

## AIN'T NOBODY'S BUSINESS IF YOU DO

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### *The absurdity of consensual crimes in our free country—Peter McWilliams*

1996, Prelude Press, 666 pages

*"I never hurt nobody but myself  
and that's nobody's business but my own."  
— Billie Holiday*

It's taken me too long to review this book because it's taken me far too long to actually read this magnificent book. Everyone in Liberty World knows Peter McWilliams and most of us have shed many a tear for this sensitive, kind, humane, supremely intelligent, humorous author, publisher, and advocate of fundamental personal freedom. For this man.

We cry because so benevolent an individual became one of the most celebrated and brutal victims of the fight against victimless crimes. He was literally murdered by the federal government, by men dressed up as legitimate, constitutionally franchised United States' authorities who denied him his property, his freedom, and the medical attention he needed to prevent him from choking to death, June 14, 2000. You can read the story of his barbaric murder by federal officials here. There are a number of sites on Peter, and his own Web page has apparently been left up on the World Wide Web in memory.

Peter's cannabis activism, as evident by *Ain't Nobody's Business*, was a large part of the government's rationale for killing him: "How dare anyone write a book claiming the drug war is immoral and ineffectual, and that it mercilessly destroys innocent lives."

*"We're in a war. People who smoke pot on a casual basis are guilty of treason. They shouldn't be arrested, they should be taken out and shot." — Daryl Gates, former Los Angeles Police Chief (and ultimate whack job)*

Peter was a casualty of that war, I'm increasingly convinced not as collateral damage but as a intentional target of the enemy.

In Summer of 2000, I attended the convention of the Libertarian Party, in Anaheim, California. It had only been two weeks since Peter died, and I recall LP party founder David Nolan on the dais literally breaking down conveying to us what a wonderful man Peter was: as a businessman, his compassion for AIDS victims, his courage under his own affliction with that horrible disease, his persistence in the fight for medical marijuana to alleviate human suffering in general, and to top it all off his wonderful, playful sense of life.

Peter never stooped to the brutality of his tormentors; he held to the end that these officials who imposed and applied such draconian restrictions while Peter awaited sentencing were only well-meaning pawns in a silly policy. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Even though John Stossel managed to air a positive 20/20 segment on Peter's plight shortly before Peter died, virtually no one in the controlled media elevated the story to where it belongs: the saga of Peter McWilliams, late-20th-century Ghandi for personal liberty.

The reason I'd put off reading *Nobody's Business* for so long is, as a victim of government aggression myself (though negligibly compared to Peter), I knew what he was going to describe. I had first hand knowledge about how the drug war destroys lives—a reasonable estimate is more than the current population of the United States (~300 million) have been the victims of government aggression for victimless crimes during the 20th century—and the thought of revisiting in text this awful condition of unenlightenment depressed the heck out of me. But I needn't have been concerned. *Nobody's Business* is not only full of facts and anecdotes and, believe it or not, humor, it is full of hope. It's actually a field manual and a voluminous reference for leaders in the heroic fight for personal freedom.

Cutting right to the chase, the following list is more or less transcribed from McWilliams' earlier chapters. He provides the most comprehensive indictment of government aggression for "sin crimes" you'll ever see:

## ***Reasons for Stopping Government Aggression on Consensual Activities (esp. for Ending the Drug War)***

- 1) It's un-American—America is based on personal freedom and on the strength of diversity; the American Dream is that we are all free to live our lives as we see fit, provided we do not physically harm the person or property of others.
- 2) It's unconstitutional—The US Constitution and the Bill of Rights clearly acknowledge our natural rights to be free from coercion by moralists, do-gooders, and busybodies.
- 3) Laws against consensual activities violate the separation of church and state—Most arguments for laws against consensual activities have a religious foundation: the consensual activities are judged to be sins before God. The anointed faithful want the state to imprison and kill the sinners for the glory of God.
- 4) Laws against consensual activities are opposed to the principles of private property, free enterprise, capitalism, and the open market—For the government to say that certain things cannot be owned, bought, given away, traded, and sold is a direct violation of both the sanctity of private property and the fundamental principles of capitalism.
- 5) It's expensive—McWilliams provides an elaborate analysis of true costs of enforcing laws against consensual activities in America: \$450 billion per year. (When you add the destruction of human lives, the cost is easily three to four times that number.)
- 6) It destroys lives—A single arrest and conviction, even without a jail sentence, can permanently affect one's ability to get employment, housing credit, education, and insurance. If you do spend any time in jail, your life is often completely ruined.
- 7) Consensual crimes encourage real crimes—To support an addiction to a substance, for instance, most addicts will need to resort to property crimes in order to afford the high prices due to government-contrived scarcity.
- 8) Consensual crimes corrupt law enforcement—The lure of easy money tempts most people; everyone knows cops have the best drugs... and access to mountains of cash and all the personal favors. A legacy of consensual crime laws is that one of our true heroes, the honest cop, is an endangered species.
- 9) The cops can't catch 'em, the courts can't handle 'em, and the prisons can't hold 'em—As it is, the police are catching less than 20% of the real criminals (those who do violate another's life, liberty, and property); there's no way they can even make a dent in consensual crimes. To free prison space for consensual criminals, real criminals are put on the street every day.
- 10) Consensual crimes promote organized crime—Organized crime in America grew out of an earlier attempt to legislate morality: Prohibition. The enormous amount of money at the disposal of organized crime via banning of consensual activities enables organized crime to buy the entire system of "justice." They're the last ones to want consensual activities decriminalized.
- 11) Laws against consensual crimes teach irresponsibility—If we maintain that it is the government's job to keep illegal anything that might do us harm it implies that anything not illegal is harmless. This is certainly not the case.
- 12) Laws against consensual activities are too randomly enforced to be either a deterrent or fair—If the chances of being caught at something are only, say, one in ten million, that's hardly a deterrent. In fact, their very illegality often makes consensual crimes fascinating, glamorous, and irresistible.
- 13) Law against consensual activities discriminate against minorities and the poor—Many consensual activities that the mostly white, male, heterosexual, affluent, Christian lawmakers have deemed illegal do not reflect the preferences or experiences of minority groups. Further, the laws are enforced unevenly.

