

Marijuana tax act

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Marijuana was declared an illegal drug in the USA with the passing of the Marijuana Tax Act in 1937 under dubious circumstances. ¹ Since that time numerous studies have shown that the drug is less harmful than tobacco and alcohol. Despite the available evidence and the enormous cost of enforcing the marijuana ban, it is hard to understand why this relatively harmless drug continues to remain illegal in the United States. This essay argues why marijuana should be decriminalized without further delay. Opponents of legalizing marijuana contend that it is a dangerous drug; this is far from the truth.

For example, there has not been a single recorded case of death due to marijuana overdose. On the other hand, a legal intoxicant like alcohol results in the death of about 5,000 persons every year due to overdose. The reason for this is that the ratio of cannabinoids² necessary for intoxication is 40,000:1 while that for alcohol is generally between 4:1 and 10:1. ("Answers To..." 2005) As such marijuana is one of the least toxic substances and would have to be consumed in physically impossible quantities to prove fatal.

As for the health effects of marijuana, a World Health Organization (WHO) Study, which was scheduled to be published in December 1997 but was suppressed by its top management due to political pressure, had reported that Cannabis fared better than alcohol and nicotine in five out of seven comparisons of long-term damage to health. (Concar, 1998) In terms of addictiveness too, most studies show that marijuana was less addictive than alcohol, nicotine and caffeine. (Quoted in "Study Compares..." 1994) A common myth about marijuana is that it acts as a 'gateway' drug, i. . . ,

marijuana use leads to use of harder drugs such as heroin or cocaine. This theory is disproved by the fact that after the legalizing of marijuana in Holland in the 1970s, heroin and cocaine use declined markedly, despite a slight increase in marijuana use. If the 'gateway' theory were true, the use of hard drugs should have gone up rather than down. (" Answers to... " 2005) Other charges against marijuana, based mainly on prejudiced and unreliable studies, are that it contributes to an escalation in crime and is responsible for increased driving accidents.

The linkage between marijuana and crime is absolutely false because, if anything, marijuana actually lessens aggressiveness in the user. Only " driving under the influence of marijuana" could be hazardous but it is far less problematic as drunken driving. (Ibid.) Enforcing the ban against marijuana in the US costs the tax payers as much as \$ 12 billion annually; it also diverts the energies of the law enforcing agencies that would be better served in fighting the spiraling crime rates in the country's cities.

This is reflected in the fact that there have been nearly 6. 5 million marijuana arrests in the United States since 1993, 3 far exceeding the total number of arrests for all violent crimes combined, including murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. (" Marijuana Prohibition Facts," 2004) Apart from the 'direct' estimated cost of \$ 12 billion that would be saved by legalizing marijuana, the government would also be able to collect a considerable amount of money by way of taxes.

Moreover, de-criminalizing of the drug would eliminate much of the underground criminal network in the country that gives rise to numerous

social problems such as spreading corruption and graft among the law enforcing agencies. It is unfortunate that policy makers and law enforcers have failed to learn the lessons of Prohibition of alcohol in the 1920s when a similar ban against alcohol had escalated crime to astronomical levels and deprived the government of much needed tax revenue.

It would, therefore, not be wrong to conclude that the rationale behind the continuing criminalization of marijuana is based on false premises and difficult to defend. Most scientific studies have conclusively shown that marijuana is a far less harmful drug than alcohol and tobacco. The cost of enforcing the existing harsh laws against marijuana possession is unnecessary and diverts the attention of the American justice system, which would be better served in fighting violent crime and terrorism. As such, there is no reason why marijuana should not be legalized forthwith.