



THE BECKLEY FOUNDATION GLOBAL CANNABIS  
COMMISSION REPORT LAUNCH:  
“WHERE CAN WE GO WITH CANNABIS POLICY?”

HOUSE OF LORDS, WESTMINSTER PALACE, LONDON  
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ABSTRACTS & BIOGRAPHIES

HOSTS

AMANDA, LADY NEIDPATH  
Director, The Beckley Foundation

BIOGRAPHY

Amanda Neidpath founder and director of the Beckley Foundation, has long advocated an evidence-based approach to drug policy that seeks to minimise the harms associated with drug use. She has hosted 7 seminars on International Drug Policy issues, entitled '*Society and Drugs: A Rational Perspective*'. These meetings bring together leading academics, experts and policymakers from around the world and have helped broaden the debate, which, among other outcomes, led to the call in 2007 in the UK for a drug classification system based on a scientifically-evaluated scale of harms. In 2006, it was her awareness of the lack of attention paid to cannabis in international drug policy discussions, despite cannabis being the most widely used illegal substance and the mainstay of the war on drugs, that led her to convene the Global Cannabis Commission Report. The Foundation has produced over 30 much-cited academic reports, proceedings documents and briefing papers on key drug policy questions.

THE LORD MANCROFT

BIOGRAPHY

Lord Mancroft is a British peer, businessman, and politician. He is one of the 92 hereditary peers elected to remain in the House of Lords after the House of Lords Act 1999. He has been chair of the Addiction Recovery Foundation since 1989 and chair of the Drug and Alcohol Foundation since 1994.

**MORNING CHAIR**  
**PROF. COLIN BLAKEMORE**  
Professor of Neuroscience, Oxford University

BIOGRAPHY

Colin Blakemore is Professor of Neuroscience at the Universities of Oxford and Warwick. He is also Chair of the Food Standard Agency's General Advisory Committee on Science, and of the Electromagnetic Fields Discussion Group of the Health Protection Agency. From 1996-2003 he was Director of the Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience at Oxford and from 2003-2007 he was Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council. He studied Medical Sciences at Cambridge and completed a PhD at the University of California, Berkeley. He has been President and Chairman of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, President of the British Neuroscience Association, the Physiological Society and the Biosciences Federation, and is a member of the UK Drug Policy Commission. He is a frequent broadcaster on radio and television, and he writes about science for a general audience.

**INTRODUCTION TO THE CANNABIS COMMISSION**  
**PROF. ROBIN ROOM**  
University of Melbourne and Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre

BIOGRAPHY

Robin Room is a Professor of Sociology at the School of Population Health, University of Melbourne, and the director of the AER Centre for Alcohol Policy Research at Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre, Fitzroy, Victoria, Australia. He is also a professor at and was the founding director of the Centre for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs at Stockholm University. He had previously directed research at the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario (1991-1998) and the Alcohol Research Group in Berkeley, California (1977-1991). Room has studied effects of alcohol, drug and gambling policies. He is a coauthor of a number of books on alcohol policy, including *Young Men and Drugs* (NIDA, 1975), *Alcohol in Developing Societies* (Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies, 2002), and *Alcohol – No Ordinary Commodity* (Oxford UP, 2003). His research interests include historical, cultural and social epidemiological studies of alcohol and other drugs, including comparative research across psychoactive substances.

ABSTRACT

The Global Cannabis Commission Report has been prepared to provide a comprehensive overview of all issues relating to cannabis and its regulation. This study summarizes what is known about the extent and patterns of cannabis use across nations and over time. It reviews the research literature on the health effects of marijuana use, as well as the little that is known about the other harms associated with cannabis use, production and distribution under current policies. We describe those policies, distinguishing carefully between law on the books and policy as

implemented. We emphasize evaluations of the effects on cannabis use and, more broadly, of various kinds of policy innovations aimed at reducing the penalties for personal use. With a view to the ten-yearly UNGASS review of international drug policy we give particular attention to the potential for changes in the international treaties that would give nations more flexibility in their policy responses to cannabis. In the final chapter we offer a framework for making cannabis policy decisions and offer some recommendations for policy at the national level.

