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 limitations.

Inspector Dave Driver, he of the eyes that betray, saw that he was pissed off and that my eyes deceived me as I walked this cordon para-military patrols armed with Glockcs 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 media nationally. A big and successful cannabis law reform rally had been held, thousands of people turning out to protest against 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 restructuring the prohibition protraits 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 go at Sydney APEC and it's what we go 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 Blaye fronts the media looking like a frog on Valium, the ship he commands has sprung leaks.

The HEMP Embassy was tipp'd off about the April's Food 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 undercover cops 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?"

"Where did you get your information?"

At first I thought he was objecting to misformation 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 undercover cops was right. Somewhere someone is laughing, and it ain't Blaye Lyons.

"May a long time sun shine upon us all.

"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."

Nimbin's Cannabis Cup this year brought forth a bumper crop of top-quality high-yield strains that organisations 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 related 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 Kavasila (pictureed) said, "This is a pretty big deal for the growers. They're all very proud of their efforts."

Canberra's Best Buds

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

The best beers will represent the North Coast at the Sydney Cannabis Cup later in the year.

And it grates with me that Police Media Unit disinformation about 80 arrests allegedly made by the Nimbin MardiGrass media nationally. A big and successful cannabis law reform rally had been held, thousands of people turning out to protest against 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.

"Where did you get your information?"

At first I thought he was objecting to misformation 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 undercover cops was right. Somewhere someone is laughing, and it ain't Blaye Lyons.

"May a long time sun shine upon us all.

RVBYESOUE

SMOKING PARAPHERNALIA & FINE USED BOOKS
21 CARRINGTON STREET Lismore 2480
PO BOX 1184 Lismore (02) 6622 4676

Best Buds

Nimbin GoodTimes

Happy High Herbs

82a Cullen Street Nimbin
Open 7 days
phone/fax 6689 1385
www.happyhighherbs.com.au
Also in Nottoway, Fitzroy and Surfers Paradise

June 2008

www.nimbingsonetimes.com
A large crowd crammed into the Nimbin Bowling Club during MarchGrass for the second annual Pot Art Tattoo Art competition. The 49 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 beat 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. Prices 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.

Legalise yeah, but how?

from the HEMP Embassy

Dr Alex Wodak stimulated considerable discussion in Sydney following MarchGrass and his idea to distribute pot legally through post offices.

"The Oasis"

"The Oasis" was proving popular this year, with the police finally allowing healing booths to operate. The booth was run by a localاً.

Legalised cannabis is a 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.

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, dogging of the courts and prisons with users, disproportionately adverse effects of drug law enforcement on poor and minority communities, diversion of police resources 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.

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, dogging of the courts and prisons with users, disproportionately adverse effects of drug law enforcement on poor and minority communities, diversion of police resources 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.

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, dogging of the courts and prisons with users, disproportionately adverse effects of drug law enforcement on poor and minority communities, diversion of police resources 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.

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, dogging of the courts and prisons with users, disproportionately adverse effects of drug law enforcement on poor and minority communities, diversion of police resources 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.