
The Case for Drug Legalisation

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Introduction

Many people take the prohibition on the currently illegal narcotics (e.g: Marijuana, Cocaine, Heroin) for granted. They believe that just because the drugs are physically harmful, they should be banned. Yet, this

is very far from the fact. While drugs can be harmful, there is no good reason to make them illegal. In fact, the prohibition on drugs causes so many undesirable side-effects, that they **must** be made legal.

If this sounds fantastic to you - read on, I'm sure you'll find out that I know what I'm saying.

The war on drugs has been supported by both the left and right political camps, and has only been rejected by Libertarians and various other minority groups who hold this view. As a result, most people who believe they should choose between left, right or middle, think drug prohibition is acceptable on everybody. But this is not the case. The prohibition on drugs is very harmful to the public and individual well-being and must be eradicated as soon as possible.

The Morality of Drug Abuse

A person has a basic right to harm himself, as long as he does not harm others in the process. That's because everyone of us is the owner of his mind, body and property, and is solely responsible for their use and abuse.

All arguments that do not favour that, like that a person thus contributes less to society, and becomes a burden on it are pretty silly. That's because a person is never obliged to contribute to society ("First, do not harm"), and the society at large is not obliged to support its members. (It would be Socialistic to claim otherwise.)

Thus, a person must be allowed by law to consume drugs. I'm not saying it is desirable if a person exercises this right. I'm just saying that a person should be allowed to do so, just as he is allowed to smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, deteriorate in personal hygiene, give away money for no good reason, act stupidly, etc. These are all harmful activities, yet perfectly legitimate.

The Biology of Drug Use

Drugs are not as harmful as many people think. Most drug users are perfectly healthy people who just happen to have a drug problem, just like people who smoke, or are alcoholics, or are addicted to caffeine have a drug problem. Otherwise, they are able to function properly and be good citizens. There are no recorded deaths from Marijuana in the U.S. The amount of deaths for Cocaine is 20 per 100,000 (4 if we take into account such factors as its reduced quality), and the deaths from Heroin are 400 per 100,000 (or 80 if we take these factors into account). This is compared to 150 deaths per 100,000 from Alcohol and 650 from Tobacco. Taking the numbers into account, in the U.S. there used to be 390,000 deaths per year from Tobacco, 150,000 from Alcohol and only 400 from Heroin and 200 from Cocaine (and none from Marijuana). (Source [<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa121.html>].)

Thus, legalising drugs, which would potentially make them more common, will not be a hazard to the global health status of the population.

The Bio-Psychology of Drug Use

The mere act of consuming illegal narcotics, usually does not cause one to commits crimes. While drugs affect the mind, a large increase in drug consumption by itself will not cause a large increase in the number of crimes committed.

Note that criminal activity is often related to drug use due to its present illegal nature and the fact drug users steal in order to acquire drugs. (or other drug related crimes.) However, this is not a direct result of the bio-psychological effects of the drugs themselves.

Arguments for Drug Legalisation

The Prohibition on Drugs Causes an Inflation of Crime

As drugs are illegal, they are being marketed by outlaws, who charge an inflated price for them. Much more inflated than the amount it requires to grow, manufacture and distribute them. As a result, there is a growing black market for the distribution of drugs and drug users eventually need to commit crimes like theft and robbery to support their habits.

The average crime rate in the U.S increased twice fold due to the prohibition on Alcohol. Once the prohibition was lifted, it decreased back to its original state. It is expected that drug-induced crimes cause a similar increase, due to the similar nature of this prohibition.

In this analysis one should also include the very “crimes” of drug use, trafficking, and sale, as well as crimes caused due to the criminal nature of some drug dealers. Drug trafficking is also a huge source of income for Organised crime.

All of this crime can be eliminated in a swift blow by legalising drugs. When drugs will become legal, they will be produced, distributed and sold by local legitimate entities, who will be subject to Capitalistic market constraints. Their prices will drop to a minimum, allowing everybody to buy them at the needed quantities. Criminals will no longer be able to make a decent living from selling them in the black market (as there will be none.).

The War on Drugs does not Help to Fight them

Law enforcement organisations attempt to stop drug trade by catching drug shipments, and drug dealers. However, any shipment or dealer that is caught, has only one effect: a temporary increase in the price of drugs at the location to which they were intended. Most drug shipments and transactions are never stopped, and it is a pointless struggle to try to stop them.

