

David Marr ([00:00:00](#)):

Good afternoon. We're going to talk about drugs and money and crime for a moment. Let me introduce the panelists who are here this afternoon. Sitting close to me closest to me is Sadie Plant. Sadie told me a moment ago that in this hole years ago, it was the first place she ever spoke in Australia. Sadie remains English. She was an academic teaching at Birmingham university. She is now thank Kevin's a full-time writer. And I suppose she's on this platform because of her book writings on drugs next to her is Alfred McCoy. Now this mysterious man is very important, man, in public debate in this country, because even though he lives and works in the United States, he has had an enormous influence on the way in which we understand and debate policy on drugs in Australia, because for 25 or so years, maybe even longer, he's been writing about the drugs trade in Southeast Asia, and he has always placed Australia in that trade.

David Marr ([00:01:04](#)):

And whenever I hear the rhetoric of Australia's new engagement with Asia, I always think of Alfred McCoy telling us exactly what it's all about being a marketplace for Asian heroine. And the third member of the panel this afternoon is Nick Cowdery. Nick Cowdery began life as a criminal barrister, a knockabout kind of criminal barrister practicing in new Guinea. And then later in new south Wales with some distinction. And he is now the director of public prosecutions in new south Wales, a controversial figure there because of his continued insistence on speaking. Good sense about law and crime and punishment rather than aping the kind of stuff that we live with. And I think you live with here too, mainly from radio shock jocks and and crook newspapers. And Nick Cowdery is now, I like to think of him as the prince of punishment in new south Wales. So that's our panel this afternoon. Each of them each of them will speak for a bit some from the lectern and some not. And then we'll have lots of time for questions and general discussion about the topic this afternoon. And we're going to begin by hearing from Sadie Plant.

Sadie Plant ([00:02:23](#)):

Okay. Thank you very much. It's a real pleasure to be here after many years. So I'm very grateful to all the people who've made it possible for me to come today. I just going to say a couple of things, just to throw a few ideas into, to begin what I hope will be a stimulating debates. And I want to just say a few things about the whole notion of black markets and especially the historical role that drugs have played in the formation of, of what we know considers to be black or underground or slightly gray economies in the world. Clearly I'm sure most people are aware. The trade in drugs is one of the biggest global industries of any kind black or white. They're just most all religious. And that second it is Thor's only two arms and oil. So really we're talking about an enormous trade this trade in illicit substances or other the illicit trade in certain substances.

Sadie Plant ([00:03:19](#)):

And obviously the whole problem of that black markets is that there are by definition, impossible to be precise about, and nobody can really be sure the extent of, of any black market, but it seems that Alfred will confirm or probably expand on this a great deal. That's some 10% of the global economy may be taken up by this trade in illicit substances, which as you can imagine is a huge proportion of international trade. Clearly, one of the implications of this is that we're there to be any changes on a global level to the legal situation in relation to these substances. Then it would have enormous implications for many aspects of global trade and geopolitics, which I'll come back to in the moment. But the main point that I'd like to make just to kick this off is that it's important to realize not only the magnitude of this trade,

but also the fact that it's with drugs really, especially opium and to some extent Coker and its derivatives that the whole distinction between black and white markets first originated.

Sadie Plant ([00:04:30](#)):

This is largely because the trade in opium in particular was so crucial to the formation of modern capitalism. I'm thinking especially of the role of Britain in Asia, especially in China. Now, going back to the 19th century, the trade in opium between India and China, which was obviously crucial to Britain's economic wealth and therefore to the industrial revolution, it really financed much of the industrial revolution of the period. And of course, in many ways it's then enabled us to say that the formation of modern capitalism, these substances really, we could now say looking back, I think the first commodities of modern capitalism and in many senses, obviously they were a completely unregulated trade at that time because there was no national or international legal system that was in a position to legislate them. And in effect, we can look back now and see the formation of the first laws to deal with this international trade as really being the very beginnings, not only in many cases of a notion of the nation state and therefore state regulation of any kind of commodity, because these were really the first commodities to ever be subjected to any kind of international or national legislation of any kind, but also on an international level, we really see the beginnings of international law of any kind coming with the first attempts to regulate the international drugs trade.

Sadie Plant ([00:06:05](#)):

So on the one hand, we've got a history where these substances lie at the heart of a kind of free market capitalism. And on the other hand, we've got situation where their attempts to regulate them really lie at the very basis of international law. I'm thinking in particular, when the league of nations first came together, the trading opium and cocaine were really some of the first issues that were on the agenda for the very first meetings of the league of nations. That obviously was the body, which then became the United nations later in the 20th century. So as I say, we can see drugs really at the heart of not only our current questions about black markets and white markets and legitimate and illegitimate trade, but also we can see them playing this crucial role in the very formation of the whole idea of what it was to have this distinction between legitimate state regulated state sanctioned trade.

