

REQUIEM FOR PROHIBITION

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Introduction/Issues: “Friends, Colleagues, Specialists, lend me your ears. I come to bury Prohibition, not to praise it. The evil that policy does lives after them. The good is oft interred with their bones. So let it be with Prohibition.”

Method / Approach: This presentation takes a fresh look at the statistics used in the argument for the failure of Prohibition. In doing so it will also compare the success rates and outcomes of other taboo activities (such as Gambling and the Sex Industry) where regulation and legislation replaced Prohibition. It looks at how emotive arguments blur the arguments and propagate the myths to perpetuate the inconsistencies in the current AOD policies.

Key Findings: Alcohol and Tobacco are arguably the greatest problem drugs with the largest fiscal and social costs. Yet these are the licit drugs, with the least restrictions and censure. If the movement and attitudes for some illicit drugs have swung towards decriminalisation, legislation and regulation, for others (including licits) it has moved to create greater restrictions and reduce both supply and demand. AOD policies have resembled a Newton’s Cradle rather than a Pendulum, with actions and policies at both ends of the spectrum slowly tending towards a central equilibrium.

Discussions and Conclusions: There have been many strong cases made that Prohibition has been an epic failure and as a policy should remain buried in the past. We will exhume the body to find out if it is well and truly dead and give it a fitting eulogy, or to find out if there is life in the zombie yet.

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