## A REVIEW OF THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF CANNABIS USE

PROF. ROBIN ROOM

University of Melbourne and Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre

### ABSTRACT

The health and psychological effects of regular cannabis use are not as well understood as those of alcohol and tobacco, but epidemiological research over the past decade has provided evidence that it can have adverse effects on some users, particularly those who initiate use in adolescence and use more than weekly for years during young adulthood. This presentation summarises the most probable adverse health and psychological effects of acute and chronic cannabis use. It focuses on those effects that are of greatest potential public health significance, as indicated by their likelihood of affecting a substantial proportion of cannabis users. Priority is given to evidence from well-controlled human epidemiological studies and clinical and laboratory studies of the effects of acute and chronic cannabis use. It concludes that the public health impact of contemporary patterns of cannabis use are modest by comparison with those of other illicit drugs (such as the opioids) or with alcohol.

## THE EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF PROHIBITION

PROF. BENEDIKT FISCHER

Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver

### BIOGRAPHY

Benedikt Fischer is Professor and CIHR/PHAC Chair in Applied Public Health at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, and the Director of Illicit Drugs, Public Health and Policy Unit at the Centre for Addictions Research of British Columbia (CAR-BC). He is also affiliated as a Research Scientist at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, and as adjunct faculty to the Departments of Public Health Sciences and Criminology at the University of Toronto. He has published several articles on Canadian cannabis and other drug policies, and has contributed to substance use policy development in Canada at local and national levels. In 1998, he led the writing of a study by a pan-Canadian working group for options for cannabis use control reform in Canada. Originally trained as a criminologist, Fischer's research focuses primarily on illicit substance use, marginalized populations, infectious disease, criminal justice and public health, with a strong interest in policy and program development.

## **ABSTRACT**

This presentation reviews cannabis use and the cannabis market in the current circumstances of an international prohibition regime. Prohibition of an attractive substance creates illegal markets, which have consequences in terms of the contours of production, distribution and consumption. We examine data on: the prevalence of cannabis use; the prices that are charged and the revenues that are generated; the enforcement of prohibitions; how many individuals are charged with various kinds of cannabis offences and what are the consequences of those charges. The chapter concludes that there is minimal evidence that changes in statutory penalties would reduce cannabis use. The lack of evidence of a deterrent effect has to be weighed against the considerable harms that undoubtedly arise from the existing regime. There is a large-scale black market that is an unintended consequence of the existing system of prohibition, which represents in itself a challenge to the authority of governments.

## **A REVIEW OF POLICY INITIATIVES OF REFORMS WITHIN THE INTERNATIONAL**

### **PROHIBITION SYSTEM**

**PROF. BENEDIKT FISCHER**

Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver

## **ABSTRACT**

This presentation reviews the existing reform models of cannabis control that have been implemented at national and sub-national levels around the world within the provisions of the existing international treaties and conventions. It describes the control regimes which have departed from a standard approach of full criminal prohibition, and reviews the evidence of the impact of these alternative regimes on cannabis use and other indicators. Before examining the details of the reform regimes, we clarify: the wider social, legal and practical context; how the alternative regimes have evolved; and the key concepts, terminology and typologies used.

## **THE IMPACTS OF CANNABIS POLICY REFORMS WITHIN THE CURRENT DRUG**

### **CONTROL REGIME**

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SIMON LENTON**

National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology, Perth

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Simon Lenton is an associate professor and Deputy Director at the National Drug Research Institute, Perth, Western Australia, and he works as a Clinical Psychologist in private practice. He has published more than 30 scientific articles, book chapters and reports on cannabis, health and the law and presented on the topic at numerous national and international conferences. He is first author of *Cannabis Possession, Use and Supply*, a monograph published in 2000. Lenton was a former member of the Ministerial Working Party on Drug Law Reform which advised the Western

Australian Government on the design and implementation of the Cannabis Infringement Notice scheme which came into effect in March 2004. He is currently heading a large pre-post evaluation of that scheme. Lenton's research interests include illicit drug use and harm reduction, impact of legislative options for cannabis, and drink and drug driving.