Sadie Plant ([00:07:04](#)):

And on the other hand, illegitimate at black markets. One consequence of that for the current situation is obviously become now the fact that really looking back much of the Western world, as I say, Britain in particular, but by no means only Britain grew rich really on the trade in opium and many other psychoactive substances that are now controlled by these international laws. And one of the consequences of the current situation is that of course, many nations who in theory would be now in a position to really do the same thing and use the same markets in these substances to, to their own benefit are of course prohibited from doing so. So it seems to me that our current situation has a great deal to do with the ways in which the west maintains its political and economic power and the ways in which many other countries in particular, the most extreme cases being Afghanistan, Burma, Colombia, some of the most impoverished countries in the world are obviously prohibited from really engaging in that same extremely profitable trade.

Sadie Plant ([00:08:12](#)):

And the final point that I'd just like to make, to begin with. Cause I'd like to make sure that we have plenty of time to discuss the many issues that will come off. All of this is that at the moment, I think we

see another sort of sinister development coming out of this history. And that is that in many cases, the routes and the systems that are now in place that have really grown up over the last hundred years of prohibitionist policy, which would enable these substances to traffic around the world are increasingly being used now to traffic people. And it's a situation which I'm sure we'll again, come back to, in relation to, for example, prostitution, we've got sex on the agenda as well as drugs here today. But also the more general trade in moving people around the world. I've had recent experiences, especially with the loss of Afghan friends who have found themselves in a position really in the hands of people, smugglers who until very recently were drug smugglers and have now just kind of shifted into the people smuggling trade.

Sadie Plant ([00:09:16](#)):

And of course, when they were smuggling drugs and they were about to be caught, for example, in a boat on the high seas somewhere, it was easy to just throw the heroin over the side. Now it's the people that get thrown over the side. They really are treated with the same callousness as the substances are treated before. So it's a, the, the, the legacy that we live with of this history of establishing this distinction between you just missed an illegitimate trade, has many spin-offs of which that's just the most recent and one of the worst. So I'll leave it at that and for the moment. Yeah. Thank you.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:09:57](#)):

Thank you, David. After a lifetime of standing to address courts, I find that the more natural position to adopt they topic is sex, drugs, and money. I'm not going to say a great deal about sex, not because of the subject about which I don't know a great deal, and I'm not answering any further questions about that. But because obviously the focus has been and will be on drugs and money, but I would like to make an aside on the subject of sex while I have the opportunity and it's to inform you of the very grave problem that our society has Sofar as the criminal law is concerned in relation to child sexual abuse. This is not something that affects only our society in Australia. This is an international phenomenon and something which has grown exponentially in recent years. Not I believe because there has been any more of it happening, but because a great deal, more of it is being reported.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:11:05](#)):

And you will see reports from all countries, all societies on earth on the extent to which this appalling crime against children is being committed. So I simply flag that as an issue that we should be concerned with, that we, as a society should be concerned with because children are our future. And if we stop the cycle of abuse, we will have to learn to live with it forever. To give you an example in new south Wales, my state, there are more than eight substantiated cases of child sexual abuse per day around the year. And I think that is a polling, well, no more sex, drugs and money, which are sexy enough topics in themselves. And I'm going to make some comments from the point of view of a domestic lawyer, a lawyer practicing within the Australian domestic jurisdiction. Being a lawyer is bad enough. I know being a criminal lawyer is even worse and worse, still is being a prosecutor, but that is what I am. What I have now been exclusively for the last nearly seven years and what it looks as though I will continue to be for some time to come crime is what governments make it.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:12:47](#)):

Parliament tells us what is criminal. And we have a mechanism of government set up to deal with crime. It is defined differently from time to time, things that were once crimes are no longer and things that were not crimes are declared crimes. As technology develops as community attitudes, change crime,

yeah. Is usually the result of passion, greed or need. And as such, it's a very human phenomenon. We've always had crime. We have it now and I believe we will always have it. So my job security is looking pretty good. Aye. Once they deal with crimes of passion, sometimes money comes into those, but it's usually incidental crime occurs when people lose their self-control and commit offenses in heightened emotional circumstances. But crime, as I said, also arises from greed, which is directly connected with money and from need, which may also be a need for money for material goods, to convert into money, to fuel some other need that a person has. The most typical example is a heroin addict who needs money to buy black market drugs, to satisfy the addiction that that person has.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:14:36](#)):

Right. I've heard quite a bit about addiction already at this festival, and we will hear more about it. And I don't want to spend time talking about where that addiction comes from or how we end up with drug addicts. We have always had drug users. We've had drugs ever since somebody pull the plant out of the ground and chewed it and discovered that it produced a pleasant sensation. We've had other sorts of drugs ever since people mixed chemicals together to produce something which when ingested also produced a pleasant sensation, I believe we will always have drugs with us. They'll become more and more inventive as time goes by. They will produce different effects as people that chemists develop drugs that react on human bodies in different ways. Our big problem is how to deal with it. And what we've done so far is a pretty crude form of control called prohibition.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:15:47](#)):

