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Proposition 19: Lessons Learned

Thursday, November 4, 2010

Ganjanomics

The *New York Times* has [a story](#) on a non profit organization that generates funding through Cannabis farming.

Late this month, with some help from the sale of its first small crop, grown under California's liberal medical marijuana laws, the group plans to present an inaugural exhibition on its land, of sculpture and installation work by more than 20 visiting artists — some of whom will have helped bring in the harvest. The foundation's hope is that income from succeeding crops will fully support such projects, in perpetuity, creating a kind of Marfa-meets-ganja art retreat north of San Francisco and a new economic engine for art philanthropy.

Nice idea, but why should artists have all the fun? A not-for-profit homeless collective could do the same thing. How many homeless and/or jobless men would volunteer to live as an ascetic-farmer-philosopher in a not-for-profit Cannabis growers co-operative?

They could even hire Cannabis-friendly non-profit rent-a-cops to police the streets.

You say you want a revolution?

Proposition 19: Lessons Learned

In his article, [Why did California vote down legal pot?](#), Jeffrey Miron of the Cato Institute says Proposition 19 suffered a bad case of “overreaching”. For example, the text of Proposition 19 legalized marijuana in California, but it also established labor rights policy by protecting certain employees from being fired over marijuana use. This created a backlash among employers in California, who then opposed its passage. Miron said that Prop 19 supporters would have had more success if they had allowed employers more latitude in making their own employment decisions.

Prop 19's disadvantages were accentuated when Attorney General Eric Holder said that [federal marijuana laws](#) would be upheld whether the law was passed or not. Holder's words were calculated to chill the momentum of Prop 19 supporters, and effectively trivialized the vote before it was cast.

It also effectively opened up a can of whoop ass on would-be marijuana farmers in California. “This legal limbo would have kept the marijuana market underground, limiting tax revenue and continuing the ills of black market,” Miron wrote. “This ambiguity also dimmed support by making state-level legalization feel like an empty gesture.”

So now that Prop 19 has lost, what next on the road to legal marijuana?

Supporters of the [Yes on Proposition 19 campaign have vowed to pursue legal marijuana](#) for the 2012 election. With the recent Lancet study showing that [alcohol is a more dangerous than marijuana](#), prohibitionists may have real trouble convincing the electorate that there is any good reason to continue outlawing marijuana.

Miron believes that “Marijuana can and should be legal.” He advised “Legalizers” to aim at changing federal law, and to help convince the courts that the Constitution does not authorize Marijuana prohibition.

A final key to legalizing marijuana is to get conservatives, not just liberals, more involved. A number of well-known conservatives have advocated legalization, such as Milton Friedman, George Schultz, and William Buckley, but the general perception is that legalizers are “stoners,” acting mainly out of self-interest.

Yet legalization can appeal to conservatives, especially if the arguments emphasize freedom, personal responsibility, and the Constitution, along with up-front clarity about the goal: legal production

and use of marijuana for adults, whatever their motivations. Past liberal efforts, such as medical marijuana, invite charges of hypocrisy and weaken support.

Good points all. The next version of Prop 19 must be streamlined, simplified, and hold appeal across a broad spectrum of voters — not just liberal Democrats.

[Why did California vote down legal pot?](#)

[In California, Pot Is Now an Art Patron](#)

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