

WE ARE ALL VICTIMS OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

No one wants a society of addicts or irresponsible citizens, least of all members of the B.C. Anti-Prohibition League. But current methods of dealing with the drug issue are not only ineffective, they create or compound the problems they propose to solve. While claiming to try to stop substance abuse, our rights are instead abused, as any "use" of marijuana, LSD, or cocaine is considered "abuse" unless it is done in the guise of science designed to prove the substance dangerous.

Desiring these substances is considered 'addiction' while desiring alcohol is considered 'normal' yet decades of research have shown:

- marijuana is not a harmful drug in either its physiological or sociological effects.
- LSD is not dangerous when taken by knowledgeable, prepared, secure people.
- the vast majority of cocaine users take cocaine in moderation with no ill effects.
- heroin addicts can live productive lives when they can afford both their habit and food.

No, drugs do not cause crime. The war on drugs causes crime, as it is a war on people who choose to live their own lives, it escalates the price of selected substances, and it encourages disrespect for personal privacy.

Yes, the abuse of drugs can kill you. In fact, records show that in Canada there are 35,000 deaths each year directly related to the use of tobacco, and 3,000 - 15,000 deaths each year directly related to alcohol. In comparison, cocaine and heroin each are related to approximately 400 deaths. (Many heroin 'overdoses' are not that at all but death due to lack of publication of the long-known medical fact that combination of opiates with alcohol or barbiturates can be fatal.)

No person has ever died from an 'overdose' of marijuana. Less than 10 Canadians a year are killed while enjoying marijuana. Clinical studies indicate statistically you'll live a little longer if you use marijuana than if you don't.

You may think you need not be concerned if you do not use so-called illicit substances yourself, but the war on drugs affects everyone in our society. **The law is harmful because:**

It encourages disrespect for law and authority. When people discover they have been lied to, their willingness to trust is diminished. Citizens do not respect hypocritical laws based on deliberate misinformation, the people who keep these laws in place, or the people who enforce them with violence and threats.

It prevents proper education. Nothing is without risk, including the consumption of psychoactives. But we do not outlaw bleach and cars, both of which can be extremely dangerous. Instead we educate our young in the appropriate use of these things. We owe it to our children to tell the truth about drugs so they can make responsible informed choices.

It leads to otherwise avoidable health risks. Consumers are at risk from the impurities and unknown strength of street drugs. Participants deserve to know the dosages they are taking and be assured of safe, high quality products. This would be possible in a legal marketplace where respectable merchants could talk freely and be held responsible for their claims.

It fosters isolation and abuse. Anyone actually in distress from the use of psychoactives should be free to seek help without fear of beatings, interrogation, stigmatization, and acquiring a criminal record.

It escalated the price of drugs. Because of the risks involved in providing 'illicit' substances, prices do not relate to the actual cost of production and distribution.

It promotes crime. Some users, disenfranchised from society, use anti-social methods of obtaining funds. Addiction drives some people to steal \$2,000 worth of goods to sell for \$200 for \$5 worth of painkiller.

It restricts personal responsibility and freedom. The ingestion of psychoactive substances is victimless, and therefore no crime by the accepted definition of that word. When a drug is potentially harmful to the individual who ingests it, that person should be free, responsible, and informed enough to make choices for him/herself, as is done when we choose to drive a car, rock-climb, drink alcohol, work in a factory, or bungy-jump.

It promotes divisiveness and intolerance. Those perceived as addicts and therefore criminals are shunned by others in society. There is an additional disparity between the rich and the poor – the rich can afford their substance of choice, can

hide their use easier, and can afford better legal care if they are ever charged (which is rare). Families are torn apart, not so much by the use of psychoactives as by the legal implications of that use. One 'head' endangers all members of the household by attracting aggressive police assault teams.

It promotes violence. Police kill offenders, offenders kill police, dealers kill each other, and innocent bystanders are caught in the cross-fire. The only "drug" whose pharmacology actually promotes violence is alcohol.

It makes 'criminals' out of ordinary people. An otherwise law-abiding citizen who enjoys psychedelics in privacy in their own home is forced to act and live in fear of stalking, beating, arrest and prosecution and the loss of everything they hold dear – family, friends, job, home, and freedom. Such a person may also be left with no choice but to associate with people involved in real criminal activity in order to obtain their substance of choice.

It escalates the cost of law enforcement. There is a huge financial burden of upholding prohibition, including surveillance equipment, people and time to use such equipment, court costs, legal fees for both Crown Prosecutors and Legal Aid defenders, hospital costs and damages due to the war, and incarceration expenses of approximately \$45,000 per year for each person sent to jail. Supplying a heroin addict with free heroin and psychoanalysis for the underlying problem would be cheaper and would allow him or her to hold a job.

It misdirects money. There is an incredible amount of cash disappearing into the black market, money which could be used toward the betterment of Canadian society. We are losing the potential tax revenue and increased employment of legalization (which would more than off-set the decrease in enforcement officers), and the gross sums spent on studies, commissions, and committees whose findings end up largely being ignored anyway.

It destabilizes world markets. The Economist magazine has for many years recommended drug legalization because the laundering of the estimated 600 billion dollars in world drug trade is damaging to global markets. This illegal money prevents an accurate assessment of the worth of many companies.

It destabilizes governments. Drug smugglers need protection and revolutionary armies need money. The marriage between these groups in developing countries results in government corruption and instability.

It prohibits what is possibly the most important and versatile natural renewable resource known. Cannabis hemp could save North American economy and ecology. According to a U.S. Department of Agriculture estimate (Bulletin 404) one acre devoted to hemp could produce as much paper as 4.1 acres of trees over the same twenty-year period. Eco-friendly hemp needs no pesticides and could supplement soil-depleting cotton (50% of chemicals used in agriculture are used for cotton). Hemp seeds are the best plant source of the nutritional essential fatty acids (Omega 3's and Omega 6's). Hemp bio-mass fuels could replace fossil fuels and anything made with petroleum can be replaced with a renewable hemp oil product.

It is abusive to the Police. Easily available drug money cash is corrupting. To require police to treat addicts and users as criminals creates job hazards and stress.

It consumes unnecessary police time. Pursuing drug users and dealers who engage in voluntary transactions is difficult and therefore resource and time consuming. Our scarce tax dollars would be better spent dealing with crimes of force and fraud.

It produces more concentrated drugs. Smugglers and dealers need drugs to be as small as possible. Concentrated drugs tend to be more addictive than weaker drugs.

It restricts religious practices. Many of the psychoactive substances which induce mind-altering experiences are not 'drugs' in the normal sense but sacraments which religious people have used in prayer and contemplation since before the beginning of recorded history.

It encourages racism. The Canadian Narcotic Control Act came into being in 1911 to stop Chinese Canadians from smoking opium to keep them from organizing labour unions and allow easy deportation.

It prevents access to useful medicine. The medicinal value of marijuana for many illnesses is well documented.

It is unconstitutional. Section 52 of the Constitution Act provides that the Canadian Constitution is the supreme law of Canada, and that any law that is inconsistent with the provisions of the Constitution is, to the extent of the inconsistency, of no force or effect. The Constitution can only be limited by laws "justified in a free and democratic society".

The so-called War on Drugs is in effect, if not intentionally, a War on Freedom of: conscience, thought, belief, opinion, expression, communication, peaceful assembly, association, life, liberty, security, religious expression and justice.