Reasons For Cannabis Legalise

I would like to start with a story. Michael Levine was a New York cop and a strong supporter of the war on drugs. Concerned about drug dealing in New York, he spied on 100 drug dealers in a block in Manhattan. One night, the police swooped in and arrested 80 of them at once. What do you think happened?

So – the obvious consequence was that drug dealing reduced dramatically.

However, this only lasted for a couple of weeks as very soon it was back up to original levels. The demand for drugs meanwhile remained completely unaffected. What's more, there was an increase in violence on the block as other criminals and ganstas fought to replace those that had been arrested and take their patches.

The war on drugs has proven ineffective. A zero tolerance approach has no impact on demand.

The Issue for us in Victoria is that Cannabis is currently illegal and a criminal offence.

I contend that Cannabis should not only be decriminalized but should be legalized.

Argument 1: Cannabis has been shown to be no more of a risk to ones health than either alcohol or tobacco but unfairly it attracts criminal charges for possession. A criminal record can have serious implications for a young person's opportunities in life such as limiting career choices or preventing international travel.

Evidence: By decriminalizing the possession of drugs, governments can help people get the support they need.

Decriminalizing lessens the stigma of drug use to allow those with a problem to actually seek help as they know they won't face criminal charges.

Example: In 2001, Portugal decriminalized possession of less than 10 days' worth of any drug. Instead of arresting addicts, authorities now help educate people on safe practices and help them to quit. Decriminalizing drug possession in Portugal led to a large decline in drug use.

Argument 2: Young people will be more protected against drug use if Cannabis is legalized.

Evidence: Despite what we might initially conclude, legalization actually places stronger barriers between teenagers and drugs as the sale takes place in a controlled environment where suppliers have an obligation to comply with the law. When it's illegal, criminal networks have no reason not to sell to teenagers since the product is illegal whichever way you look at it. They have no incentive not to sell them drugs.

Example: If legalized, the overall demand for illegal supply will drop as most adult customers will source their cannabis from a legitimate outlet. This means there will be less incentive for criminal enterprises to supply the drug and therefore lower availability to teenagers.

Argument 3: Legalizing drugs increases tax revenue and weakens criminal organizations.

Evidence: Legalization puts criminals out of a job and opens up whole new legitimate businesses who can employ people and contribute to the economy. Alcohol and Tobacco are evidence that legalization and control greatly reduce availability of illegal sources of the products whilst providing the government with huge sums of tax revenue.

Example: Prior to recent changes in the law in some parts of the US, it was estimated that the government spent $41 billion in arresting, prosecuting and jailing dealers whilst a further $46 billion in revenue could be raised through taxation of drugs. This would be a total contribution to the government of $87 billion which could be used for health care or to address social issues.

Rebuttal

There are many who would claim that regardless of the low risks, Cannabis is still a gateway drug which can lead to further experimentation with harder drugs and ultimately addiction and should therefore remain illegal. This is the primary reason cannabis usage is frowned upon

This is because we have previously been led to believe that drug usage leads directly to addiction or dependence. However, medical evidence now shows that drug usage doesn’t lead to addiction in isolation. Using opiates as an example, there is an exceedingly large number of people that are treated with opiate painkillers every year but only a small percentage of those develop an addiction. A study in the Canadian Journal of Medicine discovered that patients with very high exposure to opiates were no more likely to become dependent than anyone else.

Addiction is now thought by many medical professionals to be the combination of addictive substances and addiction-prone individuals. Two thirds of injection drug users suffered some form of childhood trauma, be it physical or verbal abuse or the disappearance of a parent. Drug addiction is also likely to afflict people who are isolated or have lost social connection.

Conclusion:

Prohibiting cannabis possession and criminalizing users has proven to be ineffective in reducing the demand for cannabis. In fact, cannabis use has continued to become more widespread and socially acceptable.

Full legalization of Cannabis will reduce the social impact on individuals as well as the cost of processing them through the justice system. Legalization will put in place stronger frameworks to guard young and vulnerable individuals from Cannabis use and dangerous criminal engagements. Legalization will generate tax revenue which can be re-invested in addressing social and health issues and will bring a much needed boost to the economy.

Legalize Cannabis now! Its time to move from the stone age to the stoned age.