

R4nger5 Radio

Episode 62



Recording time : TBA

News

Drugs in Portugal: Did Decriminalization Work? Thanks Kevin!

Pop quiz: Which European country has the most liberal drug laws? (Hint: It's not the Netherlands.)

Although its capital is notorious among stoners and college kids for marijuana haze-filled "coffee shops," Holland has never actually legalized cannabis — the Dutch simply don't enforce their laws against the shops. The correct answer is Portugal, which in 2001 became the first European country to officially abolish all criminal penalties for personal possession of drugs, including marijuana, cocaine, heroin and methamphetamine.

At the recommendation of a national commission charged with addressing Portugal's drug problem, jail time was replaced with the offer of therapy. The argument was that the fear of prison drives addicts underground and that incarceration is more expensive than treatment — so why not give drug addicts health services instead? Under Portugal's new regime, people found guilty of possessing small amounts of drugs are sent to a panel consisting of a psychologist, social worker and legal adviser for appropriate treatment (which may be refused without criminal punishment), instead of jail.

The question is, does the new policy work? At the time, critics in the poor, socially conservative and largely Catholic nation said decriminalizing drug possession would open the country to "drug tourists" and exacerbate Portugal's drug problem; the country had some of the highest levels of hard-drug use in Europe. But the recently released results of a report commissioned by the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank, suggest otherwise.

The paper, published by Cato in April, found that in the five years after personal possession was decriminalized, illegal drug use among teens in Portugal declined and rates of new HIV infections caused by sharing of dirty needles dropped, while the number of people seeking treatment for drug addiction more than doubled.

"Judging by every metric, decriminalization in Portugal has been a resounding success," says Glenn Greenwald, an attorney, author and fluent Portuguese speaker, who conducted the research. "It has enabled the Portuguese government to manage and control the drug problem far better than virtually every other Western country does."

Compared to the European Union and the U.S., Portugal's drug use numbers are impressive. Following decriminalization, Portugal had the lowest rate of lifetime marijuana use in people over 15 in the E.U.: 10%. The most comparable figure in America is in people over 12: 39.8%. Proportionally, more Americans have used cocaine than Portuguese have used marijuana.

The Cato paper reports that between 2001 and 2006 in Portugal, rates of lifetime use of any illegal drug among seventh through ninth graders fell from 14.1% to 10.6%; drug use in older teens also declined. Lifetime heroin use among 16-to-18-year-olds fell from 2.5% to 1.8% (although there was a slight increase in marijuana use in that age group). New HIV infections in drug users fell by 17% between 1999 and 2003, and deaths related to heroin and similar drugs were cut by more than half. In addition, the number of people on methadone and buprenorphine treatment for drug addiction rose to 14,877 from 6,040, after decriminalization, and money saved on enforcement allowed for increased funding of drug-free treatment as well.

Portugal's case study is of some interest to lawmakers in the U.S., confronted now with the violent overflow of escalating drug gang wars in Mexico. The U.S. has long championed a hard-line drug policy, supporting only international agreements that enforce drug prohibition and imposing on its citizens some of the world's harshest penalties for drug possession and sales. Yet America has the highest rates of cocaine and marijuana use in the world, and while most of the E.U. (including

Holland) has more liberal drug laws than the U.S., it also has less drug use.

"I think we can learn that we should stop being reflexively opposed when someone else does [decriminalize] and should take seriously the possibility that anti-user enforcement isn't having much influence on our drug consumption," says Mark Kleiman, author of the forthcoming *When Brute Force Fails: How to Have Less Crime and Less Punishment* and director of the drug policy analysis program at UCLA. Kleiman does not consider Portugal a realistic model for the U.S., however, because of differences in size and culture between the two countries.

But there is a movement afoot in the U.S., in the legislatures of New York State, California and Massachusetts, to reconsider our overly punitive drug laws. Recently, Senators Jim Webb and Arlen Specter proposed that Congress create a national commission, not unlike Portugal's, to deal with prison reform and overhaul drug-sentencing policy. As Webb noted, the U.S. is home to 5% of the global population but 25% of its prisoners.

