

Prohibition lessons: Why don't we just legalize all drug use?

John Curley

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I stood outside one cold evening watching drug deals through binoculars with two undercover cops. We focused on one little block. The cops would radio ahead, swoop in and get the guy.

While we waited for more illegal deals, I turned and asked, "Why not just legalize this stuff?"

That began a whole conversation with two people who are in the business of stopping "this stuff" from happening. One of the officers told me saw where I was coming from, but that, in essence, it would be giving everyone permission to destroy themselves.

Here's the thing. I'm a Libertarian. My view: You do you.

I always point to what happened during prohibition. When all of a sudden we decided to stop selling alcohol, the number of murders spiked, crimes and organized crime went up. When they cut prohibition, rates of robbery, burglary, murder and assault went down, according to an analysis by the Cato Institute.

So let's legalize it all. If you want to inject junk into your body, good for you. See you later. That's your choice, society has no right to stop you. My right to swing my arm ends at your beautiful nose.

My co-host Tom, a bleeding-heart liberal, is slightly skeptical. He says this attitude means I have no sympathy for an 18-year-old kid who gets addicted to heroin and dies. That's not true.

We know personal stories – like [Penny Legate losing her beautiful daughter](#) to heroin — and thousands of others that are terribly sad. I just don't think more government fixes the problems. Or more police.

Would you arrest somebody with diabetes who is having a diabetic shock on the street? No. You'd call an ambulance because he or she has diabetes. If somebody's got heroin and injecting it into their system, they are sick. You do not put a sick person in jail. You put a sick person in a hospital and give them medical treatment. To continually pick up a sick individual and jail them, how are you affecting the sickness? Zero.

It costs tens of thousands of dollars to pick somebody up out of the gutters, put them through some rinky-dink court system, and send them back out on the street. We are subsidizing the habit

by not treating the sickness so that we can facilitate this criminal idea that makes people feel good that we're rounding up drug users and putting them in jail. It doesn't do anything for anybody.

Even in the rich confines of Sammamish and Issaquah, we have a heroin problem and these kids have all the money but are missing parents that are involved in that part of their lives.

"If we legalize it, though, we'd have even more deaths on our doorsteps in those cities," Tom countered.

But would we? Or would we have less death because we could take some of the money spent on criminalization and use it for treatment?

That's why I say we put down the binoculars and handcuffs and legalize it all.