



THE DRUG TREATMENT CENTRE BOARD

35 YEARS ON

DRUG ABUSE: A PERSPECTIVE ON INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY RIGHTS

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ALCOHOL:

On discussing drug abuse and a perspective on individual and community rights we must not forget that alcohol continues to be the most abused drug in Ireland.

PER CAPITA CONSUMPTION:

The per capital consumption increased by 46% between the years 1989 to 2000.

ECONOMIC COST:

This is hard to quantify but it is estimated it cost the nation over €2.2 BILLION annually.

PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES:

Offences in this category have escalated by 80 per cent between the years 1996 – 2001.

It is reckoned that 30 per cent of male and 9per cent of female admissions to general hospitals are consequent to alcohol dependence syndrome.

FAMILY EFFECTS:

The effects on partners and families are also detrimental serious and long term consequences.

DRINKS INDUSTRY:

The drinks industry advocates an individual responsibility approach. However the failure of this approach is clearly seen in any accident and emergency department of a hospital as well as the spiraling amount of public order offences.

DRUG ABUSE:

Historically speaking Opium was legal and freely available until 1868. Morphine was synthesized in 1808. The hypodermic needle was introduced in 1850 and Heroin was synthesized in St. Mary's Hospital in London in 1874. The introduction of the hypodermic needle greatly facilitated the abuse of opiate drugs.

In colonial times the British East India Company processed Opium in Bengal and exported it to China. The Opium Wars ensued in 1841 which ultimately led to the seizure of Hong Kong

INTERNATIONAL TRADE:

International trade in drugs is a major “industry”, almost on a par with arms sales. Herewith find a simple example of the increasing value of Heroin as it travels from Afghanistan to Ireland:-

HEROIN

AFGANISTAN	€1,000
TURKEY	€11,000
NETHERLANDS	€24,000
IRELAND	€101,000

€1,000 Euro of Heroin in Afghanistan is worth €11,000 by the time it is transported to Turkey. When it reaches the Netherlands it is valued at €24,000. In Ireland that same quantity is now worth €101,000. As can be seen from the above the risk / reward are very high.

IRELAND:

In the late seventies early eighties in Dublin’s North Inner City revealed a prevalence rate of 10 % in the fifteen to twenty-four year old age group were abusing Heroin.

U.S.A:

In the USA much has been made of the war on drugs. In 1999 \$ 17.7 Billion dollars was spent on this war. In 1996 of the billions spent 63% went towards law enforcement, 19.4% towards treatment and 13.6% went towards prevention.

IRISH POLICY:

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 was quite innovative in its day. This was followed by the Special Government Task Force 1983. Subsequent to that was the Misuse of Drugs Act 1984, which was much more punitive in its approach. In 2001 a National Drugs Strategy was put in place. There were four key elements to this. These are:

- SUPPLY REDUCTION
- PREVENTION
- TREATMENT
- RESEARCH

DRUG COURTS

Many countries have put in place Drug Courts and as the name implies these deal specifically with drug related issues. Results to date are rather mixed. However, elements of successful programmes involve:

- TREATMENT IN THE COMMUNITY
- OPPORTUNITY TO AVOID A CRIMINAL RECORD OR INCARCERATION
- CLOSE SUPERVISION
- CERTAIN AND IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES

CONCLUSION:

There is no one solution, no secret formula and no magical answers. Rather there are various underlying factors, various influences and substances, which require multifaceted responses. We will have to manage increasing drug use. (Morgan 2000).