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Press Release of the Swiss Association «Parents Against Drugs»: **Liberal Drug Policies in Switzerland are NOT Successful**

One can see from media reports that the liberal drug policies of Switzerland have been a success: Psychiatrist R. Stohler and Sociologist C. Nordt, who analysed the registry instituted in 1991 of all methadone treatments in the Canton of Zurich, came to this conclusion in their study, because the number of new consumers of heroin has gone down since the implementation of easier access to heroin and methadone.

The many years of experience of the specialists of the Swiss Association "Parents Against Drugs" find this to be a false conclusion, in fact the science behind this study is thrown into doubt by the fact that this supposed success is aligned with only one aspect of the entire problem of liberal drug policies. Many scientific aspects are disregarded and we would like to go into them here in detail:

1) Substitution of Heroin with Marijuana and Cocaine

Which drugs will be most heavily consumed at any given time is subject to trend. In the last 15 years heroin has been replaced by the illegal drugs marijuana and cocaine. For this reason the decline in new heroin users can certainly not be chalked up to the liberal Swiss drug policies.

2) The Governmental Distribution of Heroin is not a Treatment Program

It is a lie that heroin addicts, by virtue of the fact that they are shooting up governmentally controlled heroin, are somehow undergoing treatment. With approximately 5% willing to give it up, this goal must certainly be viewed as a failure.

3) The Social Costs of a Liberal Drug Policy are Climbing Beyond Calculation

According to a statement by the UNO Drug Control Agency, only a very rich country such as Switzerland can afford such a liberal drug policy with a flood of distribution of heroin, methadone and newly Ritalin. Since this somewhat excessive consumption of narcotics which is coupled with minimal requirements and large medical follow-up expenses, has to be born by private health insurance carriers, their premiums have increased alarmingly. Also financial welfare benefits which must be paid out by social welfare agencies and disability insurance for this small group of drug addicts, will soon be an unbearable burden on the Swiss taxpayer. The outlays for social programs caused by the consumption of illegal drugs are estimated at over 4 billion Swiss Francs per year. As a result, a collapse of our welfare structures is a real threat!

4) **80% of Drug User are Politoxicomaniacs**

The drug clients – both men and women – as they are called by their custodians, are approximately 80% polytoxicomaniacs, meaning they also consume other addictive substances such as cocaine, marijuana, sleeping pills and tranquilizers (Benzodiazepine) along with their governmentally issued heroin and methadone. These must be obtained on the black market.

5) **Effects of Playing Down the Dangers of Marijuana Consumption in Switzerland**

The studies of the Swiss Early Psychosis Project (SWEPP) and the research report of the ESPAD Swiss Center of Expertise for Alcohol and Other Drug Problems clearly show the effects of a liberal drug policy and the effects of playing down the danger of marijuana consumption in Switzerland:

- a) Switzerland can be counted amongst those countries in Europe with the highest level of marijuana consumption.
- b) Cognitive deficits, reduced educational success and above all a reduction in psychosocial adjustment are the effects of an early entry into marijuana use.
- c) With few exceptions the number of problems increases in parallel to the frequency of marijuana consumption.
- d) **Parents allow their child-raising principles regarding drug use and rule-breaking to be influenced by governmental policies.**
- e) Young people freely admit in the survey that it is "very easy" to obtain (the illegall) marijuana in Switzerland.

6) **Effects of Marijuana Consumption in Young People**

In the Canton of Zurich every third youth loses his position as an apprentice. As a result unemployment directly related to marijuana consumption has increased substantially in recent years.

7) **Danger of Depression and Psychosis Due to Marijuana Consumption**

The suicide rate amongst the young in Switzerland has risen sky-high as marijuana consumption often leads to depression and psychosis.

8) **Marijuana as a Heroin Substitute**

The THC content of the consumed marijuana can be up to 20 times higher due to hybrids grown in indoor enclosures so that with inhalation a high similar to that of heroin consumption can be obtained: Marijuana can thus be understood to be a heroin substitute, whereas in contrast to heroin it is very easily obtained.

These arguments document the fact that the liberal drug policy of Switzerland has created problems in the fields of public health and the socio-political and economic realms which threaten to overwhelm us. The exponents of a liberal drug policy in Switzerland attempt to beguile governmental agencies and the civil population with supposed successes in minor battles while the major battles are long since being fought elsewhere.