voices fears that the presence of a pot club might attract the wrong clientele, which he described as "riffraff." High quality cannabis comes in over 55 varieties; so hopefully, the store owner could cut objections in half by limiting the sale to a classification that only appeals to the riff and repels the raff.

The use or consumption of grass has its parallel right here in Florida. Cannabis is still illegal, but sea grass, upon which manatees and other sea creatures feed, is a very desirable, protected commodity.

Last month the Sarasota Herald-Tribune reported that a marine biologist and the local environmental group known as Manasota-88 had filed a lawsuit against the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, alleging failure to fully protect sea grass beds in the Port Manatee area.

The outcome of the litigation cannot be predicted at this time, but in the interim, hopefully no baby manatees will be traumatized by passing near an unrestored sea grass bed.

**Yes, the world is full of many kinds of grasses,
And some are good, but some are bad to use;
One needs to trust the wisdom of the masses:
Which kind to kill and which to safely choose.**

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I Don't Care Where You Were on 9/11

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Contributing Columnist

You may have noticed that people remembering where they were on 9/11 is a staple of commemoration activities and cable newscasts during the fifth anniversary of the Muslim terrorist attacks. Then, courtesy of MSNBC, CNN and FOX, they share the poignant stories with us. Frankly, after 20 minutes of some news babe ruminating about where she or some guest was on 9/11, you find yourself hoping that O.J. Simpson kills someone else and again commences circumventing Los Angeles in a white Bronco. Even that yawner was riveting compared to personal reminiscences. I can remember where I was when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, when John Kennedy was assassinated and when the U.S.S. Cole was attacked. I won't bother to share the information with you because it is absolutely irrelevant to the event.

I am also seriously tired of the "blame game" which now seems to be the current fashion in our political debate. Democratic Senate Leader Harry Reid could not wait to criticize President Bush for making a political speech the night of Sept. 11. Aside from the fact that any speech given by a politician is a political speech, Reid's effort seems strained and overboard, especially since most critics found the speech relatively innocuous.

The recent controversy about the ABC film concerning 9/11 is another good example of the blame game. Most critics have found the film finds ample fault with both the Clinton and Bush administration. The Clinton machine went to work immediately demanding the film be changed or not shown. Leading Democratic senators even threatened ABC stations with loss of broadcast licenses if they didn't come to heel. One can only imagine the outrage in the press if that letter had come from Republican senators.

Republican supporters, not content to let the Democrats be the only fools in town, went on the attack with the message 9/11 was mostly the fault of Bill Clinton. The fact is, Clinton did mount an effort, which at the time seemed appropriate to the threat. Oh yes, he did bomb an aspirin factory thought to be making

bombs, but as Bush has proven, there are mistakes in war. Any reasonable analysis would find that Clinton likely responded to the terrorist threat much as George Bush would have had he been president in the late 90s.

The 9/11 Commission basically charged both administrations with missing opportunities and an unwillingness to take risks. It didn't help Clinton that Sandy Berger, his National Security Administration chief, was caught stealing documents from the National Archives prior to his testimony before the Commission. Berger, now known as "Pants Berger," stuffed some of the documents down his pants. One could only assume the documents would have shed an unfortunate light on the Clinton administration.

Clinton and Bush were both in an unfortunate position prior to 9-11. Even if either had connected the dots, what kind of cooperation from the public, the press or state and local officials could they have expected? How could either Bush or Clinton explain to the Congress or the American people the necessity of imposing the new security measures prior to 9/11? Even now — after 9/11 and the attacks in London and Spain — many people charge the Bush administration with deliberately creating a false atmosphere of fear. They go so far as to allege the recent arrests of suspected terrorists in London were staged to help British Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush.

Forget all the charges and counter charges, there are two principal reasons the 9/11 plot succeeded; they are the same two reasons the Japanese could successfully attack Pearl Harbor. In both cases we underestimated the intelligence, ability and motivation of our enemy, and in both cases no one really believed it could happen — not the Democrats, not the Republicans, not the Congress, not the American people.



Bret Stephens asks a relevant question to consider during commemoration week. In an op-ed piece in the Wall Street Journal he asks, "Here's a puzzle: Why is it so frequently the case that the people who have the most at stake in the battle against Islamic extremism and the most to lose when Islamism gains — namely, liberals — are typically the most reluctant to fight it?" The "Common Dreams News Center," a left-leaning blog believes the choice is between Islamic Fascism or Republican Fascism. A quick reading of the blog leads one to believe they would probably go with the Islamic version if forced to make a choice. Then you have Michael Moore holding forth with his belief the insurgents in Iraq are the equivalent of the American revolutionaries of 1776.

Why does the loony left seem to line up with Muslim Fascism? The writer, Christopher Hitchens, believes the fall of the Soviet Union and its satellites has deprived the left of "peoples democracies" to support. If you doubt this, he recommends you read the rants of George Galloway, British MP, and former U.S. Attorney General, Ramsey Clark. These two and their friends also support Castro and Kim Jong-il. According to Hitchens, one reason, "not quite so well laid out by the rather 10th-rate theoreticians of today's left, is that once you decide that American-led 'globalization' is the main enemy, then any revolt against it is better than none at all."

There is, at the very least, much confusion on the far left as to the merits of the war against Muslim jihadists. Stephens points out some of this confusion, "Consider, for instance, QUIT! — Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism — a group that, in its hatred for Israel, curiously fails to notice that Tel Aviv is the only city in Middle East that annually hosts a gay-pride parade." QUIT! also seems to be unaware Muslim countries execute homosexuals or anyone advocating such a lifestyle.

Another reason according to Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-born, former Dutch parliamentarian, "is the superficial confluence between the bugaboos of the Chomskyite left and modern-day Islamism. Many social democrats

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