

## Unacceptable Collateral Damages

It is well documented that the United States has a prison population of 2.2 million (one of the worlds largest) with over one-third incarcerated and serving sentences for violations of "drug laws." If as a country and people, reeling in economic crisis, we were truly serious about fiscal responsibility, reducing unnecessary spending and public safety - we would eliminate the main source of financing for organized criminal activity and terrorism though out the world. We would end our absurd "war on drugs" by decriminalizing their use, acquisition and/or sale. Instead, regulate and tax their use.

In 2002 I can remember a series of "slick" TV commercials from the Office of the Drug Czar, etc. portraying young children as saying that "they": "...helped kill a judge,...purchase weapons, etc." The message intimated that through the purchase of illegal drugs (controlled substances) that profits from the illicit sales were and are used to further violence and/or despicable bad ends, etc. No one familiar with the cycle of violence associated with drug trafficking will deny the substantial truth in those adds - and we could easily add terrorism, gun running, human trafficking, organized crime, gang warfare, etc. to the list of beneficiaries of illicit drug sales.

There is a problem with the above however. The shame or sham is that its our very own elected law makers and legislators who have made laws that have given birth to a multibillion dollar illegal industry that finances criminal enterprise of all sorts, not the least of which is terrorism - in this country, over our borders and world wide. The profits of drug trafficking are the engine of nearly all the above craziness. In the 1920's a virtual world of crime with the means to finance more was created by Prohibition (of alcohol). As a people, we (our grandparents) were smart enough to fix that problem by legalization. Over the last thirty plus years however, we've allowed ourselves to be "sweet-talked" by lawmakers and special interest groups to use legislative power to unfortunately repeat history on a much grander scale by passing laws to criminalize all forms of drug associations. By so doing, an underground economy was again created with the unintended consequences placing huge amounts of cash into the hands of organized criminal and terrorist organizations. Free cash used to finance world wide terrorism by fanatics bent on the destruction of everything free people hold near and dear. And of course, we spend more and more resources year after year arresting (1,376,792 in 2006) our citizens on drug charges for violating "the law." Why? Because someone made a law saying "its a crime."

So, some "thinker/s" thought it was a good idea that, "...there ought to be a law against that ... lets make it illegal by criminalizing all activities related to its use, etc." - with a whole bunch of laws - with big penalties and long prison terms. So here we are, and just what is the big deal about drugs? Who really cares (or should) if someone uses drugs to "get high" and/or anesthetize themselves? Who gets hurt? This writer suggests that very few are harmed (per capita) by "the drugs" themselves and/or their use. The real harm comes from the consequences of the criminalization of their possession, use, acquisition and/or distribution. Even more harmful are the many layers of collateral damage created by the "so called Justice System" and/or the state sponsored terrorism of it's citizens in regard to "enforcement." As a nation we spend over \$100 billion dollars every year in drug related enforcement, interdiction, prosecutions, incarcerations, welfare related family consequences, destruction of and confiscation of property, injury, lost wages, near permanent disenfranchisement of large segments of the population, and death of innocents - just to name a few.

"The cure," if there is one or ever will be , is worse than the disease.

That \$100 billion dollars (+) would be better spent protecting our boarders; helping finance universal health care; fixing Social Security; research and development of new energy sources; quality education for all and/or fighting the real enemy of democracy and our way of life - ignorance.

Tax revenue and fees from the legitimized sale and regulation of drugs could and would be a new income stream for federal, state and local government's. This would surely be a better controlled use of our financial resources than giving the cash to criminal and terrorist organizations bent on our harm and exploitation. Add to that, the prison population across the country would eventually be reduced by at least one third with significant savings diverted to more worthy projects.

What is the difference between an alcoholic and/or a drug addict? Neither is a desirable condition but with current laws, one may be found in treatment and the other in a prison. It doesn't make sense morally, ethically or economically. They both make an informed choice to anesthetize themselves, they've only chosen different poisons.

Nearly all violence associated with the illegal drug trade can be traced directly to the criminalization factor. If drugs were legal and controlled like alcohol (package stores, bars, etc.) crime linked to drugs would virtually be eliminated with no appreciable damage to the social fabric of the community.

The following facts speak for themselves. Illegal drugs (controlled substances) do not and have not caused a disproportionate death rate that would justify the amount of financial resources and state sponsored misery being applied to "the problem." This is especially apparent when compared to other causes of death. Statistics compiled annually from: The National Safety Council; National Center for Health Statistics; U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; American Cancer Society; American Heart Association; Bureau of Justice Statistics; U.S. General Accounting Office; and articles from the Boston Globe, New York Times, U.S.A. Today; and other periodicals confirm these facts. Research them for yourself - to your own satisfaction.

Death Rates in the United States: note - 2003 = (3) 2004 = (4), etc.

<u>Cause of death :</u>	2002	2003 - 2007
Drug related	7,00 - 15,000	( ave. / year )
Occupational Injuries	-	5,703 (6)
Aids	-	18,017 (3)
Home Accidents	28,000	-
Falls	16,257	17,700
Infant deaths (under 1 yr.)	28,000	22,710 (5)
Poisonings	10,000	33,313 (3)
Suicides	29,000	32,439 (3)
Motor Vehicles	41,000	45,800 (5)
Influenza / Pneumonia	94,800	56,640
Hospital Mistakes	90,000	( ave. / year )
Hospital acq. Infections	90,000	( ave. / year )
Missing Persons	95,000	( ave. / year )
Obesity Related	300,000	n / a
Tobacco Related	450,000	n / a
Heart Disease	560,000-	652,486 (4)
Cancer	n / a	559,650 (7)
Stroke	n / a	150,074 (4)
Abortions	n / a	848,163 (3)
Diabetes	n / a	73,138 (4)
Alzheimer's	n / a	65,965 (4)
Firearm Related	n / a	30,136 (3)

So, how can we and/or why do we justify and continue spending billions and billions of precious tax payer dollars year after year, turning our country and the rest of the world "on it's ear" - ravaging communities from coast to coast and boarder to boarder and filling prisons? The only reason for "this mess" is because someone thought they were doing "the right thing" (saving people from themselves) and of course some opportunists saw an opportunity as entrepreneurs, for a "jobs program."

Special interest groups are all for these draconian laws and those groups include "the Correctional Industrial Complex," (a massive multibillion dollar jobs program), politicians, lobbyists, paramilitary & covert police units with licenses to kill, attorneys and the criminal justice system. They are all at the "public trough" and willing to perpetuate "the myth." Change the Laws - encourage healthy choices with education and provide treatment - not prison.

Stop the madness - end the war on drugs - decriminalize and control drugs like alcohol, tobacco and firearms - and help stamp out terrorism along with stupidity. Let us be more fiscally responsible with our tax dollars by turning a negative into a positive.

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