#### ABSTRACT

This presentation summarizes chapter 5 of 'Cannabis Policies – Moving Beyond the Stalemate'. It reviews the existing evidence on the impact the alternative regimes of cannabis control which have been implemented at both a national and sub-national level within the current constraints of the international drug conventions. The number of reforms which have been well evaluated is limited and caution needs to be exercised in drawing conclusions from reform example in one country and applying them in another. Nevertheless the following conclusions can be drawn. Measures to reduce penalties or to decriminalize cannabis possession and use have been adopted in numerous jurisdictions without an upsurge in use. Moreover these reform measures have had some success in ameliorating the adverse consequences of prohibition. However, these benefits can be undercut by police practices which may increase the number of users penalized, or by discriminatory enforcement of the law. Questions remain open about the extent to which the increased commercialisation of cannabis in the Netherlands in the period 1992-1996 may have resulted in more cannabis use by the young and in an earlier age of onset.

#### BEYOND THE CONVENTIONS

PROF. ROBIN ROOM

University of Melbourne and Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre

#### ABSTRACT

This presentation considers measures which would in one way or another move beyond the limits of the current international drug control regime with respect to cannabis. Some such measures could be taken by concerted action by the parties to the current conventions, or by a substantial majority of them. Such measures would involve removing cannabis from the conventions, or fundamentally altering the provisions of the convention covering cannabis. For completeness, we list these alternative measures, but do not explore them in any detail. In the current global cultural politics of drugs, it seems unlikely that any of these measures could be successfully pursued. Other measures could be taken by a single state or by a group of states. There is considerable variation between these measures in the extent to which they can be seen as politically viable at present. However, they are discussed in somewhat more detail, because possible paths forward seem more likely to be drawn from these alternatives. We also discuss some options for an alternative international cannabis regime to the present one.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FROM THE GLOBAL CANNABIS COMMISSION REPORT**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR SIMON LENTON

National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University of Technology, Perth

**ABSTRACT**

This presentation summarizes the conclusions and recommendations of 'Cannabis Policies – Moving Beyond the stalemate'. Conclusions are drawn regarding cannabis use and harms, the effects of current policies and options for ameliorating the adverse effects of prohibition as well as options for moving beyond the international treaties. It concludes there is no justification for incarceration or criminal conviction for simple cannabis possession or use offences. It recommends the international drug control regime should be changed to allow a state to adopt, implement and evaluate its own cannabis regime within its borders. This would require changes in the existing conventions, or the adoption of a new pre-emptive convention. If this is not done there are recommendations for states about how to go about reducing the adverse impacts of prohibition. If states do decide to make cannabis legally available it is recommended that a system of strict government controlled regulations are employed with controls on price, quality, potency, and availability, along with good public education about harms of cannabis use and bans or restrictions on advertising and promotion. The effects of any changes need to be closely monitored and inform prompt revision of the changes if indicated.

**AFTERNOON CHAIR**  
**DR. SANDEEP CHAWLA**  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

**BIOGRAPHY**

Sandeep Chawla, Ph.D., is head of Research and Policy Analysis at the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Since 1994 he has led the development of UNODC's research and analysis capabilities. The systematic publication of research findings, analytical studies, statistics and annual estimates of the extent of illicit drug production, trafficking and abuse, reflected in the *World Drug Report*, the annual *Global Illicit Drug Trends* publications, the Studies on Drugs and Crime series and the annual illicit crop survey reports, all occurred during this period. He is the Editor of the *United Nations Bulletin on Narcotics*, which is one of the oldest journals in the field, having been in continuous publication since 1949.

