

America is living through a drug nightmare. Up to 80% of street assaults, murders and burglaries are drug-related. Drug gangs have spread their power to every city and town. Many police have been corrupted, courts are overcrowded, and prisons are bursting at the seams. The lure of big drug profits is turning children into pushers and cops into crooks.

Every year the War on Drugs escalates. More money is spent, more drugs are seized and penalties for drug use become more severe. Yet illegal drugs are still plentiful.

There's a simple reason why America is not winning the War on Drugs. We have been fighting the wrong enemy. We have been told that the cause of our drug nightmare is drug sellers and users. The real cause is drug criminalization.

### Prohibition Revisited

This is not the first time the U.S. government has tried to save Americans from themselves. In 1919, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution prohibited the manufacture of alcoholic beverages.

Suddenly honest, responsible Americans who just wanted a drink, were turned into criminals. Respectable bars became underground speak-easies, and legitimate liquor manufacturers were replaced by criminal bootleggers.

Gang shoot-outs became common. There was massive bribery of police and judges. Criminals who made illegal booze paid little attention to quality, and many consumers went blind or died from tainted products.

Eventually politicians were forced to admit the futility of trying to legislate morality. Liquor was harmful – but liquor prohibition was even worse. In 1933, Prohibition was repealed.

### Violence and the Social Costs of Drugs

Today, liquor is legal and there are no longer any shoot-outs over kegs of beer or barrels of gin. But today the disastrous consequences of alcohol prohibition are being repeated with drug prohibition.

Before President Reagan declared all-out War on Drugs, America's crime rate had been declining – but with the advent of the new drug laws, violent crimes increased 32% between 1976 and 1985. Today, many areas of our inner cities have become violent wastelands.

The more the government suppresses drug use, the more drug violence increases. Drug criminalization results in huge black-market profits and the domination of the drug trade by criminal gangs. As gangs battle each other and the police over turf,

widespread violence is inevitable.

Drug prohibition also results in enormously inflated drug prices. The street price of heroin has been as high as 5,000 times hospital costs. To pay for \$200-a-day habits, addicts have little choice but to turn to prostitution, burglary, and armed robbery.

Tens of thousands of social drug users have also had their lives needlessly destroyed by prohibition. A single arrest can destroy a career or family. But no matter how many Americans are arrested for drug use, no matter how many middle-class users lose their homes and jobs, drug prohibition cannot succeed.

Look at any major American prison with its human cages, iron gates, armed guards, and continual surveillance. Drugs are still readily available in prison. If brutal repression cannot keep drugs out of our *prisons*, then turning our entire country into a prison will not keep drugs off of our streets.

### How Dangerous are Illegal Drugs?

The violence associated with illegal drugs is certainly real, but how great is the medical danger of the drugs themselves? Each year, over 50,000 Americans die from alcohol abuse. Over 400,000 die from cigarette-related illnesses. Less than 3,000 die from illegal drugs.

Unlike tobacco and alcohol, marijuana – the most commonly used illegal drug – is not addicting, and there has never been a case recorded of anyone dying from an overdose. Illegal drugs cause far less medical harm than alcohol and nicotine.

The desire to “get high” seems to be as fundamental as the sex drive – and nearly as pervasive. Given human nature, the most humane policy would seem to be to honestly educate people about the risks of drugs, encourage moderation, and make sure that intoxicants are as safe as possible. But such policies are made impossible by the demonization and criminalization of drugs.

Criminalization is also the cause of the vast majority of “drug overdose” deaths. Because drugs are illegal, there is no quality control or any way to sue sellers of adulterated drugs. Needles and other drug paraphernalia are also illegal, so hard-core users share “works,” which is a major cause of the spread of the AIDS epidemic.

Over 70 million Americans now use illegal drugs occasionally – particularly marijuana. The vast majority are *not* addicts, but moderate social users. The small percentage who really *are* addicts deserve our compassion and help, not persecution and imprisonment.

### The Inhumanity of the Drug War

Poor, largely black, inner-city communities are particularly sad victims of the War on Drugs. Few poor teenagers will take entry-level jobs at \$5 or \$6 an hour when they can make thousands a week selling drugs. Failing to acquire job skills early in life, they may end up as criminals or on welfare their entire adult lives. The irresistible attraction to a profitable life of crime can only be ended by taking the profit out of drugs – by making them legal.

Other victims of the War on Drugs are middle-class Americans fired from their jobs for casual drug use; children treated as criminals in schools and subjected to intrusive searches of their lockers and bodies for drugs; glaucoma and cancer victims denied medical marijuana; and middle-class families who have their homes, cars and bank accounts confiscated for minor offenses.

### The War On Drugs has Become A War On Your Liberty

Our proudest heritage as Americans is our freedom to live our lives as we see fit. That birthright is now being destroyed in the name of winning the War on Drugs.

