

THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE

Just another casual casualty of the drug war

by Brian Wright

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Reviewed by Logan Brandt

Brian Wright's first book, *New Pilgrim Chronicles*, is the story of one man's coming to the Free State of New Hampshire to help create more liberty everywhere. In contrast, Wright's second political monograph recounts his experience with the "Drug Prohibition System (DPS);" it's a true drug war story where an ordinary middle-class guy's liberty is suspended for two grueling weeks by the harsh, senseless prosecutocratic world of prison-planet lite. Brian decided to use this dire personal experience—considerably more benign than what the poor or minorities are typically subjected to—to speak out, for those who have no voice, against the cruel, unusual system.

The "Crime"

In the early 1990s, it appears Brian, out of curiosity or too many beers, had fallen into the moral hell of freelance medical-marijuana production (ahead of his time). Using a Phototron, a popular home-growing system—the instructional literature shows you how to grow tomatoes—Wright finally had developed six small plants, which yielded perhaps an ounce of low-grade Mary Jane... 90% of which he was giving away to a lady friend he knew who suffered from cancer. He never sold any product and consumed very little (his preferred drugs of abuse being Sam Adams and Stolichnaya).

In those days he lived by himself in a third-floor, two-bedroom apartment and kept the Phototron in the second bedroom. Early one evening in January of 1992 while he was helping a friend write a resume in a Detroit suburb 20 miles away, it appears someone(s) started a fire in the basement storage area for Brian's building in the complex. After leaving his friend, Brian stopped off at his favorite bar in West Bloomfield, and in fact was watching the 11 o'clock news when video of his apartment complex fire incident came on the air.

He left the bar immediately and reached his apartment just as the fire trucks and fire personnel were retiring from the scene. It had been a serious fire, but thanks to quick response by the firefighters, damage to the individual apartments—the building contained two sets of 12 apartments connected through a common basement storage area—lie mainly in deep smoke penetration. (Most units would need to be rebuilt down to the base structure.) That night Brian stayed with a friend, then returned to the site next morning.

Fire investigation people were milling around and residents were allowed to enter their apartments, with air filters on their faces, to gather belongings and assess the damage. Upon entering his apartment, it became clear to Brian that things were awry. Apart from any damage the firefighters might have caused, items were strewn about and drawers emptied—the place had been ransacked. Official-looking papers lay on his dining room table and when he checked his second-bedroom closet the Phototron was gone. The papers consisted of seizure notices accompanied by a search warrant—later discovered to have been an after-the-fact paper slapped on top of an illegal search.

Bloody Hell. To make a long story short, Wright lawyered up, had the attorneys volunteer him to surrender to the police assuming an arrest warrant would be imminent, and went about restoring his living situation. The arrest warrant never came! Three years later, a "come-in" letter arrived from a state narcotics police agency claiming a warrant existed and that Wright should surrender himself. Wright's attorney contacted the sender and checked the LEIN (Law Enforcement Interstate Network); no arrest warrant existed.

Two years later Wright takes a contract techwriting job in Texas; a year and a half after that Wright prepares to return to Michigan by finishing some business at the Texas DMV—Texas actually calls its motor vehicle department the Department of Public Safety (DPS), but Wright uses DPS to mean the Drug Prohibition System. While he is at the DMV, he is arrested; within the previous couple of years his Social Security number has been posted in LEIN. Thus an arrest warrant has now been executed on Brian Wright without Brian's knowledge; no one ever learns exactly the chain of custody and release of this arrest warrant.

The "Time"

At the age of 49, in the city of Houston generally acknowledged to be the Armpit of Texas,[1] where he has few friends and no family connections, Brian Wright is unceremoniously hauled away to the Harris County Jail. The greater part of *There Must Be Some Mistake* consists of what it's like to be processed into the county jail of a large metropolitan area and to be incarcerated there for several days. However, *TMBSM* not only documents the dismal nationwide system that forcibly confines tens of thousands of ordinary, peaceful, constitutionally innocent civilians every day; it gives you the sociology of this little-documented environment. Brian's booklet conveys who these victims are—with humor and a generous helping of basic human respect.

There Must Be Some Mistake begins at this point of Brian's Houston takedown. (He flashes back to the apartment fire in Southeast Michigan that leads to the interest of law (mis)enforcement, while standing before a magistrate years later.) Eventually, Brian is "extradited," picked up from the Harris County Jail, and brought back to Michigan. Then the book describes the bonecrushing wheels of the court system, where the Constitution means nothing in the face of an unrestrained "prosecutocracy" whose mission statement is to punish as cruelly as possible... especially those who in the game of life have very few cards.

Brian shows us the unrelieved sadness and hopelessness of the lives of so many who are bound up in the iron jaws on the front end of prison planet. The system manipulators—so many consciousness-averse government power-people who play their roles as cops, judges, prosecutors, guards, and whatnots with varying degrees of insolent, self-righteous thuggery—have universally crummy jobs, but the worst of them are in sadistic denial. We see that the essence of the DPS is a bunch of mean, sick people beating up on a bunch of imprudent, weak people... all for the financial benefit of corporate law-enforcement and prison industries. Whose ends are served? The nonhuman Kleptocons, of course.

The Prospects

There Must Be Some Mistake culminates with a general message that we need to end the drug war, and in a damned hurry, too. One can go to any of a hundred Websites today fighting for basic rationality in how society and its governments treat drug use. Former cops have their Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, a highly successful group arguing that drug abuse should not be a law-enforcement matter. We have the medical marijuana movement and the heroic work of Peter McWilliams[2] that reaches out in healing from the grave of his drug-warrior inflicted death. And the grim statistics of human destruction caused by the war are everywhere, ref. my personal favorite NHCommonSense.org.

The immediate costs to governments run around \$50 billion per year, but these billions carry the seeds of destroying so much more human wealth and human life: probably the full cost to American society of drug prohibition is more than \$1 trillion annually.[2] You can fix a lot of pot holes for that. But what *There Must Be Some Mistake* shows us is how ordinary people, who are productive and peaceful, can get slammed discourteously in ways that don't often show up in the statistics.

For many, i.e. the folks "on the wrong side of the tracks," drug prohibition is slavery. Like a modern Uncle Tom's Cabin, *TMBSM*—by showing the genuine travail experienced even by a man with "options"—can perhaps blow up the gutless-wondrous complacency of the American middle class on this issue... and create a groundswell of activism to free these modern slaves and obtain meaningful restitution from those who have enjoyed the slimy benefits of being their masters.

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[1] I'm happy to state that later, spending more time and visiting friends there, I came to actually love the city of Houston... except for the "end of the world" rains, floods, and hurricanes that sweep thru seemingly every other month.

[2] *Ain't Nobody's Business if You Do*, by Peter McWilliams

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