

BENEFITS OF RE-LEGALIZATION

New Products: Hemp has an estimated 50,000 non-smoking commercial uses. According to Department of Agriculture research, hemp has four times as much fiber for making paper as wood pulp. The original Levis were 100% hemp. The word canvas comes from cannabis, and eighteenth-century and earlier sailing ships were covered in hemp. There is a strong market today for natural fibers, and there has been a resurgence in hemp products, especially paper, but all of this hemp must be grown in other countries because it is illegal to grow hemp in the United States.

Money Lost: Most of the people in prison for drug use in California are there simply for using marijuana. This costs an average of \$25,000 a year per person. We spend \$100,000,000 per year on 15,000 marijuana arrests. Why should our tax dollars go to imprisoning people for using a drug with the abuse potential of a cocktail? These costs don't include the lost taxes the criminal would have paid, or the cost of social services needed by families of the now imprisoned marijuana user. Californians also spend 3 to 6 billion dollars per year on marijuana, money which is completely untaxed.

Jail Violent Criminals: We are letting rapists, murderers, and burglars free to make space in our jails for marijuana smokers and sellers.

Regulation: Today, we regulate where and when alcohol and tobacco can be sold. When alcohol was illegal, it was brewed and sold on every street, and there were special speakeasies just for schoolchildren. Ending *alcohol* prohibition allowed us to regulate alcohol, and ending *marijuana* prohibition will allow us to regulate marijuana.

Stop Subsidizing Crime: Illegal drugs are a boon to criminals because they're illegal. They earn vast profits, and their turf wars spread violence throughout our cities, just like in alcohol prohibition. Californians spend at least \$3,000,000,000 per year on marijuana. This money is lost into the black market and untaxed.

Stop Hard Drug Use: In Amsterdam, decriminalization of marijuana *reduced* the use of harder drugs such as heroin and cocaine. It *may* have reduced the use of *marijuana*: only 3% of Dutch teens smoke marijuana regularly, compared with 4% of American high school seniors who smoke marijuana *every day*. Amsterdam also credits their policy with reducing violent crime in their country.

KILLER WEED?

Overdose: There are no known cases of marijuana overdose. The lethal dose of marijuana when eaten is probably greater than the user's weight. DEA Administrative Law Judge Francis Young called it far safer than many foods we commonly consume.

High Drivers: Marijuana doesn't impair physical coordination like alcohol does. Numerous studies have shown that drivers high on marijuana drive only slightly worse than sober drivers, and far better than drivers high on alcohol.

Health Risks: Separate research reports of heavy cannabis users in Jamaica, Costa Rica, and Greece did not find any evidence of brain damage or impaired mental or physical functioning due to even heavy, chronic cannabis use. It is generally recognized that smoking marijuana is safer than alcohol or tobacco, and that eating marijuana is safer even than coffee or tea. New evidence from the National Center for Toxicological Research confirms previous findings that marijuana is quite benign, even when smoked.

Many things that we do have health risks. The health costs of football, sugar, automobiles, and fat each exceed that of marijuana. Regulating health is a dangerous business.

Lost Productivity: The only peer-reviewed study on productivity, published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, found no difference between the drug positive and drug negative employees. A Georgia Light & Power study found that workers testing positive only for marijuana had an absentee rate 30% *lower* than the company average. *Most* estimates for lost productivity and increased health care for drug users include *alcohol* and *tobacco* users. But we already know what happens when we make *them* illegal.

Medical Uses: Many doctors feel that marijuana should be available as medicine. Almost half of the members of the American Society of Clinical Oncology would prescribe it, according to a 1990 survey. More than 44% have recommended the *illegal* use of marijuana to at least one cancer patient. In some Veterans Hospitals, use of marijuana by paraplegic and quadriplegic patients is tolerated, if not openly encouraged by physicians, who accept this practice as being of benefit to their patients.

In San Diego, Sam Skipper was found not guilty of using marijuana. The jury decided it was a *medical necessity*: he was using it to combat AIDS wasting syndrome.

WHY IS IT ILLEGAL?

There are a number of reasons why marijuana use was made illegal. None of them have anything to do with the medical or intoxicating effects of hemp.

Racism: During the depression, marijuana was primarily used by Mexican immigrants or migrants, who competed for jobs with other Americans. Labor groups started to demand that these people be shipped back across the border. The name marihuana stems from this period, and was an attempt to paint this drug as Mexican.

