

So why was cannabis suddenly prohibited? Read on..

Cannabis mis-represented

In 1894 the British and Indian Governments Hemp Drugs Commission ruled out prohibition of cannabis and said that the social use of cannabis was acceptable. They also denied previous claims that cannabis caused insanity. However, the world was changing quickly. Addiction to narcotic opiates was becoming a serious concern in the Western world, and moves were being made to ban them. On the other hand the cannabis hemp plant was seen as a serious obstacle to the huge profits which could be made from the synthetic alternatives to cannabis products - chemical drugs, fossil fuels, and chemicals for cotton and wood pulp. It was not a difficult matter to convince delegates at the 1924 Opiates Conference in Geneva, that cannabis was also a dangerous and addictive 'narcotic'. This was done by delegates from Egypt, (where hemp threatened the valuable cotton exports) who claimed that some of their people suffered from 'chronic hashism' and insanity due to smoking cannabis. The conference set up a special committee to look into cannabis, but before they had time to report a Second Conference decided to include cannabis in the list of prohibited substances. Britain abstained in the vote. Cannabis became mis-classified as a narcotic drug.

Under the conditions of the conference Britain created the Dangerous Drugs Act in 1928, which banned cannabis along with heroin, opium and cocaine, except for medicinal use.

Once the Western world had accepted that cannabis was dangerous and had made it illegal in their countries, the next step was to eradicate hemp completely.

In the USA vast quantities of cannabis were being grown for fibre, as well as being used medicinally, religiously and socially, without problem. However, pharmaceutical companies were patenting new drugs. Petrochemical companies were preparing to monopolise the fuel supplies and replace natural hemp products by synthetics such as plastics and nylon, as well as take control of the paper industry, and supply vast amounts of chemical fertilisers and pesticides to less sturdy crops such as cotton and tobacco. There was huge pressure to outlaw cannabis hemp and tycoons such as William Hearst (newspapers and timber), companies such as DuPont, and public servants such as Anslinger, worked together on a campaign which was to convince the public that smoking 'marijuana' (a racist term they used to avoid associating it with the friendly cannabis plant), was likely to cause 'reefer madness' and lead to rape and murder. Anslinger told of plots by

'ginger haired niggers' to undermine society by spreading the cannabis 'addiction'.

In the USA the Marijuana Transfer Tax banned cannabis as a crop. This was pushed through the legislative processes quickly and without the knowledge of the American Medical Association which had long recognised cannabis as a medicine. In fact the only people who were able to attempt to oppose the law were the seed companies, which is why cannabis seed remained legal as bird food. Anslinger went on to control the attempts at eradicating hemp until he was eventually sacked by President John Kennedy, who was said to have used cannabis to ease back pains.

However, during the time World War II broke out, American policy had to change in order to produce the necessary fibre for war. 'Reefer Madness' was rapidly, but temporarily, dropped in favour of a 'Hemp for Victory' campaign and farmers were required to grow cannabis. After the war Anslinger continued to publicly campaign that cannabis drove people crazy and made them violent, right up until the Vietnam War when he then blamed cannabis for pacifying American troops.

The world-wide campaign against cannabis continues until the present day. Further International Treaties, such as the UN Single Drugs Convention of 1961, officially denied that cannabis had any therapeutic properties and classified it alongside highly addictive, toxic and dangerous synthetic drugs. Further changes in national laws, including, in Britain, the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, increased penalties, withdrew cannabis as a medicine, and banned its cultivation for any reason. This situation has resulted in the prosecution of millions of people around the world, some of whom are even now serving life sentences and longer for small amounts of cannabis, often solely for medicinal use. These include William Foster who was sentenced to serve 93 years in Texas recently; he suffers from chronic rheumatoid arthritis. The prohibition of cannabis and the widespread use of the synthetic alternatives is responsible for many of today's problems, including the drugs problem, alienation of huge sections of populations, over-crowding of prisons, pollution, unemployment and increased suffering. Britain alone spends over half a billion pounds a year 'fighting' drugs, resulting in 83% of arrests being for cannabis 'offences' - over 80,000 people - and the problem is getting worse.

In the face of the many testimonies from medical users of illegal cannabis and the huge social and ecological problems caused by, and resulting from, prohibition of cannabis, we need to ask: "Was the prohibition of cannabis justified?" What do the scientists and doctors say? Is cannabis as harmful as was claimed - or have we all been conned by money-motivated conspirators?

What the experts say

- **UK ROYAL COMMISSION, WOOTTON REPORT 1966** said: "there is no evidence that (any) serious dangers are associated with the smoking of cannabis", and "cannabis does not lead to heroin addictions" and that there was no evidence that cannabis caused "conditions of dependence or psychosis requiring medical treatment."
- **US JAMAICAN STUDY 1974** said : "No impairment of physiological, sensory, and perceptual performance, tests of concept formation, abstracting ability, and cognitive style, and tests of memory."
- **DR. ANDREW WEIL (RUBIN & COMITAS GANJA IN JAMAICA, 1975)** said : "a-motivation [is] a cause of heavy marijuana smoking rather than the reverse."
- **DEA JUDGE FRANCIS YOUNG'S REPORT, 1988**, said "[cannabis is] far safer than many foods we commonly consume" and "in its natural form it is one of the safest therapeutically active substances known to man."
- **UK JUDGE JAMES PICKLES SAID IN 1992** : "Cannabis never killed anybody and its use is widespread. You can't stop it. The law defeats itself because all the efforts to stop drugs coming in only drives up the prices and the gangsters move in to push the drugs."
- **AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REPORT 1994**, "Cannabis has been erroneously classified as a narcotic, as a sedative and most recently as an hallucinogen. While the cannabinoids do possess hallucinogenic properties, together with stimulant and sedative effects, they in fact represent a unique class of pharmacological compounds."
- **US DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES, CRANCER STUDY**, said: "Simulated driving scores for subjects experiencing a normal social 'high' and the same subjects under control conditions are not significantly different."
- **UK JOURNAL THE LANCET, NOV. 1995** said "The smoking of cannabis, even long term, is not harmful to health"
- **US NATIONAL TOXICOLOGY PROGRAM REPORT 1997** said : "... found absolutely no evidence of cancer."
- **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE, UCLA, 1997** said : "Neither the continuing nor the intermittent marijuana smokers exhibited any significantly different rates of decline in [lung function] as compared with those individuals who never smoked marijuana."