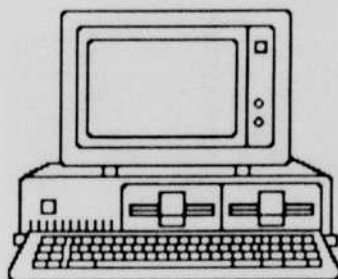


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Monday In-Depth

Drugs Continued from Page 1

more people who are against legalization take the idea seriously instead of quickly dismissing it.

Thomas Coffin, a supervisory U.S. attorney in Eugene, is one of the people who dismisses it. He believes legalization arguments are misguided and lack substance, but he admits the idea has some appeal in Oregon.

"Unfortunately, there is a significant number of people in Oregon who fervently believe drugs ought to be legalized," Coffin said. "They're a minority, but they're very vocal and will be even more so in the coming months."

Wreak havoc on society

Legalization advocates argue the societal costs of enforcing drug laws are much greater than the dangers presented by the drugs themselves.

To prove their point, they offer statistics like these: The Oregon Department of Human Resources reports that of the 433 Oregonians who died as the direct result of using alcohol and drugs in 1987, only 13 were directly caused by cocaine and 1 was caused by methamphetamines.

In no case was marijuana listed as a cause of death, although its use was mentioned twice.

But Lon Mabon, Director of the Oregon Citizens Alliance, said that drugs can "wreak havoc upon society" without resulting in the deaths of those who use them.

Advocates and critics generally agree drug use would increase if legalized. What worries Coffin is the possibility of

an increase in violent crimes committed by people under the influence of drugs.

He also maintains smuggling would continue.

"Unless you're willing to give up any and all drugs to anyone that wants them, you're still going to have a black market," Coffin said. "I don't understand what these people feel they're going to accomplish by legalizing it unless they're willing to do that."

No easy political division

So who are the few calling for legalization?

"Intellectuals on the liberal side basically think we should be allowed to do anything we want no matter how destructive it is," Mabon said. National drug czar William Bennett publicly has accused "liberal elites" of having a similar attitude.

Mabon said while some conservatives also support the idea, he does not.

Edward Weeks, an associate professor of public policy at the University, points to the conservative philosophy behind legalization arguments.

"The conservative position is to say that the role of government in the lives of individuals should be at a minimum," he said. "Legalization is very much a conservative argument."

The advocates come from both sides of the ideological fence. They include such prominent conservatives as economist Milton Friedman and former Secretary of State George

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