



nererj

History Repeats Itself

November 06, 2014 - Front Section

Someone recently told me how much it costs the government (local or national) to house a convict. The cost amazed me - especially since it was higher than some people make in full-time jobs. For some reason the national government thinks it is okay to print new money when needed. A businessman can't do that. Someone also told me that almost half of the prisoners behind bars are drug related convictions - much of it related to marijuana.

Why is it a waste of time to teach history in our schools? Because no one ever learns anything from it. It does repeat itself. If everything that was addictive was outlawed, we would have to outlaw food, soft drinks, cigarettes (not a bad idea) sex (not a good idea), and many other everyday things that become habits or addictions. Getting back to pot, legalize it and a lot of harmless prisoners can be released. That will save the government a lot of money.

In 1920 our brilliant political leaders decided to outlaw alcohol with the 18th Amendment. The result was that distilleries and breweries in Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean flourished as their products were either consumed by visiting Americans or illegally exported to this country. Joe Kennedy Sr. admitted that he made his millions doing just that.

My uncle owned one third of a Boston restaurant that served you know what. A martini in a coke bottle. Gin in a coffee mug. He was a nice guy. His partners, not so much. The main result of Prohibition was violent crime. Ever heard of Al Capone? It took our government 13 years to do anything about it, 21st Amendment.

By the way, the reason I am bringing up the subject is that last month the mayor of Albany, N.Y. released details of a proposed agreement with the developers of a resort casino across the river in East Greenbush. Like many other areas in the country, certain factions of the local population fight having casinos in their area (NIMBY) believing that gambling leads to crime. Those same people stand in line at their local store to purchase a lottery scratch ticket that rarely pays off. Please explain. How can states promote scratch tickets and outlaw casinos? Although they have been doing so for many years.

One of the top real estate developments in the U.S. - Las Vegas. And it isn't owned by gangsters or crime syndicates. It is a growing retirement and family city and one of the top three sites for conventions, business and meetings. It was incorporated as a city in 1911 and it is now the most populous American city founded in the 20th Century, and it is one of the top tourist destinations in the world. What did they do right? They legalized gambling in 1931. The rest is history and, by the way, who the hell ever studies and believes in history.

Roland Hopkins is founder of the NEREJ, Norwell, Mass.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540