

Entertainment - No more beer at Giants Stadium?

Contributed by Paul Armentano

It's time for a kinder bud than booze

There was less "buzz" than usual during the NFL season's final regular season Monday night football game between the New York Jets and defending Super Bowl champion New England Patriots and it had little to do with the Jets' dire season record.

Following a string of violent incidents between rowdy football fans during the team's previous games, including stabbings, Giants Stadium officials made the call to halt beer sales. Jets spokesman Ron Colangelo could not have been more blunt: "It's for the safety of our fans."

The Dutch secret to keeping the peace: a clamp down on alcohol and regulated access to cannabis.

Alcohol's long-standing association with aggressive behavior begs the comparison to another social lubricant, cannabis.

No credible research has shown cannabis use to be a causal factor in violence, aggression or delinquent behavior, dating back to the U.S. government's First Report of the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse in 1972, which concluded, "In short, marijuana is not generally viewed by participants in the criminal justice community as a major contributing influence in the commission of delinquent or criminal acts." (The Commission also recommended that Congress remove all criminal and civil penalties on the possession of small amounts of the herb.)

A more recent Canadian Senate review reaffirmed: "Cannabis use does not induce users to commit other forms of crime. Cannabis use does not increase aggressiveness or anti-social behavior."

"Cannabis differs from alcohol in one major respect. It does not seem to increase risk-taking behavior," stated the British Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in its 2002 report recommending the depenalization of cannabis. (Parliament eventually did so two years later.) "This means that cannabis rarely contributes to violence either to others or to oneself, whereas alcohol use is a major factor in deliberate self-harm, domestic accidents and violence."

British soccer fans recently experienced this first hand after their team's loss to Portugal at the Euro 2000 tournament in the Netherlands. According to news reports, the British fans, whose reputation for post-game, alcohol-fueled tirades is known worldwide, took the loss without incident and not a single fan was arrested after

the match. The Dutch secret to keeping the peace: a clamp down on alcohol and regulated access to cannabis.

It's a lesson we can pay heed to here in America, as well.

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