At the Cato Institute in early April, Greenwald contended that a major problem with most American drug policy debate is that it's based on "speculation and fear mongering," rather than empirical evidence on the effects of more lenient drug policies. In Portugal, the effect was to neutralize what had become the country's number one public health problem, he says.

"The impact in the life of families and our society is much lower than it was before decriminalization," says Joao Castel-Branco Goulao, Portugal's "drug czar" and president of the Institute on Drugs and Drug Addiction, adding that police are now able to re-focus on tracking much higher level dealers and larger quantities of drugs.

Peter Reuter, a professor of criminology and public policy at the University of Maryland, like Kleiman, is skeptical. He conceded in a presentation at the Cato Institute that "it's fair to say that decriminalization in Portugal has met its central goal. Drug use did not rise." However, he notes that Portugal is a small country and that the cyclical nature of drug epidemics — which tends to occur no matter what policies are in place — may account for the declines in heroin use and deaths.

The Cato report's author, Greenwald, hews to the first point: that the data shows that decriminalization does not result in increased drug use. Since that is what concerns the public and policymakers most about decriminalization, he says, "that is the central concession that will transform the debate."

Link: <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1893946,00.html>

Manchester will this autumn become the first city where people can sign up for an ID card, Jacqui Smith has said. Thanks APIPA!

Anyone over 16 in the city with a UK passport will be able to apply for a card from the Home Office. The home secretary's speech signals her determination to push ahead with the cards, which will initially cost £30, despite opposition. The Tories and Lib Dems want the £5bn scheme scrapped, while some Labour MPs have expressed doubts about its cost. People in Manchester who want an ID card can register their interest on the Directgov website. They will then be told later in the year how to get their card, which will probably involve a visit to the Manchester passport office to be interviewed and have their fingerprints and photo taken.

The Conservatives claim the Cabinet is split on ID cards, with some ministers keen to scrap them to save money. But the Home Office says it is determined to push ahead, claiming ID cards will reduce fraud - thus saving money - and are vital to combating terrorism and organised crime.

The Manchester launch will mark the beginning of the main phase of the ID scheme which ministers say will culminate in cards being available nationwide by 2012. At a series of meetings on Wednesday, Ms Smith said post offices and pharmacies could play an important role in the success of the ID scheme, allowing people to give their fingerprints and a face scan while "out doing the shopping".

The cost of the cards will be capped at £30 for the first two years and then there will be an additional cost to the applicant of getting a card via a post office or High Street pharmacy. This charge has yet to be decided, but the Home Office says it hopes it will be "competitive", and reports have put the total cost at about £60.

People in Manchester will only be able to get the cards by applying directly to the National Identity Service. They will not be able to get them from shops and post offices for another two years. "ID cards will deliver real benefits to everyone, including increased protection against criminals, illegal immigrants and terrorists," the home secretary said.

Government officials will seek to allay people's concerns about the amount of personal data to be collected and retained for the new cards, saying it will be no greater than for passports. "I think it is important to recognise that we're not collecting some massive accumulation of information about citizens," said James Hall, chief executive of the Identity and Passport Service.

Non-EU residents have been required to have identity cards since the end of last year. Shadow home secretary Chris Grayling said the Conservatives would scrap ID cards but were not "assuming vast savings", as much of the money has already been spent.

He told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "We are still talking about somewhere between £1bn and £2bn which, at a time when our public finances are in a right Royal mess, is a saving worth having in my view."

He claimed "the government's plans are quite clearly for a compulsory ID card scheme in the end" and people on low incomes, such as pensioners, should not be forced to pay for them.

He also questioned the value of the Manchester trial, arguing it was "very hard to see" how it could be made to work on a voluntary basis in a single city.

If the Conservatives win the next election they would scrap the scheme, said Mr Grayling, adding: "We don't think the nation can afford them and they won't happen."

Efforts to issue cards to pilots and other airport workers - a scheme which is being trialled at Manchester and London City airports - are meeting with growing resistance. Pilots say they are effectively being forced into signing up for the cards.