The Prohibition on Drugs Lowers the Quality of Drugs

Illegal drugs are not sold in the free market and as a result the sold good is subject to the whims of the local outlaw manufacturer or distributor. As a result, they often have reduced quality, which can cause a lot of unnecessary health side-effects on their users, including many deaths.

During the prohibition on alcohol it was observed that the quality of alcoholic beverages has heavily decreased, and the same thing happens now with the currently illegal drugs.

Since it is hard to find high quality drugs, when drugs of a high quality are found the drug user will buy as much of it as they can afford, especially if it's a good deal and therefore they will have a much larger quantity around than they normally would have and therefore tend to consume more drugs.

Imagine that liquor fluctuated in price and quality. You go to the store and sometimes there are harmful chemicals in the liquor, sometimes the prices are extremely high, sometimes there is no liquor at the store at all. Only once in a blue moon are prices very good and quality good (say, it only happens once a year). In that case, you would buy as much as you could afford. Naturally, people who only use alcohol might not agree with this, but that's because they have never been in that situation, since alcoholic beverages are fully legal.

The Prohibition on Drugs Causes Proliferation of Drugs' Use

People who become heavy drug users often need to find a way to finance their habit. As a result, they often become drug dealers themselves, and try to push drugs onto other people, including children.

Furthermore, once they become dealers, they become exposed to an even wider variety of drugs than before, and they are likely to try drugs that they never would have before because drugs are essentially free to them. And a great way to push drugs on people is to consume drugs with them. So, to make more money, they end up consuming more drugs.

Making drugs legal will stop this vicious cycle. The price of drugs will drop to free market levels, and people will not need to become drug dealers themselves to finance their habit.

Slowdown of the Progress of Lower Sectors

Drug dealing in a society where drugs are criminalised is a way to make a lot of money. As a result, young people among the poor find selling drugs an easy way to earn their living and escape the more demanding path of working in an honest job.

This causes a bad effect on the societies in poor neighbourhoods, who turn to drug dealing instead of advancing their rank in the honest world. Making drugs legal will kill this easy way out, and force the young people of the poor to struggle for a honest living and gradually advance their personal and collective financial status.

Drug Users Serve as the “Unholy Enemy” of Society

There is a common pattern in history of “unholy enemies” - groups of people who are presented by leaders to be of such evil nature that the general populace should be willing to sacrifice their lives, freedom or well-being to fight them. These have been the Jews in Nazi Germany, and the Kafirs in Islam. In modern society, drug users now serve as an unholy enemy for which the government can undermine Liberalism [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberalism>] and gradually repress the people.

Yet, drug users are no such enemy - they do not pose a threat to society. Plus, they are people in need of help, not in need of being hunted and prosecuted.

The legalisation of drugs will put a stop to the irrational trend to make drug users an unholy enemy and for the government to undermine the individual rights of the citizens. There is no good reason to undermine individual rights, much less one that is useless and pointless as trying to “win” the war on drugs.

The Prohibition Causes an Abusive Behaviour among the Users

Since drugs are illegal and using them can jail a person, drug users usually exhibit abusive behaviours: they lie, steal, and become dishonest and suspicious. This is not an effect of the drug itself - it's a result of the psychological and legal situation in which they are present. By legalising drugs, one can be sure that drug users will be able to openly admit their problems, and seek help.

Drug Users Form a Subculture

Drug users tend to associate with other drug users, because non drug users do not understand drug use and have a preconceived idea that they are intrinsically bad. Therefore, drug users are always around other

drug users, and likely always around drugs, and therefore tend to do them more. When breaking a habit, you must stop your enablers, but drug users eventually mostly have other drug users as friends, so it is very hard to break the habit of drug use even after it becomes a problem. #That is because they are always around drugs and other users and it takes a large amount of will power to refuse taking drugs when one is around it all the time.

As a result, drug users form a **subculture**. The drug user ends up alienated from his or her non-drug using friends. However, the cause is not the drug or the drug problem, it is the illegal stance society takes on drugs. One is a criminal if they possess drugs, so they will not do this openly, yet they can do this somewhat openly among the drug-using subculture, and possessing drugs in that subculture makes you high status in that subculture. Drugs and especially good quality drugs are of a higher value in that subculture, than being rich.

