

Weed Witch-Hunt Rally
September 2005, Vancouver
Presented by Rielle Capler

500 years ago, millions of people, mostly women, were murdered by the church and state for consorting with the devil and witchcraft – crimes we now see as completely ridiculous. But today, the same thing is happening.

Millions of people are being persecuted, jailed and murdered by the state for the equally ludicrous crime of using, growing and distributing the devil's weed. Millions of people worldwide use a plant to elevate our mood, increase our sense of well-being, and when we are ill, to relieve our pain and nausea. We are otherwise law-abiding citizens.

This afternoon, you will hear directly from some of these people. I'd like to speak to you about a couple of these people who are not here

Lynn Wood is on the other side of the country, in New Brunswick, which is a lot more conservative than it is out here. Lynn was running a compassion club. Lynn was sentenced to 1 year in jail for selling 1 gram of cannabis to an undercover police officer in a sting operation.

Lynn was 6 months pregnant when they put her in jail. In jail, Lynn was not given her iron supplements, and was knocked around in the back of a speeding van down windy bumpy roads on the way to appointments.

After one month, Lynn was released until her appeal hearing, which will be in a couple of weeks. Lynn was able to give birth to her new baby son outside of jail, can breastfeed and can spend some time with her husband and 3 other young children. Their neighbours and friends have abandoned them because of the climate of fear and stigma around cannabis.

Lynn is a brave woman who was helping people access clean cannabis in a safe environment so they could relieve symptoms of cancer, AIDS, glaucoma, Hep C, arthritis and MS. And Lynn is a criminal under our current laws.

Jim is also not here today. Jim is a personal hero of mine. He is a long-time grower for the BC Compassion Club, who provided us with high quality organic indicas. His medicine was reliably good for pain, and he sold it to us at very low prices. Any profits Jim made went to a camp for disabled children – Jim himself has a disability.

Last week a helicopter flew low over his property and sure enough that evening he was visited by some police officers without a warrant. As the police officers were cutting down his plants, Jim showed the commanding officer his compassion club contract and the research he had been doing on organic cultivation techniques. Jim was not charged. And as the

commanding officer left, she told him that she hoped all this wouldn't be necessary sometime soon.

Jim is a truly wonderful person who helped so many people by supplying medicine that they could depend on for pain relief and could afford. Jim is also a criminal under our laws. What the police did was devastating. Who was Jim hurting? Who were the police protecting?

That brings us to a man I'm going to call Bob. Bob is not brave and heroic, nor is he a criminal. Bob is a successful businessman somewhere between BC and NB. He is a smart businessman, and when he sees people risking their liberty to supply cannabis to suffering Canadians, Bob realizes that it must be an effective medicine.

So Bob invests in a company to develop cannabis-based pharmaceuticals, because it's legal that way. Bob also has another business that is super profitable because he uses prison labour. Many prisoners are in for cannabis-related charges.

Prohibition was made for Bob. He profits off prohibitions pool of slave labour. And he profits off of the pharmaceutical monopoly prohibition creates.

Lynn and Jim are heroes, they should not be criminals. Not just so that Bob can make money.

But there is no other reason for cannabis prohibition. It is not because cannabis is harmful. The Senate report states that cannabis is relatively harmless and was ignored by the Supreme Court and by politicians we elected to Ottawa.

500 years ago, nonconforming women were burned as witches. When science couldn't find proof of witchcraft or find the devil's mark, these women were handed over to the medical establishment to be diagnosed as insane and hysterical. Women are still gaining their freedom from the medical establishment.

Today, science cannot find the harms of cannabis. Prohibition has nothing to stand on. The pharmaceutical industry is poised for their monopoly. But that will only prolong our persecution. Let's stop the weed witch-hunt now by legalizing cannabis for the sick and the healthy.

And finally, let's support all those who are being persecuted. We must not put them in jail, and must not extradite them to the USA. Write letters, speak up, organize and vote!