

OPINION

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Why we should: Part II

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Second part of a series

Yesterday we learned that the case for legalizing marijuana has three main components. In the first section of this article we found that we citizens have constitutionally granted inalienable right to liberty and personal freedom and that the government cannot legally take authority not specifically granted to it. But they have done so illegally.

Today we will take a look at some common misconceptions about crime and usage in areas where pot is or was perfectly legal. We will discover that the legalization of pot does not cause crime to increase; in fact it is the exact opposite, legalizing it reduces crime and stops funding terrorists and criminals.

Let's look back to the early period of the 20th Century during which several religious groups and other organizations, notably the WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union), decided to push for legislation to take alcohol use from being a personal choice for adults to a substance prohibited by law. In their zeal to legislate the morality of others they failed to notice (or just looked the other way) that there would be severe consequences. They managed to get a constitutional ban placed on alcohol consumption via the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and almost instantly ushered in a reign of terror and organized crime the likes of which this nation had never seen.

It should have come as no surprise that, when there is a demand for something and that demand is stifled by force of law or by any other means, the demand will get satisfied some other way. Black markets in liquor arose immediately. Once legal shipping lanes became instant illegal "rum runners." The obvious happened: Prices for the now illegal substance skyrocketed and the quality of the merchandise went down. Huge armed gangs formed to protect their interests and their supply lines and retail outlets. Huge profits were to be made and guns were used by criminals to enforce protection of their turf. Organized crime was born. Organized crime was, and is, a child of morality legislation and of Prohibition, not of liquor use.

Why does the black market cause violence and crime? Because the price of a prohibited substance rises the instant it is not allowed. Demand remains the same, which causes prices to escalate even higher. Do you think someone would rob your house or steal copper wire from an abandoned building if the commodity they desired cost 50 cents or a dollar instead of the hundreds of dollars demanded by the criminal element of a black market? Obviously not. The crime and violence comes as a byproduct of and is caused by the prohibition of the substance, not by the substance itself.

This becomes a source of money and power and increased influence for those charged with enforcing the prohibition. They stand to gain a great deal; job security for themselves and literally billions of dollars pumped into their coffers to pretend to be able to stop what should be an adult's own choice to make or not to make. They know they can't stop it. They know that by trying to stop it, it grows and goes underground and lets them pretend to have the need to grow ever more powerful themselves to keep up the pretense. In the U.S., pretending to stop drug use has grown completely out of control and has become a multibillion dollar industry consuming a large percentage of our taxes.

Back to the '20s-'30's: Finally after a decade of rampant crime and with reality staring them in the face the voters demanded a repeal of Prohibition, and got it via another constitutional amendment,

the 21st. But the damage was done, and the entrenched bureaucrats saw the power they were able to achieve and lusted after more. They knew that the voters had learned their lesson and would not unleash the harm to themselves and their families caused by another round of Prohibition so they resorted to an illegal power grab that continues to this day. Thus the illegal and unconstitutional prohibition of marijuana and other substances was born and causes pain, death and destruction even until today.

If it is legal, it becomes cheap and available simply by going into a store and buying it, like mongo beans or Spam. No gang needs to form to protect it, and a whole class of "criminals" become what they really are, just adults deciding to use or not use a particular herb over some other herb. Did anyone ever resort to burglary to get a bag of mongo beans? What would happen if they made mongo beans-"the poor man's meal"-illegal to possess or eat? The price would go way up and a black market would form and the FBI would chase their tails and pretend to be our moral guardians and save us from the demon mongo beans, spending billions of our money on the charade.

In countries where marijuana and other drugs are legal to use, the actual usage goes down, not up. Witness Australia and Norway, orderly societies both. Children are protected from using it not by authorities or by laws but by their parents, just like now. The difference is that adults who choose to inhale a particular leaf after setting it on fire are not criminals anymore. They are just consenting adults minding their own business. If you want to come and force me to use it, I am just as appalled as I am if you want to stop someone else from using it. It is simply not a decision that your government should be making for you. Next time you see someone demonized or jailed for daring to buy a marijuana cigarette, think about a \$25 bag of green beans.

I quoted David Boaz from the Cato Institute yesterday and I think he has something important to say in today's context as well: He said, "Prohibition causes crime and corruption. It diverts law enforcement resources. It channels money to criminals here and abroad. It devastates our inner cities. It imposes huge social costs on such countries as Colombia and Mexico." His quote ends here but I would go on to say, "and all for no gain at all, except for the few who maintain power and control over the rest of use by the use of governmental force of arms."

What if you were to wake up tomorrow morning and the usurpers of constitutional power had changed their minds and decided that the "war on drugs" should be fought to force you to take drugs, and which ones you had to take every day? That is no more irrational and no more unconstitutional and no more just plain wrong than forcing you not to ingest the herb of your own choice as they do today. After all they do call themselves the Drug Enforcement Agency.

Tomorrow we will discuss the money issue. I think you will find that the CNMI's economy would be booming if adults were allowed to make their own legal decisions about marijuana farming, possession and usage.

To be continued.

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