

Drug War Chronicle - world's leading drug policy newsletter

Weekly: This Week in History

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October 8, 1932: The Uniform State Narcotics Act is passed, endorsed by the federal Bureau of Narcotics as an alternative to federal laws. By 1937 every state prohibits marijuana use.

October 4, 1970: Legendary singer Janis Joplin is found dead at Hollywood's Landmark Hotel, a victim of what is concluded to be an accidental heroin overdose.

October 2, 1982: Ronald Reagan, in a radio address to the nation on federal drug policy, says, "We're making no excuses for drugs -- hard, soft, or otherwise. Drugs are bad, and we're going after them. As I've said before, we've taken down the surrender flag and run up the battle flag. And we're going to win the war on drugs."

October 7, 1989: Former US Secretary of State George P. Shultz tells an alumni gathering at Stanford Business School, "It seems to me we're not really going to get anywhere until we can take the criminality out of the drug business and the incentives for criminality out of it. Frankly, the only way I can think of to accomplish this is to make it possible for addicts to buy drugs at some regulated place at a price that approximates their cost... We need at least to consider and examine forms of controlled legalization of drugs... No politician wants to say what I have just said, not for a minute."

October 2, 1992: Thirty-one people from various law enforcement agencies storm Donald Scott's 200-acre ranch in Malibu, California. Scott's wife screams when she sees the intruders. When sixty-one-year-old Scott, who believes thieves are breaking into his home, comes out of the bedroom with a gun, he is shot dead. A drug task force was looking for marijuana plants. Interestingly, Scott had refused earlier to negotiate a sale of his property to the government. DEA agents were there to seize the ranch. After extensive searches, no marijuana is found.

October 3, 1996: US Public Law 104-237, known as the "Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996," is signed into law by President Bill Clinton. It contains provisions attempting to stop the importation of methamphetamine and precursor chemicals into the United States, attempting to control the manufacture of methamphetamine in clandestine laboratories, to increase penalties for trafficking in methamphetamine and List I precursor chemicals, to allow the government to seek restitution for the clean-up of clandestine laboratory sites, and attempting to stop rogue companies from selling large amounts of precursor chemicals that are diverted to clandestine laboratories.

October 5, 1999: The war on drugs is "an absolute failure," says Gov. Gary Johnson of New Mexico at a conference on national drug policies at the Cato Institute. Johnson, who drew sharp criticism from anti-drug leaders for being the first sitting governor to advocate legalizing drugs, argues that the government should regulate narcotics but not punish those who abuse them: "Make drugs a controlled substance like alcohol. Legalize it, control it, regulate it, tax it. If you legalize it, we might actually have a healthier society." Johnson also meets with founding members of Students for Sensible Drug Policy; footage from the meeting appears on CBS evening news.

October 6, 2000: Former US President Bill Clinton is quoted in Rolling Stone: "I think that most small amounts of marijuana have been decriminalized in some places, and should be."

October 7, 2003: Comedian Tommy Chong begins a nine-month federal prison sentence for operating a glass blowing shop that sold pipes to marijuana smokers.

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