



Prohibition was a crashing failure, not a model for the present

By William Smith
March 14, 2014

Despite all the opinions I have read recently, I was still stunned by the anti-marijuana-legalization screed in your paper arguing we should continue marijuana prohibition because alcohol prohibition was so successful ("Supporters of marijuana legalization misread history," March 11). Say what?

Do the editors even read the stuff your op-ed writers send in before you publish it? Because I can't think of one other person who has ever argued that Prohibition was a success. And I'm not talking about starry eyed liberals. Here's what the Cato Institute, the world's biggest right-wing think tank, has to say on the subject:

"Although consumption of alcohol fell at the beginning of Prohibition, it subsequently increased. Alcohol became more dangerous to consume; crime increased and became 'organized;' the court and prison systems were stretched to the breaking point; and corruption of public officials was rampant. No measurable gains were made in productivity or reduced absenteeism.

"Meanwhile, Prohibition removed a significant source of tax revenue and greatly increased government spending. It led many drinkers to switch to opium, marijuana, patent medicines, cocaine and other dangerous substances that they would have been unlikely to encounter in the absence of Prohibition."

To even publish such a ridiculous diatribe in your newspaper was ludicrous. I know you are desperately trying to appear "fair and balanced," but printing nonsense is not balance. It's as though you published an article by the Flat Earth Society to "balance" an article by NASA. Ignorance is not the other side of knowledge, it's just ignorance.

Do a little fact checking next time before you publish something that makes you look like a bunch of fools.

William Smith, Baltimore

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