

Life, Liberty and Law



Nancy Murphy

Please stop and think.

According to the politicians and academicians who speak in favor of decriminalization and/or legalization of marijuana, existing criminal penalties for possession and use of marijuana are disproportionate to the degree of mental and physical risk involved. They speak in terms of prison for first offenders. Thousands of young lives are ruined they say, not by marijuana but by severe laws and inhumane punishments.

These well-educated and well-meaning spokesmen warn us that we are ill-advised and ill-informed when we speak of damage done to the human mind and body by the use of marijuana. They advise that we end the penalties for possession — private or public — and for private or public distribution.

I wonder where these people spend their research time. Where have they been? Surely not here in the state of New York.

From Article #81.01 of the NYS Mental Hygiene Law: "The human suffering and social and economic loss caused by drug abuse are matters of grave concern to the people of the state. The magnitude of the cost directly and indirectly caused by drug abuse makes it imperative that a comprehensive program to combat the effects of drug abuse should be developed and implemented through the combined and correlated efforts of federal, state, local communities and private individual organizations."

"The drug dependent person needs help before he is compelled to resort to crime to support his habit."

"A comprehensive program of compulsory treatment of narcotic addicts and other drug dependent persons is essential to the protection and promotion of the health and welfare of the inhabitants of the state, as well as to discourage the violation of laws relating to the sale, possession and use of narcotics and other dangerous drugs . . ."

(The article contains a recognition of the correlation between crime and drugs; the threatened peace and security of the people of New York, as well as the unemployment, poverty and loss of human dignity which frequently accompany the abuse of drugs.)

Article #81.07 establishes a drug abuse control commission which, among other duties; is empowered to direct and carry on research in drug abuse; to provide education and training; to direct grants; to establish and operate rehabilitation centers; and to designate medical facilities.

Article #81.10 provides for sheltered workshops for drug dependent persons "operated for the principal purpose of offering gainful employment . . . and to enhance the effectiveness of such rehabilitation through work participation."

Additional mental hygiene laws provide for counseling, referral services, and means of preventative measures.

Article #60.03 of the NYS Penal Code states in part: "Where the drug abuse control commission

consents to provide treatment . . . (the court) may impose a sentence to a period of probation, and in such cases the sentence must include a condition that the person undergo treatment in an inpatient program."

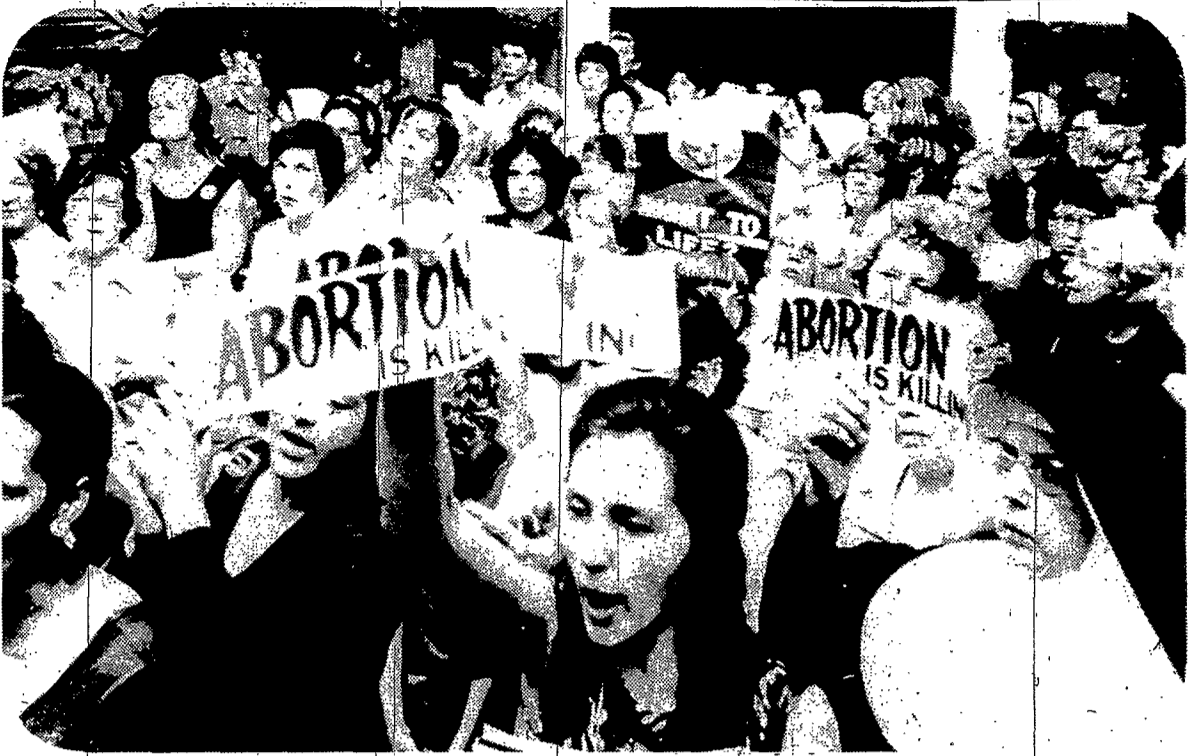
Upon successful completion of the conditions for the first offender, Article #170.56 of the Penal Code states: "(The court) may order that all proceedings be suspended and the action adjourned in contemplation of dismissal . . . (The court) may order that all official records and papers relating to the defendant's arrest and prosecution . . . be sealed and not made available to any person or public or private agency except . . . under order of a court for (determination in subsequent proceedings)."

