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Ten reasons why the Left should like the ASI, 6: Drug legalization [1]

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6. The ASI supports the decriminalization of narcotics. The Left should be pleased that the ASI has many times called for the decriminalization of drugs and for drug-addiction to be treated as a medical rather than a criminal problem.

The ASI has expressed the view that the criminalization of narcotics causes much more harm than would result from decriminalization. Because narcotics are illegal they are in the hands of a worldwide criminal network. Their illegality makes dealing a risky operation and results in very high prices for drugs, out of all proportion to the actual cost of producing them. Those high prices result in turf wars between drug gangs and make murder a commonplace. Addicts often resort to crime to fund the cost of their habit, making innocent people victims of mugging, burglary and theft.

The ASI has called for most drugs to be medicalized, meaning they would be available at high street clinics manned by doctors and nurses, to be consumed on the premises. In return for undergoing medical examination and receiving advice, addicts would receive free supplies to consume within the clinic. While this would work for most hard drugs, no-one would want to consume recreational drugs such as ecstasy and cocaine in such clinical conditions. The ASI suggests that these should be legalized since they do no harm to anyone but the user.

The effect of these reforms would be to cut drug crime to near zero, and to exercise control over the quality of narcotics. There would be fewer deaths from overdoses or adulterated supplies, and most addicts would come within the scrutiny of doctors and nurses equipped to help them.

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[3] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript
[4] http://disqus.com