

Hash in Holland: The Dutch Find It Easier To Let Traffic Flourish

Amsterdam. While the Nixon Administration calls for a crackdown against drugs, the Netherlands is moving to the conclusion that, at least in the case of cannabis, it is easier for a society to live with it than to fight it. Officially, "pot" remains outside the law, but even high police officials readily explain that this is because the Netherlands is party to international agreements governing traffic in drugs. In practice, however, the police indifferently stroll by while the sweet scent of cannabis perceptibly wafts through the streets of this lovely city. Arrests are rare—258 last year in a metropolitan area of 1.8 million—and when they occur they usually involve blatant selling of "soft" drugs, or the sale or use of amphetamines, heroin, and other "hard" drugs, none of which, at least verbally, is accorded official tolerance. In any case, sentences are extremely light by American standards, ranging from a minimum fine of about 15 cents for users to imprisonment of 4 to 6 months for a first-time offender caught with a kilogram of cannabis. Sentences of over 1 year are extremely rare, though it must be pointed out that, no matter what the offense, the Dutch do not employ lengthy prison terms.

Drugs Pushed at Youth Clubs

Against the background of furtiveness and police action associated with drug usage in the United States, nowhere is the Dutch laissez-faire attitude more striking than at two vast and jammed government-subsidized youth clubs here, Paradiso and Fantasio, both open to the public and now renowned on the international youth circuit. In each of these psychedelically lit, cavernous premises, located in downtown Amsterdam, as many as 1000 people can be found on any night, strewn about benches and floors, while pushers move from group to group, offering free samples as an inducement to sales. The police, of course, know what is going on in these establishments but confine themselves to an occasional plainclothes

check or to keeping the pushers from trying to intercept customers at near-by street corners. The city official responsible for police affairs, Peter J. Hoogenboom, chief of the Interior Department of Amsterdam, explained in an interview, "It is forbidden to sell drugs, but it is difficult to stop." Hoogenboom added that, before the clubs opened last year, "young people had no place to go. Now we have less trouble in the streets." He explained that no one under 16 is allowed in the clubs. But it is even doubtful that the police are especially concerned with that objective.

In fact, the only overt concern with Amsterdam's drug situation seems, ironically, to come from the extreme right and the extreme left, the former believing it scandalous that, as Hoogenboom describes their view, "loafers get public money while worthy causes can't." At the other end of the political spectrum, Dutch New Left activists are worried about the effect that the clubs might have on their efforts to convince young people that Dutch society needs a profound shake-up. This concern is what inspired Anya Meulenbelt, a 24-year-old radical with a degree in social work, to join the staff of one of the clubs. "One bad effect," she said, "is that the clubs reduce political pressure. People think that if they've won the fight to have the clubs and drugs, then everything must be all right." Miss Meulenbelt says she hopes the clubs can become centers for "political awareness," and though a visitor might doubt that the semicomatose masses filling these premises are likely recruits for revolution, she is not pessimistic. Though famed as centers for open sale and consumption of pot, and, as such, now a regular stopping place for gawking busloads of camera-laden tourists, the clubs also sponsor well-attended poetry readings, jazz recitals, discussion groups, drama programs, films, and political debates. And, when the administrative center of the University of Amsterdam was occupied in the spring, nonstudent club members got

swept up in the event and supported the students.

Amsterdam's officials did not arrive at their present attitude toward drugs as a consequence of careful study and deliberate policy-making. There have been no large-scale national studies of drugs, such as have been carried out in the United States and Great Britain, though the Ministry of Public Health is at present preparing such a study. Rather, Dutch practice evolved from the pragmatic conclusion that, at least on this issue, it is better to indulge youth's appetite than to follow the traditional course of turning the police loose to fight it. The conclusion flows directly from the comical humiliations that the youthful Provo (for provocative) movement inflicted on Dutch officialdom during its short-lived existence, starting in 1964. While other youth movements of the time pursued their goals with a kind of grimness, the Provos successfully adopted the practice of making the police look like fools.

Guilty of Raisin-Giving

Thus, they would set up barriers and stop traffic for the purpose of giving each driver a raisin, and, attended by the howls of many citizens, would be hauled into court and formally charged with stopping traffic and distributing raisins. Or they would nightly dance around a statue near the town hall and end up charged with "giving a forbidden performance." At one point it was widely rumored that the Provos would introduce LSD into the city's water supply—and for days policemen were posted to guard possible points of entry. While these antics amused the citizenry, the Provos attracted serious support by calling for the establishment of birth control centers, for curbs on automobiles in downtown areas, and for the provision of 60,000 white bicycles which any citizen could use at will to take him where he wanted to go, and leave it at his destination for any other citizen to use. Eventually, harassment by the Provos grew so great, and the citizens' merriment so high, that the mayor and chief of police were forced to resign. Their successors, mindful of the events that brought them to office, adopted a course of cautious appeasement when it came to dealing with youth. And from this policy came the decision last year to subsidize the establishment of two large youth clubs as focal points for the various youth

groups and cults that had sprung up, or had been drawn to Amsterdam.