It's using a hammer to crack a nut in my view. And instead of looking for other tools, other ways of dealing with the problem, all we've done is to make the hammer bigger and bigger and heavier and heavier prohibition has not worked. Prohibition will not work. Prohibition cannot work because the ingenuity of humans will outsmart it all the time. It is costly in terms of money in terms of personal toil. And it's time that we put aside our faith in hope over experience. What prohibition does is to create a black market. And Sadie has already said something about black markets generally. And when you have a black market, you have inflated prices. The markups are huge at each stage of the operation from either harvest or manufacturer through two years. And with those markups, there are profits, enormous profits going to people at the various stages, along the chain, the Australian bureau of criminal intelligence estimates that in Australia about 18 billion that's with a B dollars per year spent on illicit drugs.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:17:30](#)):

That's a huge figure by way of comparison. Australia earns \$15 billion, \$3 billion, less per annum from international tourism. And we know what that brings into the country in terms of people and, and spending it's a business. And Sadie has already put it up there with oil, with arms. And she mentioned human trafficking and the profits, the sums of money involved in human trafficking and now on a par. So we have four global industries, the oil trade, the arms trade trafficking and drugs and trafficking in humans absorbing huge percentages of the international wealth. Isn't it? Time that we learnt from experience? It's not as if we haven't given it a fair, fair go. We have the research, we have the experience. We have the knowledge, but we don't have the political or social will to direct our attention elsewhere.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:18:51](#)):

There's not much point attacking it at street level, the drug traffic, it's a largely useless exercise. It takes a few people out of circulation for a while, perhaps, but it will have a best, only a marginal effect in a local area. The problem will continue. It will come back to that local area. In the meantime, it will be displaced somewhere else. And so far as the distributors further up the line are concerned. They don't care if their straight runners are taken out, they'll find more because the money is there to be made. The share is there to be had in the product by the users themselves.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:19:40](#)):

We can target people a little bit further up the chain. And sometimes we do have some success at that level, but it depends usually on obtaining intelligence information about these people, about where they are, who they are, how they're operating and what they're going to be doing. And because of that, the successes that law enforcement have at that level are necessarily quite small. And as for the people at the top, well, the first problem is to identify them, who are they? Who starts the ball rolling, who is sitting at the top of the tree, sorry to mix the metaphors who is two, be the target and how is evidence to be obtained, linking them with something over which they have ultimate control, but in which they have no physical day-to-day involvement, sometimes very rarely. There is some success in targeting people at the top. A fairly notorious example of that was in Columbia recently, when I think his name was PEBLO Escobar was actually ambushed and shot dead by place.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:21:05](#)):

But the story leading up to that was absolutely blowing the levels of corruption involved, the power wielded by this man who controlled billions of dollars. He agreed at one point to go to jail. So he had a jail built on his property and he staffed it with his men and he fitted it out with his things. He established his own soccer team and played soccer with them, bizarre stuff. This was a man who was supposed to be serving a sentence for being possibly the, but if not the, then one of the largest cocaine bosses in the world. So those are some of the hurdles that are created by these huge amounts of black money, which are washing about in the international economy.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:22:05](#)):

It's mine. I believe that the only effective strategy is to attack the profit, to remove the profits from the distribution chain. How do we do that? I think there's only one way, and that is to remove prohibition. And in the case of heroin, for example, to make it available on prescription from licensed medical practitioners at its true market costs, which is about a dollar a dose. And I think until we get to that point, we're going to continue to have the same arguments, grappled with the same problems, pay the same costs and experience the same frustrations that we've been experiencing ever since early, I have to say last century. Now, when prohibition was first put in place in this country, following of course the lead of that wonderful Paragon from across the Pacific, the other one effective money is on the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system has been delegated the role of dealing with the aftermath of this trade, because there are huge amounts of money available to those who are unlucky enough to be caught except for the street dealers, but the ones in the middle rungs, you find that the criminal justice system, which is one of the three arms of government in our society, is occupied for inordinate lengths in that are being prolonged and promoted by the existence of the funds to pay for the representation for these people.

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:23:56](#)):

It means that the government has to provide at least comparable sums of money available to prosecute these cases. It's an enormous waste of public resources in the institutions and in the funds that are required to actually conduct the proceedings. So there are a number of issues I hope that might promote some discussion on the subject at least of drugs and money. Thank you.

Speaker 4 ([00:24:31](#)):

[Inaudible] Alfred McCoy.