## A PERSONAL VIEW IN THE CASE FOR REFORMING CANNABIS LAWS

RT. HON. PETER LILLEY

### BIOGRAPHY

Peter Lilley is a Conservative MP who has served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Nigel Lawson, then as Economic Secretary to the Treasury and Financial Secretary to the Treasury before joining the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. In 1992 he became Secretary of State for Social Security. In opposition he held the post of Shadow Chancellor from 1997-1998 and was Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party from 1998-1999. In 2001 he argued for the legalisation of cannabis in a Social Market Foundation pamphlet, and in 2005, he was appointed Chairman of the Globalisation and Global Poverty policy group, part of David Cameron's extensive 18-month policy review.

## DO THE MORE POTENT FORMS OF CULTIVATED CANNABIS POSE ADDITIONAL ADVERSE RISKS?

PROF. LES IVERSEN

Department of Pharmacology, University of Oxford

### BIOGRAPHY

Leslie Iversen PhD is a Visiting Professor at the Department of Pharmacology, University of Oxford. He directed the Wolfson Centre for Research on Age Related Diseases at Kings College London (1999-2004), and was previously Director of the Neuroscience Research Centre set up by the international pharmaceutical company Merck & Co Inc in Harlow, Essex, UK (1983-1995), and Director of the UK Medical Research Council Neurochemical Pharmacology Unit in Cambridge, England (1970-1983). He is interested in understanding how drugs work in the nervous system and in the molecular basis of nervous system disorders and is particularly known for his work on the chemical messengers used for communication between nerve cells. He is the author of several books and of more than 350 scientific publications and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of London and a Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences, USA. He acted as the specialist adviser to the House of Lords Science & Technology Committee's enquiry into Cannabis, 1998, and is currently a member of the Home Office Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs. His most recent books are "Speed, Ecstasy, Ritalin: Use and Abuse of Amphetamine", Oxford University Press, 2006; "A Very Short Introduction to Drugs", Oxford University Press, 2001; and "The Science of Marijuana", Oxford University Press, 2000.

### ABSTRACT

Cultivated high potency cannabis now dominates the UK and European market. Sold and used in the form of sensimilla, cultivated cannabis has THC-levels 2-3 times higher than traditional resin. Many cannabis users will modify their smoking behaviour to titrate desired dose of THC. Other users maintain consistent intake in terms of volume, and therefore more varied THC intake. In addition to having

increased potency, sensemilla has virtually no cannabidiol, a chemical found in marijuana plants which has been found to counteract delusions and anxiety caused by cannabis intake in some individuals. Users of high potency cannabis may have an increased risk of dependency or acute psychosis than users of cannabidiol-containing cannabis, and non-cannabis-users.

## POLICING CANNABIS IN EUROPE

JAN WIARDA

Former Chair of the European Police Chiefs Taskforce

### BIOGRAPHY

Jan Wiarda served as Chief Constable for a variety of Dutch municipal regions before his appointment as Chief Constable of the Hague in 1997 and therefore the top police officer in the Netherlands. From 1989, he was responsible for International Affairs of the Dutch Police, and 2000 saw his appointment as the Dutch delegate to the European Police Chiefs Taskforce, an organisation he went on to chair until his retirement in 2004.

### ABSTRACT

Illicit cannabis markets are flourishing, and the costs of policing these markets are high. The current system of eliminating such markets through police and justice interventions has failed to this point, and there is significant evidence that these goals will never be reached. With regard to policing cannabis in Europe there is hardly any strong policy or coherent strategic approach. A transition from cannabis prohibition to cannabis regulation by a system of licensing of growth, harvesting, refinement, trade, transport and distribution, would enable police to enforce it effectively in The Netherlands and in the European Union. It is estimated that with the introduction of a uniform-licensing system, within just a few years the cannabis problem will be under control.

