

War on marijuana



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War on marijuana What have been the central justification in the history of the " war on marijuana" in the last century especially since the war on drugs started about 40 years ago? Common sense that has evolved through centuries has been that drug use is a social evil, which affects individual users as well as others who interact with them mentally, physically and socially. And the war on drugs and especially Marijuana was initiated based on this commonsense as well as on the evidences on the link between drug use and crime. The situation in the US has been considered alarming as " the United States as a whole has the highest rate of drug use among the industrial countries of the world, and U. S. high school seniors have the highest rate among their peers in the industrial world (Author last name, date, p. 278). It was the horror stories that spread in the US in the late 1960s that led to strict laws and their enforcement regarding drug use. Marijuana has been found to have the combined effect of the three categories of drugs- stimulants such as cocaine and nicotine, depressants such as heroin and morphine and also hallucinogens such as LSD and MDMA- and this is why primarily marijuana is considered more dangerous than other drugs to the health of the user (Author last name, date, p. 270). Compared to other drugs, Marijuana is the most used drug in the US and " the sharpest increase in drug use has occurred among young teens around Age 13", who are the future of any given society (Author last name, date, p. 279). Another danger inherent with this drug use is that it can act as a stimulant for the users to experiment with more dangerous drugs (Author last name, date, p. 272). And also there has been a strong link found between drug use and crime (Author last name, date, p. 280). It has been proved that " close to half of the crime suspects arrested in the United States had used illegal drugs in the prior

three days” (Author last name, date, p. 281). 2. What are some current policies of the US government toward marijuana, and what have been the consequences of this policy? The United States has been allocating a major portion of its “ antidrug budget to law enforcement” rather than for supportive activities like education against drug use and prevention and treatment for drug use (Author last name, date, p. 287). The consequence of this policy has been that a large number of drug offenders were incarcerated (Author last name, date, p. 287). Another consequence of this policy was that it “ turned out to be a war on powerless groups, particularly minorities” (Author last name, date, p. 287). For example, the antiopium laws has in effect become anti-Chinese laws (Author last name, date, p. 287). Mostly it was the ethnic minorities and poor people who got imprisoned and convicted. Similarly the anti-Marijuana law has ben criticized as being anti-Hispanic (Author last name, date, p. 287). A campaign has been going on demanding legalization of drug use in view of the failure of the existing law enforcement efforts (Author last name, date, p. 289). Some successful programs that have been implemented to prevent drug use are, Drug Abuse Resistance Education Project implemented in schools, and also better access to modern drug treatment including psychotherapy (Author last name, date, p. 291). So far, “ America has spent at least \$1 trillion on the drug war” (Drug Policy Alliance, 2011). But it has been observed that “ millions of people have been incarcerated for low-level drug law violations, resulting in drastic racial disparities in the prison system, yet drug overdose, addiction and misuse are more prevalent than ever” (Drug Policy Alliance, 2011). The number of people who have been imprisoned for drug use “ rose from 50, 000 in 1980 to more than a half of a million today - an 1100% increase”

(Drug Policy Alliance, 2011). Figures have also shown that “ drug arrests have more than tripled in the last 25 years, totaling more than 1.66 million arrests in 2009” (Drug Policy Alliance, 2011). It has to be noted that “ more than four out of five of these arrests were for mere possession, and forty-six percent of these arrests (760,000) were for marijuana possession alone” (Drug Policy Alliance, 2011). The repressive nature of the US policies have resulted in many Americans supporting the use of legal Marijuana and Meno (2010) has reported that a new Gallup poll suggested that “ 46% of Americans support use of legal Marijuana.”

3. What other impacts has the “ war on marijuana” had on the use of the drug and users? As part of the ‘ war on Marijuana’, humiliating searches for drugs on the bodies of school children have become a matter of routine (Drug Policy Alliance, 2004). Such searches have raised huge public outcry as well. Strip searching girls, and withdrawing financial aid to schools in which drug use has been found, are some other excessive actions being taken by the government (Drug Policy Alliance, 2004). The government is also promoting drug testing in work places and people who are tested positive can be fired (Drug Policy Alliance, 2006). The new Supreme Court ruling on access to police for Marijuana search inside homes, has said that even without a search warrant police can break open the door of a residence and enter to search for Marijuana, if they feel (after knocking at the door of the house) they hear noises of the house owner destroying evidence (Smith, 2011). On the other hand eleven states in the US “ have already legalized medical use of Marijuana” because it can relieve pain and nausea in patients critically ill with cancer, AIDS etc. (Author last name, date, p. 272).

4. What alternative to the current war on marijuana have been proposed? Give some specific examples. What is your opinion

here? Johnson, Golub and Dunlap (2006) have suggested that New York City Police Department change its policy of arresting and detaining people for Marijuana smoking and keeping Marijuana in custody, to “ routinely issuing DATs (Desk Appearance Ticket) to reduce detention for marijuana violators that will help reduce the disproportionate burden on people of color associated with the current arrest and detention policy.” Harm reduction has been another intervention strategy being suggested by way of psychotherapy (Denning, 2004). Samuels and Kalishman (2003) have made recommendations to 1) adopt treatment policy instead of an incarceration policy, 2) to utilize drug prevention budget to educate people against drug use and to implement preventive measures, and, 3) to give legal access to sterile syringes in order to prevent spread of diseases like AIDS. I believe that the US has to change its policy from punitive to a supportive one. As findings of new scientific research has been suggesting, Marijuana is found to be effective in cancer treatment and hence I believe the total ban has lost its relevance and what is needed is a responsible use of legal Marijuana (Fox, 2011). And in view of the failure of Marijuana prohibition, what is needed is regulation and education (Meno, 2010). References Denning, P. (August 11, 2004) Practicing Harm Reduction Psychotherapy: An Alternative Approach to Addictions, Retrieved from <http://www.drugpolicy.org/resource/practicing-harm-reduction-psychotherapy-alternative-approach-addictions> Drug Policy Alliance, (2011), Forty Years of Failure, Retrieved from <http://www.drugpolicy.org/facts/new-solutions-drug-policy/forty-years-failure> Drug Policy Alliance (May 14, 2004) Innocent Maryland Teens Treated Like Criminals: Strip-Searched By Cops during Humiliating High School Search, Retrieved from <http://www.drugpolicy.org/news/2004/05/innocent-maryland-teens-https://assignbuster.com/war-on-marijuana/>

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