

## **Growing support for breaking the drugs/crime link in the UK**

In the face of mounting evidence about both the failure of the "war on drugs" and the way in which prohibition of drugs exacerbates broader crime problems, many people in the UK are coming to the conclusion that the only realistic way ahead is the legalised regulation of all drugs (in line with current policy towards licensed and prescription drugs, such as alcohol, tobacco and medication).

Recently, some senior police officers, politicians and even Britain's popular tabloid newspaper - The Sun (12/09/05), have spoken out in support of legalisation. Spearheading the campaign for a fundamental policy rethink on currently illegal drugs, is a British charity "Transform Drug Policy Foundation" ([www.tdpf.org.uk](http://www.tdpf.org.uk)).

"It is the enormous value added to heroin and cocaine by their prohibition that serves to create the biggest business opportunity for organised crime and encourages dependent users to engage in acquisitive crime to support their habits. I believe that global legalisation, regulation and control of drugs will happen within the next 20 years. It is the single most important policy change in criminal justice that the world will see this century. It will help bring stability to Latin America and Afghanistan, remove organised crime from the drugs business and significantly reduce acquisitive crime and the prison population in developed countries." said Danny Kushlick, Director of Transform.

Although the mood in the UK is swinging in favour of legalisation, it is clear that one country alone cannot make this fundamental policy change. Global prohibition is held in place by the UN Drug Conventions, and signed up to by most of the member states. Added to which, drugs are a global problem with illegal markets, production and trafficking systems that traverse national boundaries, so a co-ordinated international move towards legalisation will be the best way to avoid the difficulties that would ensue if one country unilaterally broke ranks on prohibition. The potential difficulties of unilateralism are highlighted by the example of Holland, where it's relatively liberal policies on cannabis use have resulted in not entirely welcome "drugs tourism" in some of its border towns.

Transform produces a monthly email newsletter and has produced a briefing entitled "Drugs and Crime - the link is prohibition". They can be contacted through their web site [www.tdpf.org.uk](http://www.tdpf.org.uk).

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