- 14) Problems associated with consensual activities cannot be solved while they're crimes—During Prohibition, how many were killed or became blind because of bathtub gin? During the new Prohibition, how many drug overdoses are due to impurities? If you're engaged in a consensual crime, "who ya gonna call" to report a real crime?
- 15) We have more important things to worry about—How about finding missing children, combating terrorism, tracking down serial killers... for starters. Even improving the quality of general education or paying down the national debt seem to rate higher than catching your neighbor sparking a doobie in his living room.
- 16) It's hypocritical—To give one obvious example: Cigarettes do more damage and cause roughly one hundred times the deaths of all consensual crimes combined. Yet tobacco growers are subsidized, and the companies receive a regulated (tho high) profit; the same arrangement holds for purveyors beer and spirits.
- 17) Laws against consensual activities create a society of fear, hatred, bigotry, oppression, and conformity: a culture opposed to personal expression, diversity, freedom, choice, and growth—If you're different, you're bad and unpatriotic... or in the words of Daryl Gates: a traitor. It becomes okay to humiliate, brutalize, ostracize, and even kill those who are not the same as we are. A preacher with a battering ram becomes society's ideal.

The remainder of the book expands on each of these areas of analysis. Further, Mr. McWilliams brings to light one gem of factual material after another, with humor and humanity. I challenge anyone to read this book and insist that we persist with our policies against people we want to beat up for disobedience or for just being odd. C'mon folks, lay down the clubs and live up to the American ideal.

McWilliams' spirit lives on and is inspiring hundreds of new Ghandis... for example, moving forward measures for medical marijuana and agricultural hemp. [My personal immediate favorite is NH Coalition for Common Sense, which has recently won an impressive legislative victory for partial decriminalization of marijuana in the Free State.] Law enforcement is now on board nationally with rational, humanitarian drug policy via Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP). [If you haven't had the privilege of seeing former lawman Howard J. Wooldridge in action—either on the road or on the (Capitol) Hill—I encourage you to catch up with him. He visited East Lansing, Michigan, a year ago, and the college kids love him.] Finally, an effort related to repeal of consensual crimes—mainly because the asinine federal government won't remove agricultural hemp from its Schedule I narcotics list—Hemp Industries Association fights the good fight to recultivate a potentially trillion-dollar-a-year industry, agricultural hemp, for family farmers and local independent businesses of all sorts everywhere. [Hemp can provide the raw-wealth engine to clean up and liberate the planet in short order.]

So right arm! Read this book and join the army of enlightenment.

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Speaking to the American people, do you really want to succumb to the superstitious dogma of a government system run amok? Do you want to continue to arrest 4,000,000 of your neighbors and incarcerate 750,000 more, EACH YEAR, for crimes that are not crimes? What sort of madmen would advocate such policies? Or are they mad at all? Perhaps these laws are intended to protect the privileges of a financial elite, or organized crime, or both. Prevent competition. Do you think of that? What's that saying: "Don't steal, it's illegal to compete with the government."

We've just seen in New Hampshire that the power structure is running scared of the truth. When HB 1623 (decrim for small quantities of marijuana) passed the NH house a few days ago, the mayor of Manchester requested that another Manchester public official (who had voted for the measure) resign. But the people have spoken and they realize the emperor wears no clothes; the mayor is probably wishing he never said anything as messages from hundreds if not thousands of citizens are undoubtedly plugging up his electronic inbox with support of the public official who voted for freedom. "We won't be fooled again."

And in conjunction with this achievement on the front lines, I want to close my review with a note courtesy Matt Simon, fearless leader of the NHCommonSense cadre. Pointing to the bizarre response of the mayor of

Manchester to HB 1623, Matt cited the following observation from that ultimate defender of liberty himself, Mohandas K. Gandhi:

*First they ignore you;  
then they ridicule you;  
then they attack you;  
then you win.*

Daryl Gates was right, we are in a war. We're fighting for common sense, freedom, and the Constitution. Treason by out-to-lunch rogue cops and politicians cannot be tolerated; any of these individuals prosecuting wars against consensual activity in the slightest fashion should be taken out and... "nonviolently and peacefully encouraged" to read *Ain't Nobody's Business if You Do*. (Then lay down their assault rifles and battering rams and retire from public life to manage ant farms or pound sand 24/7.)

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*Ain't Nobody's Business if You Do* | Peter McWilliams | *the Drug War*