Officers and Mexicans both ascribe many of the moral irregularities of Mexicans to the effects of marihuana. (*Missionary Educator Movement in California*)

Marihuana... is a direct by-product of unrestricted Mexican immigration... Mexican peddlers have been caught distributing sample marihuana cigarets to school children. Bills for our quota against Mexico have been blocked mysteriously in every Congress since the 1924 Quota Act. Our nation has more than enough laborers. (C.M. Goethe, *The American Coalition*)

When some beet field peon takes a few traces of this stuff... he thinks he has just been elected president of Mexico, so he starts out to execute all his political enemies. (*Butte Montana Standard*)

End of Alcohol Prohibition: When alcohol prohibition ended, many Prohibition Bureau agents were transferred to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, including its new leader, Harry J. Anslinger. Originally, the Bureau of Narcotics job was to go after opiates, but this didn't provide enough work for all the new Prohibition Bureau agents. Anslinger decided to capitalize on the marijuana scare in the Southwest. Speaking before Congress, he said:

How many murders, suicides, robberies, criminal assaults, hold-ups, burglaries, and deeds of maniacal insanity it causes each year can only be conjectured.

Which was true, of course, because they hadn't done any studies. When a representative from the American Medical Association pointed this out, a congressman told him to get out of the way of the federal government.

Marijuana Paper: Just before the furor over marijuana, a decortification machine was invented. This made hemp easier to use for paper-making than trees. A *Popular Science* article about the new machine predicted that hemp would soon replace trees as the major source of paper. William Randolph Hearst, the publisher of the Hearst newspaper chain, owned forest stock. His newspapers led the charge in the reefer madness scare of the thirties.

PROHIBITION IS AN AWFUL FLOP

Prohibition is an awful flop.

We like it.

It don't stop what it's meant to stop.

We like it.

It's left a trail of graft and slime,

It don't prohibit worth a dime.

It's filled our streets with vice and crime.

Nevertheless...

Were for it.

Franklin P. Adams, 1931

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME

Mayor of Baltimore **Kurt Schmoke** publically supports legalization of marijuana use. **George Bushnell**, president of the American Bar Association, believes that *all* drugs should be decriminalized. Hard-line Columbian prosecutor general **Gustavo De Greiff**, whose forces killed drug lord Pablo Escobar, said "The profits are so large that... the only solution is legalization." The **Iowa Democratic Party** called for the study of drug legalization, and the **Washington Democratic Party** opposes prohibition. The **American Civil Liberties Union** "opposes criminal prohibition of drugs. Not only is prohibition a proven failure as a drug control strategy, but it subjects otherwise law-abiding citizens to arrest, prosecution and imprisonment for what they do in private.... *The ACLU believes that unless they do harm to others, people should not be punished even if they do harm to themselves.*"

This is but a fraction of those who have realized that the drug war cannot be won with jails and crack-downs. Every dollar spent cracking down on illegal drugs makes the drug trade more profitable—and violent, leaving "a trail of graft and slime that don't prohibit worth a dime."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Crisis in Drug Prohibition: David Boaz, editor.
Cato Institute, 1990.

Marijuana: The First 12,000 Years: Ernest L. Abel.
Plenum Press, 1980.

Consumers Union Report: Licit & Illicit Drugs:
Edward M. Brecher & the editors of Consumer Reports. Little, Brown, 1972.

In a world of scarce prison resources, sending a drug offender to prison for one year is equivalent to freeing a violent criminal to commit 40 robberies, 7 assaults, 110 burglaries, and 25 auto thefts.

James Ostrowski

Say what you will about the decriminalization of alcohol, it has rid the nation of bootleggers.

Richard Cohen

Marijuana, in its natural form, is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man.

DEA Judge Francis L. Young

I would be far happier if my own teenage children would, without breaking the law, smoke marijuana when they wished, rather than start on the road of so many of their elders to nicotine and ethyl alcohol addiction.

R.D. Laing, M.D.

People who make liquor are businessmen, not the members of an international ring of alcohol refiners; people who sell liquor are retail merchants, not pushers; and people who buy liquor are citizens, not dope fiends.

Thomas Szasz

How can you expect your children to respect authorities who will ruin a person's life for possession of marijuana or put a man in jail for using a drug with the abuse potential of a cocktail? Police tell young people that pot smoking will turn them into addicts. The kids know it's not true. They figure they have been handed lies about other drugs as well, and go on to try them. We can earn their respect only by telling them the truth and treating drugs as medical, not police, problems.

Dr. David Smith

For organized crime, prohibition had been a blessing, serving as a midwife, a teacher, and a rich uncle.

Larry Engelmann on *alcohol* prohibition

They saw that more laws... seemed to generate more violence...

Ethan Nadelmann on repealing *alcohol* prohibition

It strikes us as inconsistent to issue calls for total abstinence from some drugs while happy hours with two drinks for the price of one are promoted for another.

The Drug Abuse Council

I hear man cry, *Would there be no wine! O folly! O madness!* Is it wine that causes this abuse? As well say, *Would there were no light!* because of the informers, and *would there were no women* because of adultery.

St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople

Why End Prohibition ?

A Practical Solution to the Marijuana Question

Jerry Stratton

for more information, contact:
www.jerrystratton.com
<http://www.hoboes.com/Prohibition/>

Printed December 31, 2006