

TALK BACK

DEBATING MARIJUANA POLICY: The most common arguments against ending cannabis prohibition are as easy to refute as they are to enumerate:

1. *“Marijuana makes people high.”*

Yes, and so does prayer, is that bad? People get high on nature, “high on life,” “high on God,” high on chocolate, coffee or beer, smoking cigarettes; even exercise and meditation alter your consciousness. Watching television is the biggest escape from reality of them all. But who gave anti-marijuana bigots the power to dictate what everyone else can and cannot do for fun? Why does the bloated prison industry lobby to criminalize a harmless activity enjoyed by millions of Americans?

The core issue is personal choice. Cannabis consumers are entitled to the same respect as anybody else, which is what they deserve. Neither the Constitution nor the *Bible* forbid marijuana use. The Bible states point blank that God gave us “every seed bearing herb” to use. The Declaration of Independence affirms our right to “the pursuit of happiness.”

2. *“We already have so much trouble with alcohol, tobacco and bad driving; why make things worse?”*

Alcohol often leads to aggressive behavior and reckless driving. Like tobacco, alcohol has serious, harmful health consequences. But if you think we have a drinking problem today, learn about the “Roaring Twenties” Prohibition Era, when competing liquor companies sent carloads of gangsters out with machine guns for drive-by shootings. Violent crime got so bad that the American people passed the 21st Amendment to end Prohibition and legitimize the underground economy. Society has learned to cope with alcohol use.

Some 500,000 people a year die from tobacco and alcohol, but marijuana is a different matter entirely. Not one person has ever died from smoking marijuana in medical history. Many societies have accepted cannabis use for thousands of years.

Moreover, cannabis has hundreds of known medical uses, one of which is helping people ‘step down’ from dependency on alcohol and hard drugs. Adults who smoke it are generally law-abiding, peaceful, and contributing members of society. In fact, they can be some of the nicest people you meet.

2. *“People will be driving under the influence.”*

People already do, and we certainly don’t recommend it. Nor should you drive when using common medicines like antihistamines, either. No one should ever drive if they are not fully alert and capable of doing so. Some people are just bad drivers, no matter how sober they are. The most efficient way to control reckless driving is through direct observation and impairment testing upon probable cause, not random searches.

3. *“Ending marijuana prohibition would ‘send the wrong message’ — that we condone drug use.”*

The Drug War is not about sending messages: It’s about sending people to prison. And prison cannot rehabilitate these patriotic Americans who believe that marijuana prohibition is both unconstitutional and immoral. Society might place some restrictions on its use, as we do for alcohol and tobacco, but it is criminal to lock people away for it. These are matters of

common sense, personal freedom and responsibility, not locks and bars. So, the real message of prohibition is that despite all the safeguards in the Constitution, petty tyrants still spread lies and steal away our freedoms, but only if we let them do it.

4. *“Some people can’t cope with marijuana use.”*

Yes, about 10% of Americans have addictive personalities and might want to avoid it. Everyone has the right to say “no” to marijuana: But the 90% of adults who can control their appetites also have a right to say “yes,” if they so desire. Some experts predict that marijuana use will level off soon after prohibition ends and people will reduce their use of hard drugs.

5. *Marijuana smokers have no motivation.*

Blaming pot is a cop out. The Beatles wrote many of their finest tunes while being quite open about smoking pot. Justice Douglas Ginsburg was nominated for the Supreme Court and many members of Congress have smoked marijuana, as well as millions of successful professionals and working people.

Most people prefer to smoke marijuana for relaxation or creative inspiration during leisure hours — not when they have work to do. When a person loses motivation, there are many factors to consider. They need understanding and help. Arresting them and putting them in prison only makes matters worse. Most marijuana smokers are highly motivated and productive citizens. Let’s not ruin lives with hysterical laws that do nothing to solve the real problems facing society.

6. *“Marijuana is so much stronger than it used to be.”*

Typical marijuana has had 3% THC for the past 15 years, according to government reports. Cannabis is not a man made drug: It’s a natural herb. Some people like it, others don’t. Different kinds of plants have different effects. There has always been very strong cannabis around. Hashish resin is five times more potent than regular marijuana, and people have smoked it for thousands of years with no problems.

7. *“What about the children?”*

A very legitimate concern. Prohibition glamorizes drugs and encourages children to experiment with them, as shown by recent statistics on adolescent drug use. We cannot afford to repeat this failure and risk another generation.

What kind of world are we making for our children: One full of prisons, secret police and repressive laws that tell them to spy on their own parents and family. Instead, let’s build them a world that respects each individual while it teaches them to work together in the exercise of freedom.

We need to change. Our youth must learn about personal responsibility. For society to send the right message about drug use, we must have practical and consistent drug policies supported by honest educational programs. We must set a reasonable age of consent for cannabis. We must bring the growers and vendors into the open so they can operate within the scope of the law under realistic terms of compliance.

Industrial hemp will help provide children with a healthy environment and a prosperous economy to live in. Throughout history, hemp has been a help to our human society. Now it is time once again to give hemp a chance.

8. *“Where can we get the facts about cannabis?”*

Contact the **Family Council on Drug Awareness**, PO Box 1716, El Cerrito CA 94530. 310-288-4152 Item # TB9701

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