

# CAMPAIGN FOR THE LEGALISATION OF CANNABIS

Vivian Milroy

We have been asked if we would advertise an organisation which has been set up to legalise the use of cannabis. Clearly some people enjoy using pot and feel that with caffeine, alcohol and nicotine freely available, the legal restrictions on cannabis are unfair.

Do we have an editorial policy on this? I am not sure that we have an editorial policy on anything. We exist to facilitate communication. But of course we do facilitate some communications more than others and I suppose this really amounts to an editorial policy. A communication suggesting the blowing up of Buckingham Palace would be unlikely to get accepted for publication.

The real problem is, I suppose, the problem about any kind of restriction on personal liberty. Ideally we should all be allowed to do exactly as we want. Practically - at the present stage of human development - this is unlikely to work out. Because some people, through immaturity or distorted socialisation want to harm other people. Most people will agree that we need to restrict the right of anyone to injure his neighbour. Nor would anyone defend the right of a five year old child to drink alcohol and walk down the M1. Some things have to be controlled.

It is a matter of degree, not of absolutes. My own personal view is that personal liberty - that is, the right to do anything which concerns only oneself - should be absolute, certainly from the age of eighteen and possibly from an earlier one. A difficulty in deciding the age of full responsibility is that controls tend to produce dependance and lack of judgement. It is possible that children brought up with no restrictions at all might, if they survive, be completely responsible for their behaviour.

Children who are fairly rigidly disciplined seem to need some form of discipline and this will tend to replace their own spontaneous judgement. Some people are adult at fourteen; others still dependant at thirty. But lines have to be drawn somewhere. Above the age of twenty-one it does seem to me that the individual ought to decide for himself on any course of action, and the law would be more effective if it allowed him to decide for himself exactly what he or she wants to do. If he wants to give himself lung cancer by chain smoking, he should be allowed to do so. If she wants to develop her fantasy life by the use of cannabis or other drugs, she should be allowed to do so. If he wants to reject modern society and live on a desert island, he should be allowed to do so.

So what about pot? In principle it seems as though it should not be illegal. But how much time and energy ought to be spent on legalising it? Is this really a top priority or are there perhaps more pressing alternative needs? What about poverty, homelessness, child cruelty, sexual rigidities, loneliness and chronic depression?

If I were choosing an activity into which to put surplus energy, I think legalising cannabis would come somewhat lower down the list. However, this is just a personal opinion.