The Legalization Of Drugs; A Risk Not Worth Taking Essay, Research Paper

The legalization of drugs; a risk not worth taking. Arguments concerning the repeal of the 18th amendment, drug prohibition, have not changed much over the last seventy years; the questions are the same, the concerns are the same, and the policy is the same; the way it should be. Both sides are in a constant battle over the legality of drugs: Proponents of drug prohibition insist that the effects on society would be disastrous- wide-spread addiction, increased crime, smuggling, – Opponents of drug prohibition insist that drug legalization would allow society to prosper – potency control, crime reduction, tax revenues. Even when considering the possible “prosper of society,” the uncertainty that is coupled with such a drastic change is overwhelming. Ending drug prohibition is not worth the risk. Proponents for drug prohibition have one good reason to think that the current policies concerning drug prohibition are good ones: in their eyes, no-one has been able to provide anything better. While this is true, there has been, however, one proposition by advocates for the legalization of drugs that has drawn much attention: controlled legalization (controlled legalization calls for the legalization of drugs in a restricted manner: no sales to minors, a control over potency, a system of taxation etc) (Courtwright, 313.) The theory of controlled legalization has some interesting aspects to it, yet supporters of prohibition have good reasons to reject it. First, controlled legalization calls for a form of government control to, under certain circumstances, restrict the sale of drugs. While restrictions on sales would certainly be a must, regulation of sale would be a problem. If legalization were to occur, it would most likely happen on a state-to-state level, simply due to the fact that some states are strongly opposed to the idea of legalization, while others may willingly accept it. State-to-state policy has one major draw back; it tends to vary a great deal in each instance. With these differences in policies amongst states, an illegal market to profit from them is bound to appear. And with the presence of a black market, we are bound to face problems similar to todays : smuggling, tampering, violence, etc. Second, controlled legalization insists that a reduction in crime/violence would result from a change in law. “Crime would diminish because addicts would not have to hustle to keep themselves supplied….murders associated with big-city drug trafficking would abate as lower- cost, legal drugs drive the traffickers out of business (Courtwright, 311).” However, Herber Kelber – treatment specialist and former deputy director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy – found that: the cheaper a drug is, the more it will be used, the more it is use the more addicts there will be, the more addicts there are, the more crime there is (a suspected result of legalization also includes a drop in price) (Courtwright, 312).” While a reduction in violent crimes may occur, the rate of over-all crime would very likely to rise in conjunction with the legalization of drugs.

Third, and last, controlled legalization stakes claim in the theory that personal choice is the significant factor in determining drug use, not availability, potency, or price. Putting aside the two prior arguments of regulation and violence for the moment, this may be the issue most feared by the majority of society. Supporters of prohibition could, convincingly, use this argument alone to support drug prohibition. The fear of wide spread addiction is not far from reality, Herber Kleber found that “there would be between twelve and fifty-five million addicted users if cocaine and heroin were legally available (Courtwright 311).” With addiction rates at such a drastic level, it is only logical to conclude that violence would follow. With violence rates at such a drastic level, it is only logical to conclude that government regulation would useless. Those fighting to legalize drugs argue that addiction rates would not reach such extreme levels because “…most consumers will prefer lower-potency…products to the more powerful concoctions that have virtually monopolized the market under prohibition (Nadelmann 306).” Delegates for an end to drug prohibition also point out that past wide spread addiction – at the onset of drug prohibition – was caused primarily by ignorance, not a desire to get high. They feel drug consumers of today would be educated users, choosing a drug suitable for their desired effects. Seemingly, this argument by anti-prohibitionists can be used to argue the case forprohibition, not against it. The legal system in the US is structured so that the views of citizens can be represented by certain elected officials; these elected officials then act in the interests of the majority of the people they represent So, since these elected officials are not fighting to repeal the 18th Amendment, it must be that the majority of people don’t want it repealed. Therefore, the people have made their choice about cocaine and other similarly potent drugs, they, in fact, have settled for the less potent drugs. In conclusion, it seems apparent that the risks of legalizing drugs certainly outweigh the benefits, in fact, each benefit has a substantial chance of failing. Until a universal plan can be devised – one that can appease anti-prohibitionists as well as pro-prohibitionists – it is clear that drugs will continue to be illegal. While the majority of citizens view legalization as a bad thing, no laws will change; there simply won’t be enough support to back the effort to change them. The risk of a drug-addicted, violent, unsafe community strikes fear in everyone, it strikes enough fear to keep drugs illegal, that is the way it is going to stay.

Nadelmann, Ethan a. Should we legalize drugs? YES. American Heritage vol 44, 1993Courtwright, David T. Should we legalize drugs? NO. American Heritage vol 44, 1993