"Our members believed the government promise that the ID card would be voluntary," said Jim

McAuslan, general secretary of the pilots' union Balpa. "But they now know it is anything but. Our members must have an airside pass to operate aircraft and now discover that to get that pass they must have a national ID card. "This is coercion and a case of Big Brother knows best."

Officials said they were prepared to work with unions to resolve any differences but stressed that ID cards would improve security at airports and speed up recruitment procedures. Dr Edgar Whitley of the London School of Economics has been warning about the cost of the scheme - which he has estimated at £10bn-£20bn - for the past four years. The government's figure for the cost to the Home Office is about £5bn.

Dr Whitley told BBC Radio 4's Today programme: "The more I learn about it, the less impressed I've become. "The government said one of the benefits would be you'll be able to use your identity card to get personalised public services. "But the most recent date for when that will start to happen is 2015. So the people in Manchester, if they enrol with their cards, won't get any particular benefit until four or five years from now."

APIPA says : watch out for this kind of thing – this is how Hitler started out!

Link: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8035002.stm

A speed camera boss has admitted driving at more than 100mph on a 70mph dual carriageway. Thanks APIPA!

Tom Riall, a chief executive of Serco, was caught by a police patrol car in Newmarket, Suffolk.

He was clocked at 102.92mph in a blue Volvo on the eastbound section of the A14 just before 1pm on January 4. Magistrates in Sudbury have banned the 49-year-old of Ufton Nervet, near Reading, from driving for six months.

He has also had six points added to his licence. Outside court, Riall said: "I accept the decision of the court. I recognise that speeding is not acceptable." I very much regret what happened and I have made a full apology to the court."

A spokesman for Serco Civil Government division said he did not wish to add to Riall's comment.

Link: <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/4/20090506/tuk-speed-camera-boss-caught-at-100mph-dba1618.html>

In More ID Card News.....

Former Home Secretary David Blunkett says the government should scrap plans to introduce ID cards for all in favour of mandatory biometric passports. Thanks APIPA!

Speaking at InfoSec 2009, a security conference held in London, the MP for Sheffield Brightside said biometric passports could do the job.

He said he had put the idea to the current Home Secretary Jacqui Smith.

He mooted the idea of ID cards when Home Secretary in 2001, but has changed his position in the last few months.

Asked whether ID cards could be dropped, Mr Blunkett told the BBC: "I think it is possible to mandate biometric passports.

"Most people already have a passport but they might want something more convenient to carry around than the current passport and may be able to have it as a piece of plastic for an extra cost."

Using existing databases to hold the same information already gathered to issue passports could be a way of allaying fears over a new "database of information", one of the key criticisms of the ID scheme.

"People don't worry about the Passport Agency but they do worry about some mythical identity database," he said.

Last month Home Secretary Jacqui Smith said government plans for introducing ID cards were "on track" but there have been reports that the scheme could be dropped.

The Independent newspaper reports that senior cabinet ministers are privately discussing a plan to scrap ID cards as part of a public spending savings plan.

The Home Office has estimated that universal ID cards could cost £1.25bn over the next 10 years. Mr Blunkett said mandatory biometric passports would be considerably cheaper.

"Most of the cost is borne by the person purchasing the passport," he said.

The government began issuing passports containing biometric information in March 2006.

Conservative leader David Cameron has already signalled that ID cards would be scrapped if his party wins power in next year's elections.

A spokesman for the Home Office said the government was still committed to ID cards.

He said: "There is no large fund of money to spend if ID cards were cancelled.

"ID cards will provide the public with a single, simple and secure way for individuals to prove their identity and safeguard their personal details - protecting the community against crime, illegal immigration, and terrorism."

The Home Office added: "The Home Secretary already announced last year that that as the National Identity Service rolls out in 2011/12 we will be offering British citizens the choice of having an identity card, a passport or both."

Link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/8022791.stm>

The National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies (AHS) plans to launch a recruitment drive this summer. Thanks Schneelocke!

