

World Café responses on the Decriminalisation of Drugs for Personal Use

(1) Will young people be more or less likely to experiment with drugs if they become legal?

Motive?

So called legal high have been shown to be unpredictable and harmful.

Alcohol is already legal. Less or more harmful than illegal drugs? USA prohibition created crime as does illegal drug supply.

Can we have more respectful conversations with drug users (inc. our children, pupils, patients ...)?

Dialogue vs admonition/judgement, language and messages. Would legalisation of drugs reduce admonition/judgement?

Decriminalisation allows society to change message from “Don’t do it!” to “Think carefully!”. Compare with dangerous sports.

Is experimenting with drugs a bad thing? The old oppressing the young, yet again? The hypocrisy of the old dependent on alcohol?

Gambling – users are often gamblers.

Crime and prostitution to support habit is an outcome of criminalisation.

Not everyone has the same choices available to them – what are the social and political causes of increased drug dependence, street homelessness, etc.?

Escaping the subculture – harder than getting clean – belonging, ‘being someone’ = lack of skills / confidence/ know-how for the straight world.

Motivation for getting & staying clean often related to keeping children / access to children.

Is it ok to use law to impose “ethical behaviour”.

(2) Would it be ok for the government to become drug dealers?

Taxes could be earned from sale of legal highs for rehabilitation for prisoners / users / A&E, etc.

To access drugs the particular groups & suppliers may prove to be the ones who encourage returning to usage.

Easier to come off heroin than tobacco BUT staying off is the difficult part.

Government involvement:

State Enterprise?

Regulation & taxation? [as for tobacco – recently tighter, and for alcohol – now slacker]. Private enterprise – for profit?

The more you look into decriminalisation the more grey the issues become.

There would have to be clear definition of who is licensed to sell drugs, etc.

Becoming involved in the “criminal” end of the criminal justice system is harmful to the individual & their life changes. Decriminalisation would reduce that harm.

(3) What social and health related support would be needed to support addiction to drugs if usage becomes legal?

Similar to that provided to people addicted to tobacco or alcohol.

See model in Portugal where drug addiction is a health issue but a criminal justice issue. It will be easier and safer to seek help.

Politicians are too scared of the media for such change as decriminalisation to come about.

Does the law protect other people than those with a drug habit?

Given that drugs are used to escape from reality and stressful situations there will be many who are not approachable by police or, if decriminalisation has taken place, by social/health workers. But it's safer to seek help if you are not confessing to a crime.

The more we discussed the issues the more problems we threw up.

(1) What value do recreational drugs have?

Social network

Being naughty

Non-conformism

Use of cannabis for pain relief

Vehicle for making friends

Interesting people (artists, actors, festivals)

Winding down, relaxing, creative unblocking.

Blocking unacceptable / unwelcome thoughts / emotions

Belonging.

Drugs + sport performance.

Social value?

Relaxation

Social value

To be seen as a rebel.

Keeps people happy and quiet.

Pain relief for some illnesses.

PACIFICATION – political (1984) – medical eg in care homes

(2) How do you use recreational drugs?

To relax

Response to stress

Drink at the end of the day to wind down / release stress

Possibly to calm down/deal with problems but we don't agree about this from our own perspectives.

This is a continuum, not separate issues.

Both contribute.

De-stress, part of group identity.

To escape – avoiding demons?

To cover up problems.

To experiment.

In Questions 3 and 4 I incorrectly used the expression legalising rather than decriminalising, as was pointed out several times, so I have changed this! SEA

(3) What difference will decriminalising drugs (for personal use) make to the dealers?

Outside the remit we have been given by MfS? (but let's ask Portugal)

Drug dealers would lose their powers – this would be destabilising.

If it is decriminalised where would you get the drugs –

- chemist ?
- café ?

Depends on how/ where available – eg cafes as in Amsterdam, or on prescription

Production + supply _ legal _ private companies and tax to government? Could this be earmarked for treatment/support/etc?

Street drugs often cut to dangerous substances - most drug deaths not overdose.

Logically the drug dealers would be out of business.....but would this happen?

Dealers may move on to (eg) arms/guns

Quality control could come into play with the decriminalisation of drugs, but it won't change people's need – that is a much deeper wider problem for society.

(4) Do we want to respond to Meeting for sufferings about the decriminalisation of drugs for personal use as a meeting, or as individuals?

Both!

Both Area and individual response.

As an Area Meeting.

The greatest influence we have as Quaker is as individuals – by example and communicating.

Is this something Quakers should be concerned with? (de-?)Criminalisation of drugs for personal use does not help and is not a way of rehabilitation.