"Upon the granting of [this] order, the arrest and prosecution shall be deemed a nullity and the defendant shall be restored . . . to the status he occupied before his arrest and prosecution."

Disproportionate? Prison for possession? Severe and inhumane?

America will do well to study the narcotics laws of the state of New York. And New Yorkers will do well to become familiar with them.

These laws need but adequate funding, public exposure and uniform enforcement.



'Parental Rights' Legislation

Members of the New York State Right to Life Committee pack the Hall of Governors in the state capitol in Albany. Part of a group of more than 1,000 demonstrating outside the capital, they broke through security and filled the room, which is just outside the Executive Chamber. The demonstration was staged by the Committee to "protest the indifference afforded 'Parental Rights' legislation by the Democratic-controlled Assembly." Several pieces of pro-life legislation approved by the Committee have passed in the State Senate; but none were acted upon by the Assembly. One bill would require parental consent before an abortion can be performed on unmarried girls under 18. (RNS)

Hearings On Pro-Life Amendment

In a surprise move last week, Rep. Don Edwards of California, chairman of the House subcommittee on constitutional amendments, advised pro-life Rep. James L. Oberstar that hearings on the human life amendments would be scheduled with the dates already under discussion. The surprise move ended two years of steadfast refusal by Edwards to hold hearings.

The announcement came just before a scheduled meeting in Washington, D.C., between pro-life groups and congressmen. The meeting had been convened by Rep. Don Mitchell of New York to discuss House hearings.

Among congressmen at the meeting were Rep. William Walsh and Robert McEwen of New York. Also there was a representative of Sen. James Buckley.

The New York State Right to Life Committee was among pro-life groups at the meeting.

"This step recognizes that the pro-life movement is well along its way to becoming the greatest political force the U.S. has known," said Dr. Mildred F. Jefferson, a black Boston surgeon and newly elected president of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC).

Rep. Oberstar, chief sponsor of the National Right to Life Human Life Amendment in the House, is a freshman Congressman who last year defeated the party-endorsed candidate by an overwhelming margin. His pro-life stand reportedly was considered a significant factor in his victory.

Dr. Jefferson said the victory "should put Congress on notice that we expect the democratic process to provide, at the very least, free inquiry and open investigation of the issues that are significant to our lives and our country."

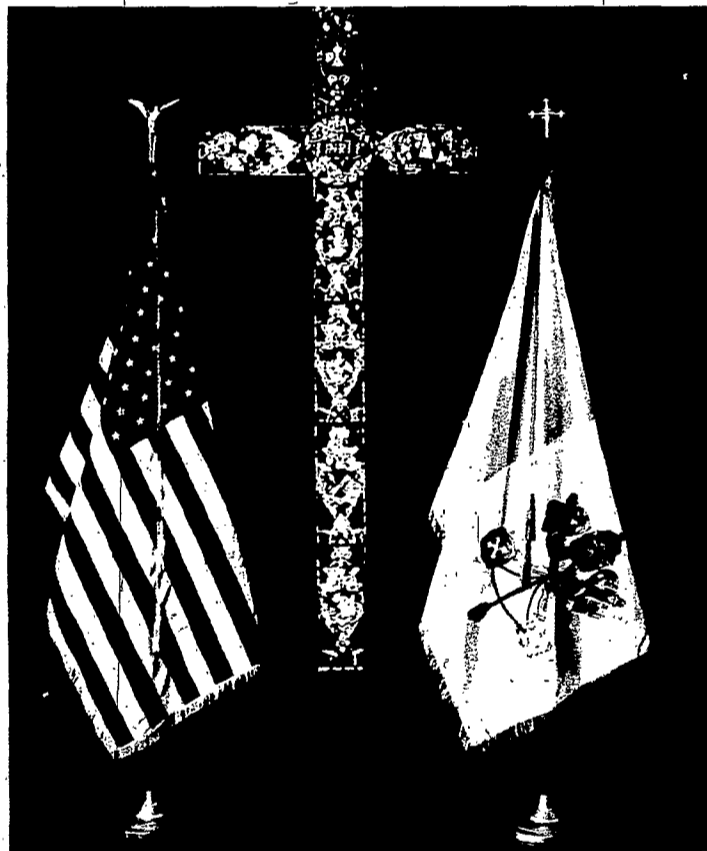
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IN KEEPING WITH THE BICENTENNIAL, TRANT'S IS PLANNING A SERIES OF WINDOW DISPLAYS TO REFLECT THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH AND RELIGION ON THE 200 YEAR HISTORY OF OUR BELOVED COUNTRY.

We invite anyone who so desires to submit a painting or other art form depicting some facet, event or theme based on this God and Country celebration.

From all those submitted (which will be part of our window display) we will have a panel select the top three for awards. The details and presentation of prizes will be worked out before the end of the bicentennial year.

Each piece submitted should be accompanied by the name and address of the owner as well as a title or explanation of the work.

It is to be greatly desired that the art work be original. No copies are eligible for awards.

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