

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Purple Haze all in my brain (Chicago's new theme song)

So here we are 2012 and the City of Chicago is de-criminalizing the possession of marijuana. Or is it pot, weed, Mary Jane, cannabis, grass, or any variety of names that might appear in the drug culture vernacular.

I expect *High Times* magazine at any moment to have Rahm Emmanuel or the alderman who introduced the proposal on their cover on each side of a potted plant of pot. A “monumental ordinance” says Daniel Solis of the 25th Ward (who I happened to have met and is a nice fellow) that he believes will have a “definite impact.” Not sure on what. Maybe on ticket writing. Revenue for the city. Decrease in violent crime. More cops on the street writing tickets and not in court for drug busts, giving a pass to drug enthusiasts who, according to the report by supporters of the ordinance, are predominantly minorities.

Gee, is that something they really want to use in order to qualify their desire to pass this ordinance? Seems kind of insulting to me. But we must show empathy to all these “ditch weed” inhalers, regardless of race, color, creed, religion, or addiction.

But the “Rahmfather” as **Tribune** report John Kass lovingly refers to Emmanuel, says this ordinance will save the city about \$1 million and free up cops all over the city to fight serious crime. Once the mayor got on the proposal, the other alderman and the press jumped on the train and dope smokers everywhere smiled—and then lit up.

Alderman Burke says it really re-criminalizes. (A word I had to look up—it doesn't mean decriminalization but I couldn't find a meaning in my Random House Webster's College Dictionary. I need a bigger word search, but maybe it means “an intelligent and effective way of addressing a problem! At least according to the various aldermen in question.)

I don't know how this makes anything better and in fact, before the aldermen fell on their swords for Rahm, a few, some, and others like a former federal drug czar and Chicago superintendent voiced their disapproval and legitimate concerns with writing a ticket rather than an arrest for the lovers of THC.

They think the mayor, who says this isn't decriminalization, is just playing a semantics game. How many traffic tickets can you get for this offense, detractors ask? Three. Five, and when do the tickets no longer become a deterrent to bogarting that joint? And how about smoking weed and driving?

This is a good one. If they smoked less than 15 grams of bamalatchee that limits possession, qualifying for a ticket, are they impaired? Is it a DUI if under 15 grams? And what, the cynical types continue, do you do with the pot you take off a person on the street? Is it still inventoried,

tested, and does that not take a cop off the street? If not, maybe they can contest the ticket by saying it is some kind of green plant-y substance like asparagus, cilantro, or basil.

And who goes after the miscreants who don't pay their one, two, or five pot tickets? Warrants issued? Does that take the cop off the street to bring them in, too? Where do you put the "boot" for wayward scofflaws who don't pay the fines? I bet that will get the city going. Tickets are \$250 to \$500, not counting court costs. Are those minority folks these aldermen think they are saving from pot arrests going to pay that money?

And if they don't, won't the arrest warrant—actually, say a FTP (failure to pay)—link the poor sap to the illegal wicked weed? Sort of defeats the purpose of not tying him or her to narcotic use, doesn't it? Does the cop have to appear in court to defend his writing of the ticket, taking him off the streets, where the whole idea was to leave him on the streets if warrants are issued and offenders eventually arrested?

But the mayor says he wants our children to get a clear, unambiguous message that smoking grass is bad—just like they tell you in South Park—drugs and alcohol are **bad!** (You know, the satirical and sometimes obnoxious cartoon on the telly these past few years.)

To appease some aldermen not wild about the ordinance, Emmanuel plans to earmark a portion of the revenue obtained to educate school children. What are you going to say, Mr. Mayor. South Park already teaches our children that "drugs and alcohol are bad." I know, kids, I'm the mayor. Don't smoke any of this here five-pointed leafy thingee. It's bad for you. But if you do and get caught, it will cost you 250 to 500 other green things. And if you don't pay, the city will go after your mama or papa. And if they don't cough up the green, your goldfish might get flushed and your dog could disappear. Or "Puff, the Magic Dragon" could show up one night and...get the picture, children?

Yes, I could go on and on with this stupidity, but what do I know. I'm not an alderman who is looking for new and improved ways of obtaining revenue for the city, which is all this ordinance among the smoke and the haze appears to be really about.

And if a public servant does this in any of the municipal bureaus, do they get fired or just get a ticket, too? Or if any alderman gets caught with a blunt, does he get impeached or just a ticket, too? I hope if one gets caught somewhere, that all that happens is they garnish his wages and not just with parsley.

Does this all just smell like wintergreen or what?

Lately things just don't seem the same. Acting funny but I don't know why. 'Scuse me while I kiss the sky.

—Jimi Henrix

Vita è bella
Happy 4th of July to y'all!