

Legalising drugs

Discussion

1. Make a list of all the illegal drugs that you know:

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.....
.....

2. Which of those are *soft drugs* and which are *hard drugs*?

3. Which of the drugs in your list are dangerous? How dangerous are they?

4. Do you know different names for the same drug?

5. Do you know what the following mean?

roll a joint

get high

smoke dope

snort cocaine

become addicted

overdose

come off drugs

an addict

6. What is the law in your country regarding drugs – both possession of drugs and drug dealing?

7. Are there any drugs in your list that you think should be made legal? Which ones and why?

Reading

As you read through the article think of the answer to this question:

If you were on the panel, would you have come to the same conclusion?

GRASS IS GOOD FOR YOU

A panel of doctors, economists, parents and police officers in the United States has decided that drugs should be made legal. Their conclusions took into account factors of crime, medicine and even prison space.

“We have a prison population of over 10 million in this country. Many of those are in jail for drug-related crime, such as the sale or possession of illegal substances”, said an officer of the Chicago Police Force. Because of new, tough laws, currently 3 out of 5 people in prison are there because of drug-related crimes, which means little space is left for violent criminals, the ones the public would really like to see locked away.

But there were more reasons raised for legalising drugs. “There are cancer patients out

there who are wandering around dark streets at night trying to buy marijuana for pain relief,” said one of the doctors on the panel. “They should be able to get what they need without entering the criminal underworld.”

The effectiveness of marijuana on patients going through chemotherapy has long been known by the medical profession, but political conservatives still raise opposition. One senator spoke out against the panel’s conclusions. “I can sympathise with the patients, but the fact is, marijuana is addictive and harmful and we don’t want that kind of thing in our communities,” he said.

But the panel disagreed. They argued that, although marijuana was admittedly a potentially addictive substance, research has

proved that legal substances such as nicotine and alcohol are far more addictive and harmful. “Marijuana actually does some good. The same cannot be said of cigarettes and alcohol.”

On other substances, the panel agreed that drugs such as heroin and cocaine did not serve the community in the same way marijuana could, but argued that keeping those substances illegal meant money for criminals. “We don’t have people shooting each other over tequila or controlling prostitutes with Marlboros,” said a teacher on the panel. “Keeping drugs illegal allows people to do illegal things.”

The panel will shortly be presenting its findings to the government.

Discussion

What were some of the reasons for legalising drugs mentioned in the article? Tick those which were mentioned in the article:

1. Drugs can help people who are ill.
2. Drugs keep criminals in business.
3. Making drugs legal means that they can be taxed, and that means revenue for the government.
4. Drug-trafficking is not as serious as violent crime, according to many people.
5. Legalising drugs could make the job of law enforcement officers much easier.
6. Alcohol and cigarettes are more addictive and more harmful and are already legal.

How many of those six points do you agree with?

Language

Use the following words to complete the sentences below:

immediate
beneficial

long-term
damaging

legal
designer

illegal
addictive

1. Cigarette smoking is more to your health than smoking marijuana or cannabis.
2. Nicotine is more than marijuana.
3. Marijuana can have very effects on cancer patients, helping them through chemotherapy.
4. The effects of smoking dope are well-known – feeling extremely carefree and relaxed. The effects are less clear.
5. How can it be for a 16-year-old to buy and smoke cigarettes when at the same time it is for a 21-year-old to buy and smoke marijuana? It's crazy!
6. One of the biggest dangers today is the so-called drugs which young people use at discos and parties.

Discussion

Do you agree with the following opinions? Discuss them in small groups:

1. *Getting high on a joint is less dangerous than getting drunk.*
2. *People who smoke dope change their personality over time. They become irresponsible, unreliable and ruin their lives.*
3. *The drug laws in our country are already too relaxed. They should be far stricter. Fine people for a first offence and then send them to prison if they re-offend. It's the only way.*
4. *Experimenting with drugs is OK. You just need to know when to stop.*
5. *Soft drugs lead to hard drugs. Just don't even think of starting!*
6. *More people die from alcohol-related problems or accidents than drug-related problems. Statistically, drugs are safer than alcohol.*
7. *All recreational drugs should be made legal for adults. That would immediately stop related crime.*
8. *Some countries in the Far East have the right idea – execute all drug dealers. That would soon stop the drugs trade.*

Have you ever tried drugs? Do you know anyone who has? Which ones?

Do you know where to get drugs in your town?

What problems have you seen in your community caused by drugs?

What would be the effect of legalising drugs? Take two minutes to think of three implications. Then tell your group what you have thought of.