

Saturday Night: 2001

George and his wife had a real blast at Harry's last night. It was the usual suburban Saturday night get-together of limited lives and secure resignation to the future however, George (loan manager at the bank), wasn't hungover and the year was 2001. It was only one of perhaps two or three Primrose Park pot parties; Primrose Park is THE new subdivision with the distant view of water through the Pilkington Plate Twindow (Reg'd T'mark). "George, says wife over orange juice, our Johnny drinks alcohol. It was at the Moore boy's party Friday night he's getting to be a problem."

Our age and contemporary history is subject to an avalanche of time compression. McLuhan says the effect of then is almost right away . . . action-consequence has very little chronological space left. A corollary need arising from this is the ability to see results before the action because there is little time to correct if the anticipated results aren't forthcoming. Values and norms hold the spotlight for shorter and shorter periods . . . there is a faster and faster turnover of the normative structure, that collective social shaper with individual application. It isn't surprising that the cognitive gap between generations is an ever-widening gulf . . . and that the older generation counter-reformations grow increasingly ridiculous with less time available. They are fighting water with fire.

One of the more obvious examples is marijuana vs. alcohol. The above Cannabis Saturday night could easily be a wide-spread middle class reality in forty years.

Cannabis Sativa was first classified, incorrectly, as a narcotic; and the law legislated on that basis with penalties roughly the same as those for the hard-core drugs. In the fifties this was corrected by several noted medical authorities, and the law is now, in its correct chronological conservatism, making little noises about legislating marijuana in a non-narcotic classification. Not surprisingly, the

emotional myths originally evolved to provide effective social control of pot, still persist, particularly in that ever lovin bastion of today's social values, the slippers on the footstool after supper older generation. Marijuana is manifest. shouts the slippers, the cry easily drowning the faint whispers of 300,000 alcoholics and countless other unclassified "alcoholic" heavy drinkers. The constantly recurring rational relapse involved that makes this possible staggers the mind, especially in a society that prides itself on being activist and completely reasonable.

As most readers are already aware, both marijuana and alcohol alter cerebral chemistry, which in turn alters behaviour and perception. Alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant. It allows less inhibited behaviour and increased socialization by depressing centres that inhibit. But while depressing certain areas of mental control it has the same effect on physical control; reaction time and co-ordination slows and it lessens the number of stimuli one can accept simultaneously. In short, you enjoy less capability more. In addition a large percentage of drinkers exceed the amount required for the greatest pleasure, some almost to the point of unconscious. Even if used sparingly to increase social well being and interaction, drinkers are escaping some of their normal controls.

Marijuana parallels some of these effects. Medical experts suspect that pot depresses like alcohol, and alters behaviour and perception, but not as much is known about pot. It also affects physical co-ordination, about to the same extent that a moderate intake of alcohol does. One important difference is the users decision about when to stop. Pot smokers agree there seems to be an automatic curb against over-indulgence built-in. Rarely does a user smoke too much. It can be used in the same way as alcohol to increase sociability by inhibiting some of the normal controls, and you don't have a hang-over!

If its possible for anyone to dispense with contemporary morality while comparing the two, mari-

juana appears to have the edge. If society insists on modifying their reality towards greater pleasure occasionally, why not grass? There are an estimated 60,000 narcotics addicts in the United States today, and an estimated 6,000,000 heavy problem drinkers. Yet, there still is a tacit consent not to discuss alcohol in terms of a problem, while people have strong opinions on narcotics addiction. To boot,

they usually know far more about alcohol than drugs. Alcohol is too close to home being in widespread use. This is not to say drugs are not, but the widespread use of drugs is thought of in medical curative terms, not to heighten pleasure or enable escape. This is how middle-aged people taking barbiturates or amphetamines to help eliminate their cerebral sag can consider their behaviour quite proper, while at the same time terming youthful drug consumption for pleasure, a problem. So society seems to be saddled with one long convenient rationale for deciding its norms.

Returning to marijuana . . . one of our society's chief objections to anything is, if it has a pure pleasure principle, and isn't productive or constructive. We really hate the idea of anyone taking pot just for fun, not withstanding the fact that is the express purpose of alcohol. The idea of a drug returning us to the productive "normal" state is perfectly acceptable. However to begin in a normal productive state, and then take a drug for relaxation, is rank "heresy"; and I don't use the word heresy loosely. The conventional reply is people who are in a normal productive state don't take drugs. What about alcohol? All kinds of people considered in that category drink, some quite heavily. So it all boils down to an arbitrary, irrational, convenient, mode of terming social acceptability. If we've had it for hundreds of years it must be good, is always a strong criterion. And most of the others are equally sensible.

It will be interesting to see if that Primrose Park pot party started at the local drug store, without prescription.

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