Alfred McCoy ([00:24:35](#)):

Thank you David. All too. We'll stand. I'm a professor of history at the university of Wisconsin and when I profess I stand and profess let me finish Mr. Cadre's wonderful story about Pablo Escobar. As powerful as he was when he was finally tracked down and killed by a very elaborate and enormously corrupt operation involving the CIA and the Colombian military about which there's a, a wonderfully horrible book and recently published what impact did this prize of prizes have upon the flow of cocaine from Latin America to the United States? None but Pablo Escobar, I would submit for all his illusory power was compared to a real drug Lord, a Southeast Asian drug Lord, Amy or street punk Pablo Escobar at the peak of his power had a mere 200 secretaries, 200 assassins. Okay. He was the equivalent, let's say of a medium-sized Los Angeles street gang.

Alfred McCoy ([00:25:40](#)):

Let's talk about a real drug Lord. Couldn't saw chunky food, the king of heroin, the Lord of drug Lords. Now at the peak of his power in the early 1990s, this man who revolutionized the drug trade had an army of 20,000 soldiers. He had a, he'd built a city carved an entire city, not just a basketball court and his own private prison. He had a city of 10,000 people with a hydroelectric dam advanced medical surgery, a legislature for his for his independent state of the size of Tasmania. And the Burmese government decided to destroy console. They bought \$2 billion worth of arms from China. They mounted a vast military campaign, the United States and all its power put a \$2 million prize on his head and concise in January of 1996 was forced to surrender and he went into retirement. Again, what impact did the elimination of the most powerful drug Lord on the face of the planet?

Alfred McCoy ([00:26:48](#)):

A man that controlled half of the heroin in the world, half the heroin in the world. What impact did this prize of prizes have upon the global drug trade? Not a thing. There wasn't a flicker in the international market. If I were going to make a film fire under the contract from the new south Wales film commission to make a film called drug trade. The movie, what I do is I'd stage it at bond diabetes. And I have Mr. Cowdrey in his suit and I'd have the Supreme court of the state of new south Wales. I'd have the tip staff, I'd have the officers of the drug squad in their uniforms with their guns. And I'd had them all with brooms at Bondai beach, with crashing waves, doing a, a 1, 2, 3 sweep high kick 1, 2, 3 sweet pike kick because that's all the difference they make.

Alfred McCoy ([00:27:37](#)):

They're fighting a vast, a vast power, something as powerful as the ocean. Something is obvious yet something as little understood. They're fighting a very powerful commodity. Now, when I was invited to speak here of the festival, ideas posed seven questions for them, this session, and one of them, there were three of them that seemed to be something that relates to my work. And I want to now deal with three of these questions. First of all, how does the invisible trade and drugs? Great, good question. I

would argue that in fact, this power is of the drug trade derives from its character. Sure. As a commodity. Now we all know what commodities are. It's a very common word, but actually it's a word that has a far deeper meaning. The American anthropologist amend name, professor Sydney Mintz at the end of his career, wrote a wonderful book.

Alfred McCoy ([00:28:34](#)):

That's full of knowledge called sweetness and power. And he was writing about sugar. And he said in this book, when the first English worker in the 18th century drank the first, his first cup of tea was sugar. This was an important historical act. The worker lifting the cup of tea to his lips or her lips, this transformed human history. And so it could be said that the opium trade, the global opium trades, which emerged at the exact same time as did the trade in sugar through the same processes is of course a commodity with exactly that kind of power at peak in 1900 opium had become such a powerful commodity that there were at that time, 41,000 thousand tons of opium produced in the world, then a legal commodity that would make it China's T crop, sorry. China's opium crop in 1900 was, let's say the same size as the Japanese tea crop or the Colombian coffee crop.

Alfred McCoy ([00:29:41](#)):

In short, it was a large commodity producing the same kind of volume in 1927% of adult males in China. One quarter of the adult male population were regular opium users. We'd call them opium addicts. So it was a bulk commodity with a vast population of users. After 1900, we started the great, what I call the great Anglo American experiment in prohibition recoiling from the excesses of the colonial opium trade that had made opium in a, into a commodity Britain and the United States launched a global diplomacy, which culminated in, in 1925, the league of nations passing legislation or passing treaties that were adopted internationally, which created an international prohibition against opium. And then today, the UN drug abuse fund is the heir of the league of nations. The effect of this prohibition was not to in fact, eradicate the traffic in opium to eradicate this commodity.

Alfred McCoy ([00:30:55](#)):

It's simply transferred this commodity to a parallel vice economy, and it transferred it away from powerful trading corporations to now rising criminal syndicates. And this trade in this illicit trade in narcotics has proven incredibly powerful. And this invisible global trade in narcotics is incredibly resilient. It's also a trade and the traffic that we don't understand, although we have international body, the UN, and we have all kinds of, of, of national government agencies that are attempting to suppress this trade. In fact, we don't understand it very well at all for the past 30 years, the global campaign to prohibit this commodity has failed for 30 years. This illicit market, this vast illicit market has transformed us and UN drug war or our attempts at prohibition into stimulus. Let me give you an example. The first of four now five American drug wars over the past 30 years was waged by president Richard Nixon in Turkey, Turkey then produced just 7% of the world's opium.