Two large buildings were made available for the clubs, full-time staffs were hired, and the city and national governments agreed to provide about 32 percent of the operating costs, with the rest coming from annual membership fees of about 30 cents each and from a 60-cent charge made when live music is presented, which is usually just on weekends. Membership is not required for admission, except when special performances are offered; nevertheless, one club says over 20,000 have joined up this year, and now, with the tourist season at its height, new members are coming in at a rate of about 1000 a week. Money is a problem, but not the main one. The greater difficulty is that, while clubs have gained repute and popularity as drug centers, there is still a good deal of uncertainty about the durability of the permissive attitude that the government now takes. A psychologist at the University of Amsterdam who is conducting an extensive study of the situation observes, "The government realizes that, if it closed the clubs, it would have 10,000 angry kids out on the streets immediately. On the other hand, the government is quite embarrassed by the international publicity the clubs attract. So, the tactic it follows is not to discuss the matter publicly, to let it go on and make believe that it isn't there. But at the moment it is a delicate balance."

For those who operate the clubs, the situation is particularly frustrating, since the city provides a level of support that allows drug usage to flourish but is unresponsive to requests that the clubs be allowed to provide social services and hostels for many of the bedraggled young people who wander in. Eckart Dissen, the 26-year-old manager of Fantasio, said, "We'd like to expand our facilities and services, but there's no chance that we can do that this summer." The manager of Paradiso said he has stopped talking to visiting journalists. "All they want to discuss is drugs," he said. "No one seems to notice that other things go on here, too."

Staff members acknowledge that earlier this year "hard" drugs began to appear on the premises and the police became aggressive. "We had four arrests," Dissen said, "involving cases that the police couldn't ignore. Then we adopted a policy of keeping it out. We just make people leave if we think they're selling or using 'hard' stuff." As

NEWS IN BRIEF

● **NERVE GAS:** The Pentagon acknowledged last week that the United States is storing nerve gas and other chemical munitions on Okinawa, a Pacific island under the residual sovereignty of Japan. The Pentagon's disclosure, reportedly the first public admission that the United States has stored lethal chemical weapons abroad, resulted from a press revelation that a GB nerve gas accident had injured about two dozen persons at a U.S. military site on Okinawa. The publicity caused a furor in Japan and ultimately led the Pentagon to promise that all toxic chemical agents would be removed from the island as soon as possible. The Pentagon also stated categorically that there are no U.S. biological weapons stored anywhere abroad, and the State Department announced that there are no lethal chemical weapons stored in Japan. In another nerve gas issue, the Pentagon announced plans to dump 2000 tons of obsolete GB gas in a sealed lake at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Colorado and to burn an additional 4000 tons of mustard gas at the arsenal, both in accordance with recommendations of a National Academy of Sciences panel.

● **STARFISH STUDY IN TROPICAL PACIFIC:** The Interior Department and other government agencies are sponsoring a study aimed at halting coral destruction in the South Pacific. For some unknown reason, the "Crown of Thorns" starfish is multiplying in large numbers and killing extensive amounts of coral along island coastal areas in the tropical Pacific. Experts fear that the destruction of the coral may lead to an elimination of food supply sources for native populations, and may eventually destroy the islands, long buffered from waves by the coral reefs. Scientists will assess the extent of the starfish distribution, cause of their sudden rapid propagation, and possible means of controlling the starfish population. The Interior Department has let a \$225,000 contract to the Westinghouse Ocean Research Laboratory of San Diego to conduct the major study. The office of Naval Research will supply transportation; the University of Hawaii, under a \$25,000 National Science Foundation grant, will gather survey data; and the Smithsonian Institution will provide scientific expertise.

● **STEAM CAR CONTRACT ANNOUNCED:** The National Air Pollution Control Administration has awarded the first federal contracts for development of an external combustion system for the consumer automobile. The Thermo Electron Corporation received a \$174,173 contract to design a steam car system, and the Marquardt Corporation was awarded a \$96,683 contract to study ways of minimizing steam engine pollutants. Earlier federal pollution control efforts had focused on setting automobile emission standards, but several agencies and congressional committees are examining possible alternatives to the internal combustion engine. In February, the Department of Transportation awarded a \$309,780 contract for a prototype steam-powered bus.

● **NOBEL SYMPOSIUM:** Thirty to forty leading intellectuals from nations throughout the world will meet in Stockholm, Sweden, this fall to formulate a "reappraisal of human aims and values, at a time when new-found powers create immense dangers and opportunities for mankind." The Nobel Foundation, which is sponsoring the symposium, hopes that the participants will arrive at a collective declaration on this subject. American scientists scheduled to participate include three Nobel laureates—Joshua Lederberg, Linus Pauling, Glenn T. Seaborg—anthropologist Margaret Mead, and geochemist Harrison Brown.