Under “Zero Tolerance,” which targets casual drug users, police confiscate cars, homes, bank accounts and businesses *without trial* from at least 2,000 innocent people a week. These seizures take place without search warrants, without probable cause, and without due process. Most property is sold at public auction, with the proceeds used to hire more drug police.

Under programs like Washington D.C.'s “Operation Clean Sweep,” police armed with automatic weapons pull up in front of stores and restaurants in drug corridors and force everyone to lie on the ground while they are searched. Any cash they may have on them is seized. Anyone who protests or resists, is beaten or shot.

In New York City, homeless shelters are being converted into jails. Former Drug Czar William Bennett has proposed building prison barges on the Potomac, in the shadow of the Washington Monument.

Under California's Campaign Against Marijuana Planting, SWAT teams search Northern California fields by helicopter. If any marijuana plants (which grow wild) are found, homes and businesses are subject to immediate confiscation. The owner has 20 days to sue the government to get his property back.

Originally the “War on Drugs” was a metaphor.



Now it is reality. In December 1989, 20,000 U.S. troops invaded Panama, capturing strongman Manuel Noriega – at a cost of at least 4,000 innocent Panamanians killed, and in total disregard of international law.

In South America, U.S. drug warriors provide some of the world's most repressive regimes with training, helicopter gunships, and automatic weapons used to strafe the villages and fields of peasants accused of growing drugs. The result of these brutal tactics has been to make heroes out of anti-government drug dealers and communist revolutionaries.

The U.S. government's "holy crusade" against drugs has become an enormous threat to peace, freedom and prosperity throughout the world.

### How Legalization Would Effect Drug Use

Drug legalization would end all of these terrors. The strongest argument against legalization is that it would result in a massive increase in drug use. But there is little evidence to support that assertion. In Holland, Belgium and other European countries which have defacto legalized drugs, drug use increased only slightly. However, crime, drug overdoses, and drug-related deaths fell dramatically.

Legalization in the U.S. may even reduce drug use. In 1975, Alaska legalized private use of marijuana. A 1982 study by the University of Alaska showed that 4% of Alaskan students used marijuana every day, compared to 6.3% of all American high-school seniors.

Drug legalization ends the "forbidden fruit" appeal of illegal drugs. It eliminates huge profits for drug dealers and the incentive to sell drugs to minors. It ends the hype, hysteria, and insanity that are the handmaidens of prohibition.

### Ending Our Drug Nightmare

For decades, the government has been waging a futile war on drugs. With every new crackdown, drug violence and brutality increase – and our freedom declines. If drugs are legalized, drug use would become just another vice, like smoking or drinking.

Legalization would end most drug violence, brutalization of drug users, corruption of police, clogging of courts and prisons, and most deaths from drug overdoses. Legalization would free social resources for efficient drug education and compassionate treatment of addicts.

Drugs should be legalized, not because drugs

are good or beneficial, but because drugs do less harm to our lives, our property, and our humanity, than drug laws.

Drug use without repression is a tolerable evil. An endless and futile War on Drugs is an intolerable assault upon the very essence of America. The War on Drugs is the cause of our drug nightmare, not the solution to it. America will be safe only when we are once more free, and drugs are legal.

### Statement of Principles

The International Society for Individual Liberty is an association of individuals and organizations dedicated to building a free and peaceful world, respect for individual rights and liberties, and an open and competitive economic system based on voluntary exchange and free trade. Members and affiliated organizations pursue these goals through independent action, using their freely chosen strategies. The association exists to promote the exchange of information and ideas, to study diverse strategies, and to foster fellowship.

ISIL and its members in over 80 countries pursue the goal of individual liberty through educational and networking activities. ISIL produces educational materials, such as this pamphlet, which is one of a series of which 4 million have been sold in the U.S. ISIL sponsors the translation and publishing of libertarian books and literature overseas, and promotes networking through its international newsletter, the *Freedom Network News*. Since 1982 ISIL has organized annual world conferences which have served as a catalyst for the development of the world libertarian movement.

Join ISIL today and help us build a free, peaceful and prosperous world. A basic membership of \$35 per year includes: a subscription to the *Freedom Network News*, a full set of 30+ pamphlets (and new ones as they are published), discounts on books and tapes, and a membership card.

Donations to ISIL are tax-deductible in the USA.

Extra copies of this pamphlet are available at 5¢ apiece (add \$2.00 shipping on orders of under 500 pieces). For a full ISIL information package, including a sample newsletter and literature, send \$3.00 to cover postage & handling.

### International Society for Individual Liberty

836-B Southampton Rd., #299, Benicia, CA 94510-1960

Tel: (707) 746-8796 Fax: (707) 746-8797

E-mail: 71034.2711@compuserve.com

Website: <http://www.isil.org>

# Ending Our Drug Nightmare

## A Humane Solution That Will Make Our Streets Safe



by Jarret Wollstein

- ISIL EDUCATIONAL PAMPHLET SERIES -

Revised April 1998