Backed by professors Richard Dawkins and AC Grayling, the initiative aims to establish a network of atheist societies in schools to counter the role of Christianity. It will coincide with the first atheist summer camp for children that will teach that religious belief and doctrines can prevent ethical and moral behaviour.

The federation aims to encourage students to lobby their schools and local authorities over what is taught in RE lessons and to call for daily acts of collective worship to be scrapped. It wants the societies to hold talks and educational events to persuade students not to believe in God.

Chloë Clifford-Frith, AHS co-founder, said that the societies would act as a direct challenge to the Christian message being taught in schools.

She expressed concern that Christian Unions could influence vulnerable teenagers looking for a club to belong to with fundamentalist doctrine.

In particular, she claimed that some students were being told that homosexuality is a sin and to believe the Biblical account of creation.

"We want to point out how silly some of these beliefs are and hope that these groups will help to do that," she said.

The federation's bid to improve co-ordination among atheists in schools follows a successful campaign at universities.

The number of groups reported by the AHS to be active on campuses has risen from seven in 2007/2008 academic year to 25 in 2008/2009, including societies at the universities of Oxford and Durham.

Leeds Atheist Society claims to have experienced discrimination, vandalism, theft and death threats from religious groups on campus, who oppose the open expression of an atheist viewpoint and blasphemy.

AC Grayling, the philosopher and writer, said: "As well as making the case for reason and science, it is great to know that the AHS will be standing up against religious privilege and discrimination.

"The AHS shows that increasing numbers of young people are unwilling to put up with it."

Simon Calvert of the Christian Institute said: "Atheists are becoming increasingly militant in their desperate attempts to stamp out faith. It is deeply worrying that they now want to use children to attack the Christian ethos of their schools.

"Many parents will also be anxious at the thought of militant atheists targeting their children."

In a further development to strengthen the role of atheism among the younger generation, the first summer camp for irreligious children or the children of nontheistic parents is being held this summer.

Organisers say that Camp Quest, which originated in America, offers "a godless alternative to traditional religious summer camps, such as vacation Bible schools".

Link : <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/5219687/Atheists-target-UK-schools.html>

(continued on next page)

Schnee says : The National Federation of Atheist, Humanist and Secular Student Societies (AHS) will start an initiative this summer aimed at establishing a network of atheist societies in schools to provide an alternative to christian indoctrination, fundamentalism and intolerance.

Needless to say, the godbots aren't happy: one Simon Calvert is quoted as saying that "[a]theists are becoming increasingly militant in their desperate attempts to stamp out faith", for example, and continues to wring his hands in the typical Helen Lovejoy fashion by insisting that "it is deeply worrying that they now want to use children to attack the Christian ethos of their schools".

Because, of course, providing an alternative to existing christian clubs and societies for the less-than-faithful is a sign of militance - the same way that, say, all those gays are just militant straight-haters hell-bent on the Destruction Of Marriage(tm) when they demand equal rights and equal treatment.

Jesus and Mo sum it up quite succinctly, too:
<http://www.jesusandmo.net/2009/05/06/abuse/>

(And BTW, if you're not reading that comic yet, you should, and the same goes for those listening to the show. :))

Prison Awaiting Hostile Bloggers Thanks Kevin!

Proposed congressional legislation would demand up to two years in prison for those whose electronic speech is meant to "coerce, intimidate, harass, or cause substantial emotional distress to a person." Instead of prison, perhaps we should say gulag.

The proposal by Rep. Linda Sanchez, D-Los Angeles, [would never pass](#) First Amendment muster, unless the U.S. Constitution was altered without us knowing. So Sanchez, and the 14 other lawmakers who signed on to the proposal, are grandstanding to show the public they care about children and are opposed to cyberbullying.

The measure, [H.R. 1966](#), is labeled the Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act. It's designed to target the behavior that led to last year's suicide of the 13-year-old Meier.

In response to Meier's suicide, prosecutors turned to an anti-hacking statute, the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, and [prosecuted](#) Lori Drew. She was accused of violating MySpace's terms of service agreement in what prosecutors said was a complex conspiracy to harass Meier via a fake MySpace online profile.