## NET WIDENING AND STIGMA IN THE POLICING OF CANNABIS LAWS

PROF. MIKE HOUGH

Professor of Criminal Policy and Director of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research, Kings College London

### BIOGRAPHY

Mike Hough is Director of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (ICPR) at King's College London. Professor Hough has extensive experience in quantitative research methods, especially large-scale sample surveys, such as the British Crime Survey and the Policing for London survey. He has published extensively on topics including crime prevention and community safety, policing, probation and drugs. He also has a long-standing interest in policing, and has written on topics including community safety, anti-social behaviour, probation and drugs. He was previously Professor of Social Policy at London South Bank University, and before that Deputy Director of the Home Office's Research and Planning Unit. Recent books include *Understanding Public Attitudes to Punishment and Penal Populism and Public Opinion*.

**PROF. PAUL TURNBULL**  
Co-Director ICPR, King's College London

Paul Turnbull is Deputy Director of the ICPR. Professor Turnbull has twenty years experience of developing, conducting and managing research on different aspects of problematic drug use. In recent years his research has increasingly focused on interventions targeted at drug users within the criminal justice system. This research has considered a range of issues including: type and appropriateness of interventions, effectiveness, views and experience of those in the CJS and drug users. He has been a consultant to the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and the Council of Europe Pompidou Group. Professor Turnbull currently heads a team conducting a number of research projects on criminal policy in the UK and Europe including an EU funded study of coerced treatment for criminals who have problematic drug using patterns. He has also been involved in several studies of policing, including the policing of cannabis.

**THE SWISS ATTEMPTS TO REFORM CANNABIS POLICY:  
A CASE STUDY FOR EUROPE?**

PROF. AMBROS UCHTENHAGEN  
Chairman of the Research Institute for Public Health and Addiction

**BIOGRAPHY**

Ambros Uchtenhagen was Professor of Social Psychiatry at the University of Zurich and Co-Director of the University Psychiatric Hospital. He was the Co-Editor in Chief of the journal European Addiction Research, and board member of the European Association on Substance Abuse Research. Ambros Uchtenhagen was also chairman of the multinational project, 'Evaluation of Action Against Drug Abuse in Europe', and Chairman of the State Expert Committee on Drugs. He is Founder and past President of the Swiss Association of Social Psychiatry. Since retirement, he is Chairman of the Research Institute for Public Health and Addiction, a WHO collaborating centre, affiliated with Zurich University. He is personally involved in projects for WHO, UNODC, the EU and Swiss federal government. He serves as a member of the WHO Expert Panel on Drugs.

**ABSTRACT**

During the 1990's, prevalence rates of Cannabis increased considerably among young people and adults. In parallel, there was a clear trend in increased clandestine mass production and illegal export of Cannabis products, and in increased confiscations and police notifications for consumption and trafficking. The Cannabis report of 1999 concluded that major changes were needed in order to replace the huge illicit Cannabis production and market by a regulated controlled production and market. In 2001, the Federal Government proposed a revision of narcotic legislation on the basis of the Cannabis report. This included decriminalisation of

Cannabis for personal use, tolerated outlets for the sale of Cannabis products under controlled conditions, tolerated production sites under controlled conditions, and intensified prevention efforts and measures to protect young people. The proposal was abolished definitely in 2004 by national parliament; the primary objection being that the revisions could lead to negative effects on mental health and inviting further increase of use by the young. The basic objective of the proposal was taken up under the name of "For a reasonable Cannabis policy with effective youth protection". Federal Government and national parliament refused the initiative. The initiative will be voted on November 30, 2008.

**DISCUSSION SESSION:  
DIRECTIONS TO MOVE FORWARD ON CANNABIS – WHAT SHOULD EUROPE BE  
DOING?**

PROF. AMBROS UCHTENHAGEN

**CLOSING COMMENTS**  
PROF. COLIN BLAKEMORE AND ETHAN NADELMANN