Alfred McCoy ([00:32:15](#)):

And by mobilizing the tremendous power of the United States, president Nixon seated in effecting the absolute 100% total eradication of opium and Turkey Turkey then provided about 80% of the source opium for the production of heroin in the United States. So this was a tremendous victory in the drug war. In this grandmother of drug wars, it was an absolute and total victory, but given the, the mysterious nature of the international economy in the drug war, every victory soon becomes a defeat. Every victory becomes a defeat. The net result of the Nixon drug war was to send out invisible 10 rolls of

stimulus that transformed the nature of the drug on five continents. Okay, let's look at how the simple eradication of just 7% of the world's opium in 1974, ramified and rippled around the globe. First of all, because demand was constant and supply was short, international price went up, that's economics 101, I got a C and I learned that and the result was to stimulate production in Southeast Asia.

Alfred McCoy ([00:33:34](#)):

Now, where, what happened to this production, this increased production of heroin in Southeast Asia? Well, the Nixon administration fought battle to have its drug war in Thailand. And it sent a team of us drug enforcement administration, agents to Thailand, and they effectively cut the flow of the drugs from Thailand to the United States. So those syndicates then began exporting to two continents, which up to this point were heroin free Australia and Europe, and both by the end of the 1970s had heroin problems given the scale of their societies larger than that in the United States, in the United States, because there was a shortage of supply of heroin. We got a sudden rapid expansion in illegal amphetamine production and Philadelphia beat was known by the end of the 1970s as the speed capital of the world, not refer reference to motor racing, by the way in Latin America, the the, the shortfall of heroin in the United States stimulated in the traffic in cocaine and started the accelerated exports of cocaine from the Andes north, the United States, and in Mexico, there was an increased production of black tar heroin.

Alfred McCoy ([00:34:44](#)):

So the elimination, this victory of the drug war in Turkey led to a vast expansion of both production and consumption of narcotics around the world and every subsequent victory in each of the drug wars that followed, serves as a stimulus. So how can we measure this? How can we measure this increase stimulus? That takes me to the next question. The next question that I receive is very simply is the cure worse than the disease is the attempt to prohibit narcotics worse than the traffic in narcotics? I would argue, yes, as long as drugs are prohibited, the drug war will continue to make the problem worse. Let me illustrate this with a few statistics after 30 years and for drug wars against opium there has been a six fold increase in opium supply in 1970, when the US war on OPM started in Turkey, the world produced a thousand tons of illicit opium today.

Alfred McCoy ([00:35:51](#)):

It produces 6,500 tons. It's gone from 1000 to 6,500 tons for the past 15 years. The United States has been fighting a drug war in Latin America against cocaine. All right, between 1987 and 1999, the production of cocaine in the Andes, despite a massive US intervention has doubled. We've gone from 300,000 tons of Koka in 1987 to 600,000 tons of cocoa today inside the United States, there has been, again, a massive war on drugs in the United States. The measure of this is our rising rate of incarceration from 1930, until 1980 in a time of half century of dramatic change in the United States. One social factors remain constant. Okay. The rate of incarceration, the United States had a hundred prisoners, per hundred thousand people, a hundred per a hundred thousand people from 1930 to 1980. Then in the 1980s under president Reagan and Bush, we began this accelerated war on drugs domestically, which produced massive incarceration of people for possession. Today, we have gone from 100 prisoners per a hundred thousand population to 650. Okay. One third of all the African-American males in the United States between the age, the age of 18 and 32 are in the criminal justice system. We are warehousing a third of the African male population. African-American male population between 18 and 32.

Alfred McCoy ([00:37:29](#)):

The number of drug users in the United States has remained constant throughout the last 15 years of the drug war at three and a half million recently. However, the number of heroin users has gone from 600,000 in 1990 to a million today. The final question, would it be how much would it cost us? The final question was to concede that the trade in sex, drugs and money is worse than the disease. I would argue that decriminalization is perhaps the only way to deal with this enormous power of this invisible market. As long as drugs are prohibited, they will remain inside this invisible underworld economy with its incredible power to transform every attempt at prohibition, into stimulus. The harder we fight this, the bigger it will grow. All right, it is our entire attempt at prohibition is stimulating its growth. The harder we try to prohibit it, the bigger it will grow it is self-defeating. And moreover not only is it self-defeating in terms of drugs, it does enormous collateral damage to our society. So I would argue that as a first step, we need to decriminalize this. We need to unravel undo the entire prohibition and return drugs into the normal legal economy where we can manage and regulate them like we manage and regulate alcohol or tobacco without all of this collateral damage. Thank you.

Speaker 4 ([00:39:17](#)):

[Inaudible]

David Marr ([00:39:18](#)):

The microphone is there, but I'm going to take the chairman's prerogative and ask each of the members of the panel, a question unanswerable AI and answerable arguments. Nick from your professional experience are answerable that that decriminalization is the only way to go. Let's briefly go around the panel. Why hasn't that happened?