● **PRO-ABM BOOK PUBLISHED:** A group of defense analysts from the Hudson Institute has published a collection of policy studies supporting anti-ballistic missile development. Entitled *Why ABM?: Policy Issues in the Missile Defense Controversy*, the privately financed book was edited by Hudson staffers Johan J. Holst and William Schneider, Jr., and includes essays by Herman Kahn, the Institute's director, Donald G. Brennan, a national security specialist, and five other authors. In a press conference, editors cited a need "to raise the level of discussion" and the "highly unbalanced nature of the public debate on ABM." Several essays offer rebuttals of the earlier, anti-ABM Chayes-Wiesner report (see *Science*, 16 May 1969). The book is available at \$6.95 from the Pergamon Press.

for the manner in which drugs are distributed, Dissen says, "that's strictly a private matter. We don't sell it. If people want to come here and sell and buy it, that's their business. Drugs here serve the same function as alcohol in a cafe. They're not necessary for people to get together and have a good time, but they help create a nice atmosphere." He added, "You don't need coffee for breakfast, but it's better with it than without it."

Though the legal status of the clubs is uncertain, they have been accorded some status in the politics of the city through the establishment of advisory boards that theoretically supervise their affairs and represent them in dealings with the city authorities. Sitting on one of these boards is a 30-year-old graduate in theology, Gerard C. de Hass, author of a book on contemporary youth, called *The Unforeseen Generation*, and secretary of a large private youth organization. "If you take the drugs out of the clubs," he said, "the kids won't come, and then we'll be back to the situation that we had when the Provos were driving the city government crazy. The authorities know that. The police remain ambiguous. Like all

police, they'd like to crack down on it. But the mayor runs the police." Though some observers say that "hard" drugs are in plentiful though relatively inconspicuous use, De Hass doubts this. "Some heroin, amphetamines and LSD are around," he said, "but not very much." As for the extent of pot consumption, he said that last April checks were made with all the dealers in the city and it was concluded that they were handling a supply sufficient for about 20,000 to 30,000 regular users. Others estimate that the numbers are probably smaller than that. According to Herman Cohen, a researcher at the University of Amsterdam, the figure is more likely around 10,000. "The increase in use," he says, "has not been great since 1960. Numerically, it is not a serious problem." Nor, if surveys on these matters are to be believed, are the clubs very important channels in Amsterdam's drug supply system. According to a survey taken earlier this year, only 7 percent of the visitors to one club said that it served as their principal source of supply.

Though Europe's popular press delights in telling garish tales of Amsterdam's newly flourishing sin centers,

many visitors come away with the impression of an essentially joyless scene. Huge, gloomy, and hot, with little dancing or conversation going on, the clubs are nightly jammed with vast crowds of lost-looking young people, many sitting by themselves, or silently in groups. Many puff on something or other, but then many do not. The club staffs estimate that about 50 percent partake of drugs, but, in terms of whether they are enjoying themselves, there is no visible difference between users and nonusers. Turned on or not, they mostly look turned off.

Anya Meulenbelt, the social worker, recalls that recently permission was received for about 300 young visitors to bed down for the night at one of the clubs. "We were afraid there was going to be an orgy and then photographers and police would come running in and that would be the end of the clubs. But they all just quietly went to sleep."

It would seem that, if there need be any concern about the social and political implications of the Netherlands' experiment in relatively unrestricted traffic in soft drugs, it should come from the left and not from the right.

—D. S. GREENBERG

Warm-Water Irrigation: An Answer to Thermal Pollution?

Eugene, Oregon. Electric utilities in the Northwest, as well as elsewhere, have been finding it difficult to announce plans to build a nuclear plant without stirring criticism that the proposed plant might cause major environmental problems. Fear of thermal pollution has often been enough to bring out opposition. Now, however, some Oregon utilities are thinking positively about the heated effluents that their power plants will discharge. They hope to show that these effluents can benefit farmers. It is even being suggested that eventually systems may be developed whereby heated effluents will serve agriculture as they are being cooled for recycling through the power plant.

Two utility-financed projects to test or "demonstrate" the beneficial uses

of heated water on croplands are actually under way in Oregon, although some people opposing the siting of nuclear power plants in the Willamette Valley suspect that the sponsors' interest in the projects springs largely from public relations motives. The Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB), with the cooperation of seven local farmers, this past spring began a warm-water irrigation project near here on a 170-acre tract lying within a bend of the McKenzie River. The goal is to demonstrate that warm water (being obtained in this case from a Weyerhaeuser paper mill) can be used to stimulate and enhance plant growth and to protect fruit trees from killing frosts. Water not used on crops is discharged from a blow-valve, its temperature thus

being reduced by evaporation to that of the ambient air before it hits the ground and trickles off back into the McKenzie.

The utility has invested \$475,000 in the project, which it says will continue even if an application now pending before the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration for a \$1.1-million, 3-year grant should be rejected. According to W. A. Cawley, FWPCA's acting director of water quality research, his agency is interested in the utility's proposal and is likely to support it if an acceptable project budget can be worked out. The agency has received no other proposals on the use of warm water in agriculture, and EWEB believes its project is unique.

The Pacific Power and Light Company (PPL) is supporting a small project at Oregon State University (OSU) to see if growing seasons cannot be lengthened and crop yields increased by warming the soil with buried electric cables. The cables simulate what could be a network of pipes carrying heated water from power plants. Larry L. Boersma, an OSU soils scientist who