



S. 241 and Vermont's transition
from a "culture of prohibition"
to a "culture of responsible
adult use."

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Why has this issue historically been so divisive?

- Divisiveness has been an essential characteristic of the “culture of prohibition.”
- The John Ehrlichman quote on the following slide is from a 1994 interview. It was featured in a recent cover story published in *Harper's* by journalist Dan Baum.

<http://jezebel.com/nixons-policy-advisor-admits-he-invented-war-on-drugs-t-1766359595>

At the time, I was writing a book about the politics of drug prohibition. I started to ask Ehrlichman a series of earnest, wonky questions that he impatiently waved away. “You want to know what this was really all about?” he asked with the bluntness of a man who, after public disgrace and a stretch in federal prison, had little left to protect. “The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I’m saying? **We knew we couldn’t make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities.** We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. **Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did.**”

I must have looked shocked. Ehrlichman just shrugged. Then he looked at his watch, handed me a signed copy of his steamy spy novel, *The Company*, and led me to the door.

- “Each of us has an obligation to be intolerant of drug use, anytime, by anybody. We must create an atmosphere of intolerance for drug use in this country.” —Nancy Reagan, 1986
- Marijuana is “probably the most dangerous drug in the United States.”
—Ronald Reagan, 1980

Quote from letter from AMA to Congress dated July 10, 1937:

- “*Since the medicinal use of cannabis has not caused and is not causing addiction, the prevention of the use of the drug for medicinal purposes can accomplish no good end whatsoever. How far it may serve to deprive the public of the benefits of a drug that on further research may prove to be of substantial value, it is impossible to foresee.*”

Why have opinions changed?

- Benefits of marijuana for certain medical conditions have become widely accepted.
- Harms have been exaggerated.
- As Dr. Sanjay Gupta wrote, “We have been terribly and systematically misled for nearly 70 years in the United States, and I apologize for my own role in that.”
(CNN.com, “Why I changed my mind on weed,” published Aug. 8, 2013)

Even today, federal policy undermines research and reasoned discussion about marijuana policy

- The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Reauthorization Act of 1998 requires it to “ensure that no Federal funds... shall be expended for any study or contract relating to the legalization of a substance (for a medical use or any other use) listed in schedule I [of the Controlled Substances Act] and take such actions as necessary to oppose any attempt to legalize the use of” any Schedule I substance (emphasis added).

Details from the Rand Corp's report for the Vermont Legislature*

- Between 60,000 and 100,000 Vermonters use marijuana regularly.
- They likely consume between 33,000 and 55,000 pounds per year and spend between \$125 million and \$225 million buying marijuana from the illicit market.

*Rand Corporation. "Considering Marijuana Legalization: Insights for Vermont and Other Jurisdictions," presented January 21, 2015, to the Vermont Legislature.

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