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:39:38](#)):

It hasn't happened. I think because politicians too nervous, too frightened to explore. We've heard just already today in a number of presentations, concern the lack of constructive political leadership in this country. And I don't think we need to look very far to discover just how true that is to what a large extent it is true. So there needs to be leadership. There needs to be a constructive engagement with people with you about what people want about what you want about what you think. Instead of having people at the top, telling us what is best for us now, until we can do that until we, the people can have some input into the fashioning of policy, unless we, the people can tell the politicians, if you take that constructive point of view and explore alternative possibilities, we will go with you. We will assist you to discover facts, to deal with the arguments in a constructive way until we do that, they'll be too scared to do it because they fear that it will cost them votes at the next election. And that's all essentially they're interested in whether or not they're going to be reelected next time,

David Marr ([00:41:06](#)):

But AI why are the spin doctors mustard against change? Why do they come out with, with opposition? I'm a historian and we just tell stories data. Don't ask us to believe that in my movies, I'm a storyteller.

Alfred McCoy ([00:41:23](#)):

Let me tell you a story that may or may not answer your question. Hopefully it does. In, in the last 30 years in the United States, there was only really been one politician with the charisma and the intelligence to really attack the drug war. And for all of his failings, that was former president Clinton. He's a very smart man and a lawyer, and he knew better than any of us. The damage the drug war was doing indeed writing and rolling stone magazine, sorry, in the interview with rolling stone magazine as

he was leaving office, he confessed that, looking back on his administration, one of the things he deeply regretted above all of his failings was his feeling really to address some of the, from the drug war and he listed them off. So the question is why didn't bill Clinton who wanted to do something about drugs who was arguing?

Alfred McCoy ([00:42:13](#)):

You'll be the most powerful man in the world. I'd say that's a fair statement. He was not only is the American presidency powerful, but he was a powerful American person. Why couldn't he be the most powerful man in the world? The most powerful political leader on the planet with all of his phenomenal stuff, skills and intellect attack the drug war. And that's the story in 1994, I got a call from bizarre sources. It was routed from the Pentagon through a cupboard fair unit in in a military base near Washington DC, then through a think tank at Ohio university. And suddenly I got a telephone call saying, hi yeah, the incoming assistant secretary of defense for narcotic meds, once you to do a report on what's wrong with America's drug policy. And I said, oh great. I've been a critic for all these years.

Alfred McCoy ([00:43:05](#)):

And so I wrote this report and I sent it in and I, then I got a call saying the assistant secretary really liked your report. And he wants you to come down to Washington and give a briefing. And this assistant secretary of defense, about 35 years old, he had a budget of \$1.1 billion us. He had all of the military parts of the drug war under his command. And so I wonder the Pentagon and I gave a briefing to, oh, I think it was 60 senior drug warriors. There were, you know, there were admirals and generals and Marine colonels around a table. And then behind them was a whole row of people without uniforms are name tags. We all know where they're from. And and they all sat as I put my slides up and gave my presentation in a more elaborate and documented way than I did just now told them what was wrong with the drug war.

Alfred McCoy ([00:43:55](#)):

And they all nodded and said, oh my gosh, that sounds sensible. And then the white house ordered 75 copies of my report. And I got another call from his secretary saying, this is looking good. You're going to be coming to Washington as a, as a consultant to help us undo this damage. Well, what happened? Well in November, 1994, the right wing Republicans captured control of the U S Congress. And instead of undoing the drug war, president Clinton, who had been unable to get any legislation from this Congress went for the omnibus crime act and hired a hundred thousand more police to put more people in jail for drugs that went, that that's the political. And as long as your ally upon leaders like Clinton to under the drug war force, it won't happen after a hundred years of prohibition to ideology, political structures of the legislative contest and the bureaucratic apparatus. We have created a very powerful prohibition nexus that cannot be undone from the top. It has to be demolished by a popular movement outside of government.

Sadie Plant ([00:44:59](#)):

Well, I agree with that last comment and I, I've got two big things to say about this. I think the reasons why it remained the situation remains the same is actually they're bigger than I's review. Who've said, I think, I think it has to do with my opening comments about the size of the, of this underground economy. And if you, I mean, we all know there's any black economy, even people doing odd jobs and not paying their tax and so on is crucial to the balance of economic power in a legitimate economy. That that's true at any level. So if you magnify that, think about that on a global scale, the implications of

eradicating this prohibited trade of rendering, it legal, the economic, the political, the geopolitical implications, I think are enormous. I mean, even I struggle to deal with the possibility of I've mentioned before countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, countries, and Southeast Asia that Alfred knows about the countries in south America that would have been taught to that the possibility of them entering the global legitimate economy, the kind of implications of that would have politically and economically.