Prevention of Legitimate Uses

The prohibition of illegal drugs prevents some legitimate uses of the plants from which they are made. The most prominent examples are paper that can be made out of Hemp, but is now made out of cut-down trees instead (which is certainly not good for the environment), and the various medical uses of Marijuana.

Strain on Society due to People in Jail

The prohibition on drugs puts many people in Jail - there are over 1 million prisoners for drug offences in the United States. There are even more if we consider drug-induced offences such as drug-induced theft.

These prisoners are a large strain on society which needs to support them. They also prevent more serious criminals from being jailed, which undermines the punishment and rehabilitation system of the government.

The legalisation of drugs will free the prisons from false criminals, and restore justice. And the lawful people will no longer need to support hundreds of thousands of jailed drug users and dealers.

Note about Why Politicians Support The Prohibition

It is well known that many politicians or people who hold government positions support the prohibition on drugs. As a result, many people are likely to conclude that they are being bribed by Mafia Dons and other high-profile criminal people who make their livelihood off the prohibition. This may actually be the case to some extent, but it's not the only possible explanation for why they support it.

There are two other explanations for why politicians, who are still honest enough to not accept bribes from drug-trafficking criminals, may still support the prohibition on drugs. The first is that they are simply clueless or misled enough to believe that the prohibition is a good thing. Many ordinary and perfectly honest people have also bought the pro-prohibition advocacy and voice opinions supporting it.

The other explanation is that some of these people know better and are acting in an evil, destructive, and dishonest manner [<http://shlomif.livejournal.com/42320.html>]. Acting and thinking in an evil way can become an obsession and an addiction, and some people have become terminally infected by it and are consistently acting in an evil manner. While it may be true that one should not "attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanlon%27s_razor], malice is still present in the world, including among the leaders.

As a result, even if such officials are not accepting bribes, they are still not acting out of the public's best-interest when they support the prohibition of drugs.

Summary

The prohibition against Drugs is the real drug problem. It is a war against the people, that consumes lives, money, and property. It has no good reason. History tells us that all the past prohibitions on narcotics failed miserably. The current prohibition on drugs is no different.

What You can do about it?

Here is a list of things you can do to help the cause of fighting for drug legalisation:

1. **Educate people about it:** write something pro drug legalisation online, in blogs, mailing lists, newsgroups, web forums; write your school report about it; publish articles about it in newspapers, tell about it to your friends, etc.

Note that you should feel free to link to this article, or even quote its text, as long as you give attribution. (See its open-content, Creative Commons, licence for more information. [<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/>])

2. **Contact Your Government** - write to your representatives and government, and tell them why the prohibition on drugs is harmful and not justified. If possible, vote for representatives that support the legalisation of drugs.
3. **Don't work against the cause** - if you're a drug-enforcing policeman, then switch to a different department, or quit. If you're an agent of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_Enforcement_Administration] or a similar organisation - then quit.
4. Last, but not least - **don't use illegal narcotics**. They have numerous bad medical effects, and using them reduces your credibility as someone who can speak against their prohibition.

By acting and propagating the understanding that drugs should be legalised, we can eventually create a strong, vibrant movement against the prohibition on drugs, that can eventually abolish it completely.

Links

- James Ostrowski's "Thinking about Drug Legalization" [<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa121.html>] is an excellent and detailed article about the problems of drug prohibition.
- The English Wikipedia has an article written on the Prohibition on drugs [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition_\(drugs\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prohibition_(drugs))] from a hopefully Neutral Point of View.
- The web site "Drug War Facts" [<http://www.drugwarfacts.org/>] was recommended to me by a libertarian correspondent. I didn't fully read it yet.
- The Schaffer Library of Drug Policy [<http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/>] is a comprehensive site for support of the legalisation of drugs. It contains a copy of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) site, with comments [<http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/dea/>] and especially a step-by-step rebuttal of their "Speaking Out against Drug Legalisation" document [<http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/dea/pubs/legaliz/claims.htm>].
- The online comic series *Calamities of Nature* [<http://www.calamitiesofnature.com/>] (which I am very fond of) has two related strips: "Caffeine Ban" [<http://www.calamitiesofnature.com/archive/?c=565>] and "Going Dutch" [<http://calamitiesofnature.com/archive/?c=427>].