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19600 S. Molalla Ave.
Oregon City, Oregon
97045
(503) 657-6958 X2309
cccprint@clackamas.cc.or.us
http://depts.clackamas.cc.or.us/print

Should marijuana be legal?

Legalizing marijuana would help solve social and political issues



Erinn Lerten
Opinion Editor

The question of whether marijuana should be legalized is a controversial issue that has been hotly debated for the past 30 years. Although there is evidence to support both sides of this argument, removing legal penalties from the production, sale and use of marijuana would eliminate many of our biggest social and political problems.

Over the years, many myths have circulated regarding the dangers of marijuana. One of the more persistent myths is

that marijuana is a "gateway" drug that leads to the use of harder drugs such as heroin and cocaine. What science and actual experience tell us is that marijuana tends to substitute for drugs like cocaine and heroin. Since the Dutch partially legalized marijuana in the 1970's, the use of heroin and cocaine has declined substantially. In general, drug abuse is perceived to be less of a problem there than it is in the United States.

Another common misconception about marijuana is that it is more dangerous than tobacco. Yes, it is true that marijuana and tobacco contain relatively similar amounts of carcinogens and smoking an equal proportion of marijuana to tobacco will create more tar build-up. However, a heavy tobacco smoker consumes much more tobacco than the amount of marijuana a heavy marijuana smoker consumes. This can be attributed to the fact that tobacco has a 90 percent addiction rate, whereas marijuana is less addictive than caffeine.

It is also interesting to point out that there has never been a reported incidence of a marijuana overdose that resulted in death. In fact, scientists estimate that you would have to consume 40,000 times the marijuana required to get stoned in order for it to be lethal. This strongly contrasts with alcohol, which requires only four to ten times the usual amount to have a lethal effect.

In recent years, some states, including Oregon, have allowed for marijuana to be used for medical purposes. Patients suffering from diseases such as cancer, AIDS, glaucoma, and chronic multiple sclerosis have used marijuana to help alleviate pain, anxiety and nausea.

Decriminalizing marijuana would be advantageous because the government could regulate its production. The government would receive valuable revenue from taxing the product. In addition, the government would not have to fund a considerable portion of the multi-billion dollar war against drugs. These savings could be redirected toward solving more critical social problems such as violence, poverty and under-funded public education.

Legalization would unclog the court system considerably. Since fewer people would need trials, justice would flow much faster and more important cases would receive proper attention, allowing the judges and the juries to make more considered opinions. The elimination of countless trials would help solve the problem of prison overcrowding and enable the police to focus their efforts on more serious crimes such as murder and rape.

Marijuana does not serve only smoking purposes. It is also an excellent source of nutrition. It has the highest oil-content in the world (34 percent), oil that is of very high quality. After the oil has been extracted, the remaining "seed-cake" is second only to soybean in protein content. Hemp can also be made into clothing and paper, yielding almost four times the paper pulp of trees. It is ironic that marijuana is illegal in the United States when the Constitution itself was written on paper made from hemp.

I am not suggesting that marijuana is good for you. Nor am I advocating unregulated use of it. However, after carefully weighing the current health, economic and crime-related costs to enforce the laws against marijuana, it is my contention that marijuana use should be decriminalized.

Physical and moral effects of marijuana outweigh benefits



Mark Falling
Contributing Writer

Cannabis sativa (also known as marijuana, pot, Mary Jane, grass and weed), is a wonder drug, or is it? Many marijuana users claim to have found tranquility through this drug and now they are pushing to legalize it more than ever, even though it might not have any practical purposes. But do they really care what it does to your body and mind?

Billionaires Peter Lewis, John Sperling and George Soros, who are spearheading and funding the pro-pot movement, have all used marijuana and want to see the drug legalized. Lewis, who smokes pot just for the fun of it, spends half his time out in his 255-foot yacht. Soros wants to make heroin and other prohibited drugs into legal prescriptions for drug addicts, while discouraging those who are non-addicts. Sperling has invested millions into unusual pet projects, such as cloning his cat. If these philanthropists really cared about helping people, they would be spending their money on finding cures for cancer and AIDS.

Even though the longterm effects of marijuana have yet to be determined, what we do know leaves its medicinal value in question. Marijuana contains 50 percent more tar than tobacco, which makes the drug more irritating and has greater negative effects on the upper airways than smoking tobacco. It may cause lung, neck and head cancers along with emphysema and restrictive airway disease. Pot also increases the workload of a heart; by increasing the heart rate and blood pressure, it creates a situation usually found in people under high stress. Also, taking marijuana reduces the number and quality of sperm while damaging their mobility, causing impotence in men. In women, marijuana can damage egg cells, which affects fertility. Not to mention the ten cases found in France (which was published in the journal *Angiology*) where heavy pot smokers got ischemia (insufficient blood supply) in their limbs and in four cases, led to amputations.

The Journal of the American Medical Association published a study on 102 near-daily marijuana users who wanted to quit for various reasons. They found out that the more they smoked, the more faulty their memory and attention spans got. Those that smoked pot regularly for an average of ten years did significantly worse on two of the 40 indices of cognitive functioning. But those who smoked it for an average of 24 years did even worse on the tests than the ten-year smokers. Marijuana causes the brain to not interpret brain signals correctly, thereby slowing down the thinking process. Taking the drug leads to difficulty in concentration, attention to detail, reaction time, judgment, memory and learning new or complex information. But the effects of long-term marijuana use on the intellect have not been declared, nor has there been any documented proof that it causes brain damage.

Most important are the moral implications of being in an artificially-induced state of mind, outside of reality, which will result in decisions that could later be regrettable. Much like alcohol, it creates an out-of-body experience, resulting in personality changes that increase the chances of losing control and harming those around you physically and/or mentally.

As a Christian, I believe that we have been granted this incredible bio-machine, for the purpose of making logical and rational decisions to acknowledge there is a Creator. But if marijuana gets legalized then maybe we will see a lot more people trying to clone their cats.

Do you think marijuana should be legalized?



Kyle Sahli
"Yes, I do because we have enough problems in this state funding schools. If we tax marijuana we can spend the money on schools."

"Yeah, because it puts too many people in prison for distribution who aren't violent criminals but they come out of prison more violent."
John Conley



David Storkel
"Actually I think it should. There's a lot of innocent people unjustly put into the system because of it. It can be abused though, it's a fine line."

"Yes, I do. When people drink a lot they become hostile and violent, pot doesn't have the same effect. Pot isn't as bad as drinking and that is legal."
Bonnie Graziano



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We were unable to find anyone who believed that marijuana should not be legalized. However if you disagree, letters to the editor are always encouraged.