

## Legalise cannabis

By [James Hostford](#), Photo Editor (2014/15)

Tuesday 11 February 2014

Last week's news of the tragic death of Gemma Moss, due to cardiac arrest in her sleep after smoking cannabis, has revived arguments about the dangers of cannabis use. The death was reported by tabloids as cast-iron proof that, "cannabis can kill". Yet, a glance at the most popular comments beneath the online reports of the case reveal that the public aren't so convinced of the dangers of cannabis.

It's disturbing how some find it more acceptable than smoking a cigarette. Indeed the debate has become trivial and limp when advocates of legislation hold up cannabis as a remedy to sooth all ills.

Some of the most compelling arguments for decriminalisation of cannabis are therefore economic. The British cannabis industry is worth an approximate £6.7 billion, a sum which nearly exceeds the revenue of McDonald's. In legalising cannabis much of the income which currently goes into the pockets of faceless gangsters and traffickers will be in taxes. The recent legalisation of cannabis in Colorado is estimated to puncture a \$600 million hole in the Mexican cartels' income.

The current prohibition of cannabis in Britain rouses stories of 1920s America where organised-crime became entrenched and the government lost a crucial source of revenue.

The benefits of regulation and taxation of a popular recreational drug are not excluded to the economic. The prohibition criminalises fairly minor offenses which burden the penal system and take resources from more destructive crimes. The implication of the government restriction of cannabis glamourises its use; there was a marked increase in consumption of cannabis in 2009 when it was upgraded from Class C to Class B drug. The unrestricted manufacture and distribution of cannabis also creates a health risk because criminals indoctrinate the product with glass, lead and pesticides.

The decriminalisation of cannabis will not solve the damage that drugs have on our society. Dealers will still exist as well the health problems it causes. The resignation of cannabis to lurking in the shadows in this country is far more damaging however. The debate in Britain is far behind much of Western Europe where the buying of cannabis is being decriminalised and the shadows are being illuminated.

I am not advocating that the government surrender to the criminals. Far from it. I think it is time to divide and conquer. The current policy of prohibition of cannabis has prevented the ability to regulate or even to accurately monitor such a vast industry.



### 9 comments

Paul

11 Feb '14 at 5:31 pm

'It's disturbing how some find it more acceptable than smoking a cigarette.' What a strange comment, tobacco is a known carcinogen, where as cannabis actually has anti-tumoral properties. It seems much

more acceptable to smoke a harmless drug such as cannabis over tobacco, a point that also applies to alcohol, one of the top killers in the UK. Britain is under the mercy of MP's vested interest in the alcohol, tobacco and pharmaceutical industries and fears a drug that can be grown at home and used safely for medical and recreational purposes. The drug debate would be moving along at a much quicker pace if not for this control.

 Report

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Tim

11 Feb '14 at 6:01 pm

please sign Caroline Lucas' e-petition <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/45969>

 Report

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speaker

12 Feb '14 at 12:10 pm

Look Your Tobacco comment is a silly thing to say and you no it .  
The measure's being taken to reduce drug's and the harmful situation's is failing.  
And "Cannibis" is what I call a GoD drug if you done some proper research , if you're looking for truth you will understand why I call it that  
you have a brain use it...

 Report

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mandrill

12 Feb '14 at 3:34 pm

"Yet, a glance at the most popular comments beneath the online reports of the case reveal that the public aren't so convinced of the dangers of cannabis." Implies that Cannabis is dangerous and reveals that the author has a bias towards that view. Not the pinnacle of neutral reporting. Water is dangerous, Oxygen is dangerous, Alcohol is dangerous, and yet we are not calling for these to be made illegal and the very thought makes no sense. And as a few of the comments on the news stories mentioned (those that were not cowardly and actually allowed comments) are mine I can say with certainty that those commenters who "...are not convinced..." generally seem to be the ones who can cite papers, studies and reliable sources for the facts they present, whereas those who are convinced all seem to simply spout the gov't line without question or variation.

"It's disturbing how some find it more acceptable than smoking a cigarette." Again a revelation of the views of the reporter. A distinction should be drawn between objective fact and subjective opinion. This is presented as the former. Consider rephrasing to "I find it disturbing how...etc" in which case we would just think you odd and not stupid.

"The decriminalisation of cannabis will not solve the damage that drugs have on our society." Conflates the damage done by the laws making drugs illegal with the drugs themselves. Many scientists and social commentators have concluded that it is the fact that drugs are illegal that is doing the harm, not the drugs themselves. The only way a drug can harm a society is if it had been ingested, en masse, by the entire population. It is a society's response to a drug that causes harm to a society not the actual drug itself. A drug can be harmful to an individual through chemical and biological processes within that individual but those processes stop under that individual's skin. Add to that the fact that the sentence doesn't actually make sense. "...the damage that drugs have on our society." should probably read; "...the damaging effect drugs have on our society." Although better would be; "...the effect drugs have on our society." Though the use of solve is not appropriate, prevent would probably be better. In fact this whole sentence needs rethought if the author does not want to be thought of as not having made it out of kindergarten.

"The resignation of cannabis to lurking in the shadows in this country is far more damaging however." I

don't even know where to start with this. I agree with the premise; that cannabis being illegal is far more damaging to society than it's actual use, but I cannot fathom how the author passed even GCSE English, let alone A level. I suspect that the author meant relegation rather than resignation and that mistake totally undermines the quite clever metaphor being used.

All in all I get the impression that the author is just as confused about the issue as the government and this piece has been thrown up in order to garner clicks from the interest generated by the Gemma Moss case. As I have already said I am broadly supportive of the ideas presented; the legalisation, regulation and taxation of Cannabis, but take issue with the slapdash and frankly amateur presentation.

Is the author a journalism student? If so then I need look no further for an explanation of the sorry state of journalism in Britain today. But then I don't suppose proofreading or being able to use the English language properly is required for reprinting press releases...

 Report

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James

12 Feb '14 at 3:34 pm

@Paul

My comment about the dangers of cannabis are grounded in research, it has been proved to cause health problems especially as it is often mixed with tobacco when it's consumed. I would disagree that you find it to be harmless to health but I see it in the same way as wine which has reported medicinal benefits but it usually consumed past the healthy limit.

Anyway, thanks for reading, my full article is on this Google doc if anybody's interested [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lxSWYEIjOYXJEUW4XUcsZdzDSu8Wtf-guUL8Xw\\_gdU0/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1lxSWYEIjOYXJEUW4XUcsZdzDSu8Wtf-guUL8Xw_gdU0/)

 Report

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James

12 Feb '14 at 3:55 pm

@mandrill

Your comment made me laugh quite a lot and you raised some great points about my writing. The main reason I'm writing for this student paper is to improve my writing for the History degree I'm studying. I didn't take A-level English but I managed to pass GCSE English Language and Literature. I know my writing isn't great but I'm glad I didn't mess up on apostrophes, they're an absolute nightmare!

As for my opinion on the debate, I believe that cannabis is dangerous to health but I believe that it is causing more damage to society in prohibition. It's a shame I didn't make this clear enough. Thanks for your comments, I'll try and write better in the future.

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mandrill

12 Feb '14 at 4:10 pm

@James

I'm showing my age obviously. When I were a lad A-level English (or it's equivalent) was required for any university course. ;)

 Report

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SJ

12 Feb '14 at 5:36 pm

@mandrill

its equivalent\* - evidently A-level English helped.

[Report](#)

Alice Tuck

14 Feb '14 at 1:03 pm

What's cannabis?

[Report](#)

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