I worry sometimes that I'm getting paranoid. According to some 'experts' I must be paranoid (given the amount of pot that I've smoked over the years)... and schizophrenic... and suffering from severe amotivational syndrome. I've always tried to ignore these wild, new, unsubstantiated medical theories and carry on regardless. Just lately however it's become increasingly difficult to do this.

I can't shake the feeling that there's a definite conspiracy afoot. A conspiracy to hijack society's mores, cut off all the interesting furry bits and turn the clock back to the grim, dysfunctional, white bread world of fifty years ago... a world where 'normality' had a very narrow and legally prescribed definition and the only fun available was government-approved, corporate-sponsored fun.

Sound paranoid? I'm not so sure. Let's take the drug laws for instance: Humans like to use drugs. It's really as simple as that. We've always enjoyed doing this and it's a safe bet that we always will. Different humans like different drugs and all drugs can mess you up or help make you happy, depending on how they're used. Why is it then that only some (and often the noisiest) drugs are government-approved while others are illegal?

Do I sense a subjective value judgment on behalf of our noble legislative bodies? Is there some kind of fundamentalist moral agenda running here? I believe so.

You only have to take a quick glance at the early history of prohibition to realise that the legislation and enforcement of these unrealistic laws has always been underwritten by religious extremists* with a grim, misguided belief that one kind of drug practice (whether it's beer, whisky, wine, 'n' waters or tea and milk arrowroot biscuits) is somehow 'good' while all other drug practices are intrinsically 'bad'…

Unbelievably, this kind of pushy, religious bigotry succeeded in banning alcohol for several years in the 1920s and '30s making life even more miserable for most of the population and giving rise to a huge blackmarket criminal underworld and a corresponding semi-corporate police structure, semi-official and semi-legit, of career 'booze-busters'.

Our current drug laws are the direct historic, cultural and moral descendents of all this. Whether it's the Bible-bashing, coke-added hypocrisy of George W's reasserted 'War on Drugs' or the dove, protestant teetotalist moral agenda run by religious extremists with a grim, insidious thrust... 'Thou shalt NOT!'

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Byron Shire Echo July 22, 2003

The rules against having fun

by a rapid and equally forceful conversion to boozing and the Bible. You can imagine what the first European conquerors must have thought as they 'discovered' the New World. Asia and India, all hepped-up as they were on the Spanish Inquisition and the English burning of witches.

'Jesus, Vasco will ya look at that? Buncha goddamn savages, gobbling mushrooms and smoking hashcoke. How the hell are we gonna build an empire outta this lot? 'Who cares, bubba? Look at all their gold!'...

Five hundred years later we're still dealing with the same basic headspace.

Bob Carr for example thinks it's okay to smoke pot so long as we're only doing it for relief from a serious medical condition or to help us get through writer's block. Obviously one has to applaud this as some sort of a step forward (compassionate, ground-breaking and with great personal potential... 'My back, Doc! My back!!!'). Still I can't help wondering what happens to all the other poor saps that just like to get stoned.

Why do we have to be 'tack' before we're allowed to get high? Why is it 'wrong' to want to occasionally smoke a big fat joint, goof off, watch the TV, listen to some music, stare at the clouds, make love, eat some cheese or just fall asleep and dribble down both sides of your chin (the sign of a truly balanced individual)? Why is it such an unfashionable, politically incorrect and personally dangerous thing to say that drugs aren't always 'bad'...

Stuff it! I'm coming out of the closet and I invite anyone to join me. Now! Quickly, before the steroid-soaked SWAT teams kick down the door and drag us all off for reprogramming and eventual re-assimilation. Stand up and be counted. Say it loud and say it proud…

'I like getting stoned and I'm not sick, I'm not a criminal and I'm not (that much) of a social deviant. I just like getting high sometimes, that's all… is there a problem with that?'

* Don't get me wrong. I've got nothing against religious extremists. I'm one myself. The trick is to know that you're a religious extremist and to acknowledge everyone else's right to their own perhaps different extremities.

Neil Pike is the Grand Autheenticated Bush Turkey of the Pagan Love Cult (www.paganlovecult.com) and creator of the award-winning gonzo video 21st Century Prohibition.