Sadie Plant (00:46:13):

And that's just one, one implication. There were many, many more as well. I think there's something systemic here that it really has as Alfred just said, sort of prohibition nexus has become this kind of machine if you like, which really does no matter how powerful Clinton is. He is not in a position to single hand at the end, do that. The second thing that wants slaves that we're dealing with, as I said before, international law, most countries in the world with very few exceptions, Switzerland is one of the only exceptions are signatures to UN conventions on the drugs trade. So even if an individual countries such as Australia wanted to make some move towards legalization of any particular substance, they are breaking international law in doing so. So in that sense, there is this enormous monstrous machine governing the whole process, which even if an individual country wants to challenge the situation, it's very difficult for the politicians, all the people in that country to do so.

Sadie Plant (00:47:14):

But having said that, we all know that in Europe, there are several countries and several regions where in fact there is this popular change. Decriminalization is happening. It has happened in many places. If you go to Switzerland, you can go into a shop. You can buy marijuana can choose from a menu. It's very cheap. It's no problem. Obviously many people know the situation Holland, but it's not only Holland that has made that move. As I say, Switzerland is in a relatively free position to do so because it's not a signatory to the convention. And therefore it can pretty much behaviors. It chooses, but Holland is often in trouble with the UN for doing this. And the same with Spain as well. Several regions of Spain have already decriminalized in Britain. We haven't officially decriminalized, but we have tasks that we'd done. So just in the last couple of weeks, it's now no longer considered to be an offense to carry amounts of marijuana for personal use.

Sadie Plant (00:48:09):

And the same as now, beginning to happen with heroin. And there are other experiments happening in Europe. For example, in Rotterdam, there's a very famous church. The Paulus Keck, where humps Fisher has become a prominent figure. The pastor of that church, who does in fact sell heroin, as you suggested at market value at pure quality to a really a dwindling number of heroin addicts in that city, he really sees them as a particular generation. His policy means that that generation is not being followed by younger people. He's now looking at opening in fats and old people's home for the remaining heroin junkie. And he really sees that they will be the last generation. And that will be the end of the problem in that city. So it is happening

David Marr (00:48:52):

Now let's open the questions. Yes.

Speaker 6 (00:48:54):

People have asked me my name. I'm Dean darling, retired physics and the science chapter, the alumni association medal university. Now you and why you're not doing this. You people who want drug

reform, you can talk Peto the drug laws quite simply quite simply by telling the pharmacological truth and exposing the pharmacological lies. And you're not doing that. The opiates that all the heroin and marijuana cannabis, if pure are, non-toxic compare that with alcohol, which causes permanent irreversible brain and bodies, that that'll damage on all the hangovers and all the rest of it. Now, you're not saying this to the public. The public are very confused because they're on the horns of this dilemma. You've got these terribly dangerous drugs on the one hand and we've got crime and the Mathew on the other. Now, the way he resolved as phony dilemma is you exposed the lie to be a law.

Speaker 6 ([00:49:43](#)):

The law to be alive, pot and heroin are not dangerous. Drugs of addiction. If you compare them with alcohol, death rates, addiction rates, withdrawal, overdose, destruction of body and brain cells and behavior, they are non-toxic compared to alcohol. For which in this country, we get the Queens on. It's the producers of alcohol. Now, the appalling hypocrisy and injustice you, people are not saying you can repeat, you can talk Peter, the track laws quite simply by telling the public, the pharmacological truth for a change in Holland. In 1996, there are 37 heroin deaths in Australia, same year, nineteen ninety six, six hundred and forty two. You asked the politician, how do you explain the vast difference between Holland and in, in heroin deaths? You all know about what you can go through the diff I can do this, but I haven't got time. Why don't you tell the public, the pharmacological truth and torpedo the drug laws? Yes. Now, how do you respond to that? The three

Sadie Plant ([00:50:55](#)):

[Inaudible]

David Marr ([00:50:55](#)):

To respond to that?

Sadie Plant ([00:50:56](#)):

I would say the same. I mean, I think probably the people on this platform, all saying that, you know, that's precisely the point. I mean, you're talking about hundreds of thousands of deaths. Alcohol-Related deaths in the country. Like Brittany, you're talking, you know, a handful of drug related deaths in comparison, even in the worst of circumstances that we have at the moment. Yeah. I agree. We all say and get it. I think the hypocrisy is not coming from right here. Is it?

David Marr ([00:51:25](#)):

Well, well, I mean, we can, I think we can all read at any time and it's been said over and over again, pure heroin. Doesn't kill people. I mean, I think constipation is the worst side effect of your hair, pure heroin, isn't it? Alcohol is an extremely dangerous substance. A few years ago. Jenny Brockie made the most wonderful documentary in Sydney and she set up to go with ambulance crews to overdoses in Kings cross, and you know, what she made, what it turned out to be. And she allowed it to emerge so beautifully. In the course of the documentary itself, they weren't going to overdoses. They were going to drunks. It was a night, actually. It was night after night of servicing the damage of alcohol and the beautiful thing at the end of the documentary, which was that the same ambulance officers were going around in the weeks before Christmas collecting donations of alcohol for their Christmas party. It's a very fine documentary, but if ever you're in doubt about the clear message of the harmlessness and the pitfalls of drugs being truthfully put in a publication read Sydney's gay press in the weeks before Mardi Gras, it is the most impeccable analysis. This is the good, this is the bad, this is the

pharmacology. Whereas the Howard government has recently put out and sent to every home in the nation, a document which lists amongst the side effects of marijuana. Euphoria.

