The Need To Legalize Pot Essay, Research Paper

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Just in, California has become the first state to legalize pot!

Unfortunately, for all you proud owners of a two-foot-bong or a three-inch bowl,

you must have a prescription from a medical doctor before you light up. Perhaps

it’s only a crack in the ice, but it is a start to a long-awaited, controversial

issue that needs to be touched upon again.

In the fall of 1996, Proposition 215 was passed in California,

legalizing the medical use of marijuana. Even though the majority (56%) voted

to pass 215, opponents plan to continue to fight the measure. It was also so in

Arizona, where Proposition 200, the Drug Medicalization, Prevention, and Control

Act, won 65% of the vote. It says that Arizona’s doctors can prescribe

marijuana, heroin, and LSD for patients when there is “medicinal value”

(California 62). The passing of these two propositions has also helped the

release of prisoners convicted of drug possession (—). With jail capacity

already overflowing, if you were to lock up a dealer, you therefore create a job

opening.

Bob Randall, president of the Alliance for the Cannabis Therapeutics, a

Washington-based patients’ right group, says as many as five-million sick

Americans might benefit from the legal access to marijuana. Marijuana has been

found to: relieve nausea and stimulate appetite in people with cancer and AIDS,

control muscle spasms among people with multiple sclerosis and other

neurological disorder, reduce eye pressure among people with glaucoma, and some

say it also controls seizures, eases chronic pain, and relieves depression. Dr.

Ernest Rosenbaum, a San Francisco cancer specialist, says he and many doctors

quietly recommend marijuana to patients who didn’t respond to other medications.

A 1991 Harvard study found that about 40 % of cancer specialists surveyed had

recommended marijuana to relieve chemotherapy nausea, and about 48% said they

would prescribe the drug if it were made legal.

An article was written in the October, 28, 1996 Time issue about a

former police commissioner, Jo Daly, who was diagnosed with colon cancer. Jo

started chemotherapy for her cancer, but the side effects included “nuclear

implosion.” Then came a burning pain under the nails of her toes and fingers.

The good news was that she eventually found relief. The bad news was that it

came from marijuana. Daly tried Marinol, a substitute the FDA approved as a

synthetic version of THC (marijuana’s psychoactive ingredient), without success

before she ended up turning to pot. Even after the positive results and

outcomes of patients using marijuana, not everyone is in favor of legalizing the

drug. Some people are still uptight about the whole issue of legalizing

marijuana and continue to set aside the benefits of pot. “This proposition is

not about medicine,” charges Orange County Sheriff Brad Gates, co-chairman of

Citizens for a Drug-Free California, the campaign opposing Prop. 215. “It’s

about the legalization of marijuana” (36).

Well, wake up, America! There are far more benefits from the drug then

just medical. Making the drug legally available, with tight regulatory controls,

would end the black market and with it, much of the violence; legalization would

reduce the number of people in prison, which in turn would reduce the government

budget. For 20 years the authorities in Amsterdam have simply ignored the use

of pot, which is regularly sold in 4,000 coffee shops in amounts up to 30 grams

a customer. Their coffee shops sell an estimated $67,500,000 worth each year

(most of which is Dutch-grown) while the Siberia Cafe sells an estimated $1,000

of hash and marijuana a day. It’s all done in the open, with the Dutch

government collecting the taxes on the receipts (Just 114).

It is reckoned that some thirty-million Americans, roughly Canada’s

population, have tried marijuana. Of those, about ten-million smoke pot every

month, and unlike our president, most of them inhale. In Glasgow, one-half of

all students between the ages of 14 and 25 admit to smoking pot “every day.”

Marijuana has become the US’ ‘biggest cash crop’ despite the death penalty for

growing the plant. The estimated thirty-two billion dollar market has spurred

many gardeners to make a career out of cultivating the plant.

In a Pensacola Florida News Journal, statements from an article titled,

“Marijuana use rising; foes to blame pop culture.” were pulled:

- It Beats crack,” said David Spencer, a 24-year-old Pensacolian who

smokes two or three joints a week. “Beats drinkin’, ’cause you don’t want to

get into a fight or you don’t get sick. Smoking weed ain’t going to kill

you like cigarettes will. Only thing it’ll do is make you chill out and

hungry.”

- And people in Pensacola are grabbing the T-shirts and other

merchandise with illustrations of giant marijuana leaves on them. “It sells

great,” said Joyce Smith, manager of Spencer’s in University Mall, about

pot-related merchandise. “We can’t keep it in stock.”

- “If you’re allowed to drink alcohol, there’s no reason that you

shouldn’t be allowed to smoke something that’s natural,” says Rick May,

26, a Pensacolian who smokes a few joints a year. “Marijuana doesn’t

cause the problems that alcohol does. You don’t hear about people getting

stoned and going to pick in a fight or getting in a car and driving

somewhere.”

From magazine articles to surveys, it’s almost unanimous that marijuana

should be legally available to the public. I took a survey within the school

and found out these results:

\* 34 out of 45 people feel that marijuana should be legalized.

\* 28 have smoked pot or at least tried it once in his/her life.

\* 31 would smoke pot if the drug were to become legal.

How many times must we analyze the issue of marijuana? It doesn’t take

a rocket scientist to figure out that legalizing the drug with a heavy and

strict tax would instantly improve the economy, not to mention the medical and

social benefits from the drug. If we were to legalize the drug tomorrow, our

national debt could be cut in half and our taxes might take a dive. America’s

society is so caught up in believing what is good and bad for us. If we were

smart, we would stop our bitchin’, let the drug become legal, and watch what

would happen for a change. Perhaps that is what everyone is afraid of, change!

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