The judge presiding over the case is weighing a motion to nullify the jury's verdict on allegations the authorities failed to prove Drew knew the MySpace terms of service existed — allegations that would be mooted had Drew been prosecuted under Sanchez's proposal. Drew's case was the nation's first cyberbullying prosecution under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act.

Sanchez's bill goes way beyond cyberbullying and comes close to making it a federal offense to log onto the internet or use the telephone. The methods of communication where hostile speech is banned include e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, websites, telephones and text messages.

We can't say what we think of Sanchez's proposal. Doing so would clearly get us two years in solitary confinement. The bill has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee.

Link : <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2009/05/prison-awaiting-hostile-bloggers/>

Scientists have found more evidence that the Indonesian "Hobbit" skeletons belong to a new species of human - and not modern pygmies. Thanks Kevin!

The 3ft (one metre) tall, 30kg (65lbs) humans roamed the Indonesian island of Flores, perhaps up to 8,000 years ago. Since the discovery, researchers have argued vehemently as to the identity of these diminutive people.

Two papers in the journal Nature now support the idea they were an entirely new species of human. The team, which discovered the tiny remains in Liang Bua cave on Flores, contends that the population belongs to the species *Homo floresiensis* - separate from our own grouping *Homo sapiens*. They argue that the "Hobbits" are descended from a prehistoric species of human - perhaps *Homo erectus* - which reached island South-East Asia more than a million years ago.

Over many years, their bodies most likely evolved to be smaller in size, through a natural selection process called island dwarfing, claim the discoverers, and many other scientists. However, some researchers argued that this could not account for the Hobbit's chimp-sized brain of almost 400 cubic cm - a third the size of the modern human brain.

This was a puzzle, they said, because the individuals seem to have crafted complex stone tools. They said the Hobbits were probably part of a group of modern humans with abnormally small brains. One team led by William Jungers from Stony Brook University in the US analysed remains of the Hobbit foot.

They found that, in some ways, it is incredibly human. The big toe is aligned with the others and the joints make it possible to extend the toes as the body's full weight falls on the foot, attributes not found in great apes. But in other respects, it is incredibly primitive.

It is far longer than its modern human equivalent, and equipped with a very small big toe, long, curved lateral toes, and a weight-bearing structure that resembles that of a chimpanzee.

So unless the Flores Hobbits became more primitive over time - a rather unlikely scenario - they must have branched off the human line at an even earlier date.

In another study, Eleanor Weston and Adrian Lister of London's Natural History Museum looked at fossils of several species of ancient hippos. They then compared those found on the island of Madagascar with the mainland ancestors from which they evolved.

"It could be that *H. floresiensis*' skull is that of a *Homo erectus* that has become dwarfed from living on an island, rather than being an abnormal individual or separately-evolved species, as has been suggested," said Dr Weston, a palaeontologist at the museum.

"Looking at pygmy hippos in Madagascar, which possess exceptionally small brains for their size, suggests that the same could be true for *H. floresiensis*, and that (it could be) the result of being isolated on the island."

Link: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/8036396.stm>

Police officers were responsible for nearly one road collision a week last year in Northamptonshire. Thanks Kevin!

During 2008 Northamptonshire Police accepted liability for a total of 45 accidents involving a police vehicle. Of the 45, one accident involved a pedestrian and two involved a motorcyclist. Three people suffered minor injuries. The figures, which were obtained under the Freedom of Information act, reveal there were 3,357 crashes caused by police officers nationwide last year, with Northamptonshire Police coming 15th out of the 25 police forces which supplied information.

Chief Insp Sean Bell, of the police vehicle collision reduction group, said: "Collisions do happen, but ones caused by police drivers fortunately happen infrequently. "We do not want our vehicles to be involved in any accidents, but these 45 incidents have to be set against the fact we have 417 police vehicles of varying kinds that collectively cover around six million miles a year. "We work hard to ensure our officers and staff are well trained and carry out their driving duties safely and we take our responsibilities to other road users very seriously. "While people expect us to respond quickly to emergencies, we balance that with the need to drive with great care.

