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Marijuana and The Capitalist Agenda

by
Mallory DeTamble

In what ways does the legalization of marijuana work to fuel the capitalist agenda?

Introduction

- Consumer Desire v. Social Benefits
- Privatized industries are self-interested.
- Changing social perceptions: Rather than see marijuana itself as a danger, the illegal enterprises associated with marijuana such as the Mexican Drug Cartel are seen as dangerous.

Regulation

- The commercialization of marijuana inflates prices, creating a disparity between black market and dispensary clientele.
- Regulated marijuana is only accessible to those who can afford it or purchase it legally.

Technological Advancements

- E-cigarette technology is now used to develop THC cartridges.
- Vaping THC rather than smoking the plant itself can be very convenient.
- Potentially dangerous/addictive additives. (unregulated and cheap products most often)

Medical Benefits

- The industry of health now incorporates marijuana as it has done so with pharmaceuticals in the past.

Criminalization

- The War On Drugs campaign that originated during Richard Nixon's presidency is coming to an end.
- Legalization is only the first step in a much longer process of criminal justice reform.
- Racial demographics of incarceration rates still reflect the disproportionate policing of minority groups. We have yet to find out if legalization will actually change this aspect of systemic racism.

Tax Revenue

- States generate tax revenue from the sale of cannabis, these profits are allocated differently from state-to-state.
- In NYS taxes include: tax imposed on the distributor, state excise tax, local excise tax, and an illicit cannabis tax penalty.

Capitalism

- "Money is a great equalizer, and commercial societies provide the best examples of its power." ~Branko Milanovic
- As marijuana is incorporated into the system of capitalism, innovation, marketing, and competition driven by profit propel the industry, often worsening social circumstances.

Conclusions

- The legalization of marijuana is ultimately motivated by the accumulation of wealth this new industry can provide. The social justice reform many originally intended on achieving by legalization has been overshadowed by its incorporation into American capitalism.