

Making a hash of pot

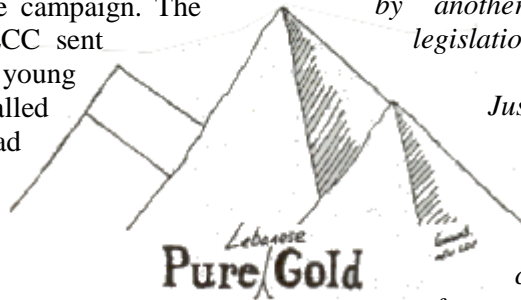
By Brian Micklethwait

Not so long ago there was an *Open Door* television programme done by the Legalise Cannabis Campaign, and as a result I joined the campaign. The first Newsletter that the LCC sent me included a report of a young Tory rake from the city called Charles Smedley who had apparently said that "the sooner we can buy 20 filter tipped Lebanese Gold in our local tobacconists the better", and who as a result had been threatened with expulsion from the Greater London Young Conservatives. Good for him. Reports of pro pot statements from other parts of the political spectrum followed. "Cannabis legalisation" said the Newsletter "is not a party political matter." As a Tory myself I was pleased about all this, and I went along to the grotty LCC nervecentre in W11 to investigate further. "Jolly good about that young Conservative who wants a rampant free market in pot" I said, or words to that effect.

But despite their newsletter the pot pluggers turned out to be most disapproving of actual freedom. "That", they said, "is not what we want at all." The following quote describes their attitude more accurately. It's from a later LCC Newsletter report of a two day LCC National Conference, held in Sheffield this April.

The working paper on legalisation embodied extensive research by Don Aitken, Mika Satow and Anne Stanesby. A rejection of a nationalised or free market system of legal distribution and the logical conclusion that a co-operative model best serves the interests of consumer and producer was endorsed by the Conference. Much of the subsequent discussion centred on the minor, though always controversial areas such as driving under the influence of cannabis and the need for certain constraints and restrictions on

availability and usage. Better education was high on the priorities list, as was the question of usage by children and young people. It was emphasised that what the Campaign didn't want to see was for one complex unworkable prohibition to be replaced by another piece of tangled legislation.



Just when members were starting to space out at the mention of a cannabis Quango, the conference adjourned for a wholesome lunch, courtesy of Brick Rabbit. After lunch we entered the less theoretical world of Campaign workshops. Topics covered included: Using the Media; Starting an LCC Branch; Organising Benefit Events; and Lobbying the Influential. As well as conveying the rights and wrongs of cannabis campaigning, the workshops gave individuals the chance to prepare a press release, learn the art of late-night flyposting and to enter the sinister world of MPs' surgeries.

Now I could just have quoted that little gem about a "co-operative model" on its own, but I wanted to give some of the setting of it. Complicated legal restrictions are proposed, while at the same time being deplored. Delegates shy away from the Quango that might be appointed to square this circle and instead have lunch, and, thus refreshed, ignore merely "theoretical" questions from then on and switch to late-night flyposting. And in among all this bustle, following logically from the researches of Don Aitken, Mika Satow and Anne Stanesby, is proclaimed one of the vilest delusions of the twentieth century. It isn't thought important enough to have a paragraph to itself. It is sprayed out of the side of the argument like mud from the wheels of a passing car.

The doctrine of the Third Way, in one or other of its many versions, accompanies just about every plunge into tyranny that any country now takes, and the most pernicious tyrannies in the world now are being created

and run by tyrants calling themselves socialists. Totalitarian socialism seldom comes about simply as a result of totalitarian socialists going around saying: "We believe in totalitarian socialism." No, what they say is: "We have found a better way. It is neither capitalism, which is well known to be horrid, nor old-fashioned bureaucratic type socialism which is also, we do agree, somewhat of a disappointment. It is a Third Way, better than both, combining the best of both worlds with the worst of neither. It is co-operative, not exploitative. It will be run by nice people like ourselves, not by ruthless fiends from Russia or East Germany." And then pink, progressive, soft in the head pseudo liberals like the ones who run the Legalise Cannabis Campaign swallow all this drivel, and either do nothing at all while the whole ghastly apparatus of a socialist dictatorship is erected in front of their startled eyes, or actually join in and help the damned thing.

There is no Third Way. You either have a free market system, which is a good idea, or a dictatorship, which is not, or a mixture of the two, which is good or bad depending on the proportions of the mix. Full stop. That's all there is. That there is some mystical "co-operative model" which is distinct from mere free market capitalism is a delusion that serves only to destroy both the free market and real Cupertino, because that is what free market relationships are.

If I have some Lebanese Gold and you want to buy it, and we agree a price and shake on the deal, then that *is* Cupertino. We both benefit, because if we didn't there'd be no deal. You're happier because you prefer the Lebanese Gold you wanted to keeping the money you gave for it. I'm happy for the equal and opposite reason. Smiles all round.

Now, there are just two ways for the government to react to all this. Either they let it happen, or they interfere. And since we're both happy about it we're certainly not going to tell them and help them stop it. They're going to have to set the police on us. No Third Way, half-way between freedom and unfreedom and yet freer and nicer than either, exists.

Free Life