"If a police driver is involved in a collision, the circumstances are thoroughly investigated to the same high standard that would be applied to members of the public, and any appropriate action taken."

Link: <http://www.northantset.co.uk/news/Police-cars-cause-45-crashes.5238215.jp>

A woman accused of tormenting her neighbours with her noisy love-making has appeared in court. Thanks APIPA!

Caroline Cartwright, 48, was remanded in custody until May 5 charged with three breaches of her Asbo in ten days. Magistrates in Sunderland slapped her with a four-year order on April 17, banning her from "making excessive noise" anywhere in England. But Houghton le Spring Magistrates' Court heard that police arrested her on April 18, April 22 and April 26 after neighbours complained she was flouting the ban with the help of husband Steve.

Prosecutor Claire Ward said there were complaints of early morning shouting, moaning, groaning and the sound of a bed banging against the wall. Cartwright was arrested on Sunday and charged with three counts of breaching her Asbo. Cartwright, of Hall Road, Concord, Washington, Tyne and Wear, whose husband sat in the public gallery, elected trial by jury and her case will be transferred to Newcastle Crown Court.

A bail application from defence solicitor Peter Lothian was refused. Cartwright was remanded in custody and ordered to appear via video link before Sunderland Magistrates' Court on May 5. On April 17, she was convicted for five breaches of an abatement notice and fined a total of £515.

Magistrates also imposed the Asbo, banning her from making excessive noise, knocking, shouting, screaming or vocalisation that can be heard in neighbouring properties or outside the house, and playing loud music.

APIPA says : surely ASBOs were intended for serious offences – this is ridiculous!

Link: <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/4/20090427/tuk-wife-faces-trial-over-noisy-sex-dba1618.html>

R4nger5 News / Feedback

- I'm not hearing anything on the r4nger5 America front, people!
- Osprey feedback

DISCUSSION – 'Sexting' as interpreted as child porn even tho they are sent with consent – what are the implications for now and the future of communications technologies – should it be judged and acted upon using the stringed anti child-porn laws? **Thanks to Macavity**, who suggested it.

Half time Music

- **Track 1** – **Detox** by **Patient Zero** from the album **Detox Detox**
- **Track 2** – **F-ing it** by **Dronewars**
- **Track 3** – **Everyday Jones** with **All you said** thanks to **Schneelocke** for reoomending www.podsafefaudio.com – I'm trying to protect CC music here!

Links

www.rantmedia.ca
www.empowerthyself.com
www.kevinisageek.org
www.wogrant.com
www.wognetwork.com
www.tangledwilderness.com
www.stormthewire.tk

Get to us on:

www.r4nger5.com (thanks KoBach!)

www.r4nger5blog.tk

and V4V@earthling.net

And come on and play in the IRC on **irc.freenode.net** room/channel: **#r4nger5**

<http://www.jesusandmo.net> Funny atheist comic – **Thanks Scheelocke!**

<http://weblife.org/links.html> Great hub for all sorts of info! **Thanks Vavrek / Kevin!**

<http://www.umpcportal.com/2009/04/umid-mbook-m1-full-review> An awesome bit of kit – pocked computer! **Thanks Macavity!**



Reccomedia

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-RE84aNY4o> Great vid on personal responsibility – **Thanks Avagdu!**

And a follow up for that one: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dU95WaMCDA0> **Thanks Avagdu!**

<http://www.bit-tech.net/hardware/2009/05/05/toughened-technology/1>How to toughen a PC

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-4008293090480628280> Guns Germs and Steel interesting historical documentary – **Thanks Avagdu!**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRGZr2m4r7M> Mark thomas protest documentary (in a few parts) – really funny

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CB3U9X_EHBITaxation fairness vid **Thanks Avagdu!**

Outro Music

- **Track 1 – Gun** by **Patient Zero** from the album **Detox Detox**
- **Track 2 – Unreal (acoustic Dub)** by **Dronewars**
- **Track 3 - Final Rewind** by **Tryad** Thanks to Macavity who suggested this!www.tryad.org
- **Rant – Sean Kennedy** with **Just a Fad**