David Marr ([00:53:10](#)):

Next question,

Speaker 6 ([00:53:15](#)):

We're hearing quite a bit about the effects of banning the drug trade in that. But I'm concerned about bands on the trafficking of people. The people try, they're banning people from moving from one country to another, from one continent to another, and they're making billions out of trafficking them, dumping them over board. The the people that died in the buses, the trucks those places in Holland, the amount of people that's in concentration camps in Australia and the, how many of them have come out in the media that we know about how many of them are there that we don't know about and how much of the public money is going into keeping those people they're paying for the people that's supposedly looking after them keeping them in those concentration camps, under those shocking conditions. And we're not hearing very much about it in our media. They're making billions out of it. Who's making who's the basket chopping our federal parliament. The phrase is the package and that this making the billions out of the drug trade and the people smuggling and trafficking, they are the criminals. And it's not just those law. There's a hell of a lot more.

David Marr ([00:55:04](#)):

Well, I think I would just say that's the first time I've ever heard it suggested that either of those two men were involved in people's smuggling, but but our

Alfred McCoy ([00:55:15](#)):

Not mine, not your area. Well, one of the

Nicholas Cowdery ([00:55:19](#)):

Organizations making a lot of money out of illegal migration, prohibited migration is a private company from the United States of America, which runs the detention camps in Australia. And I think it's a symptom of a development, which is very disturbing, and that is the conduct of private prisons. I have a great difficulty as a matter of principle in coming to terms with the idea of a private prison, the incarceration of wrongdoers is a function of government. As far as I'm concerned, it's something that's done on our behalf and something for which we should be responsible according to proper standards that are applied. The only objective of private prison companies is to make profit and to make as big a profit as possible. And if they, I was talking to somebody last night at the ed thing who told me that she had spoken to a principal of one of these companies in the United States. Apparently they get paid more for incarcerating, illegal immigrants than they do for incarcerating. People have been sentenced to imprisonment by courts. And so they're out looking for as many illegal immigrants as I can find to get into the prisons to make a high margin of profit. Just one example, we have some private prisons in this country, as well as the detention camps of warmer and a port head. And I think it's a very disturbing development

David Marr ([00:56:59](#)):

Often. Yeah, I would

Alfred McCoy ([00:57:01](#)):

Say that in a way, the analogy is a false one to say that the trafficking in illegal immigrants is directly comparable to the traffic and illegal drugs. Actually immigration is not prohibited it's regulated. And what we're, what illegal immigration is, is really simply people getting around the regulations of the market and they're punished as any manufacturer or retailer is for breaking commercial regulations. And if you look at the scale of problems in the irrationalities in the management of immigration, they're actually, although they are, they do produce accesses, they do produce incidents, they do produce problems. It's still a manageable problem for which there are possible reforms such as periodic amnesties or for example, in the United States Supreme court ruling that immigrants who were incarcerated can actually have access to the American courts. They are not deprived of their human and civil rights just by being incarcerated. There are reforms possible. The drug trade is not within this realm of rationality. It's not subject to such easy reforms. It is not regulated. It is prohibited and therefore it cannot be rationally managed. And what we need to do with drugs is move it from being prohibited, to being regulated, where it can be managed in a more rational way, say,

Sadie Plant ([00:58:27](#)):

Yeah, I think it's a bit more complicated than that. I do think there is a relation. I know that some of the same people are in fact involved in both trades and the trade in people has recently for many of them become more profitable than the trade in drugs. The fact is I think that although we talk about prohibition and I do too, but strictly speaking, it's also the case just as officers with people that drugs also are not prohibited. They too are regulated. They're very strongly regulated, but I mean, Australia is one of several countries which has a legitimate trade in opium. For example, we, we obviously use opium and opium, opiate derivatives in many, many medicines. In fact, it remains one of the most crucial medicines, morphine coding any number of pharmacological preparations. So there is a legitimate trade in opium.

Sadie Plant ([00:59:18](#)):

The opium trade is not prohibited. It is highly. And this is also relatively speaking the same with the trading in people. Yes, there is some possibility for people to move around the world, but basically we live in a world that is supposedly globalizing, which in fact allows for the relatively free movement of commodities, with exception of drugs, of commodities and of money, but does not align for a corresponding free movement of people. And I think it really is becoming, or has already become one of the big issues of our time. And I'm really glad it's come up here because I think it's increasingly important. And as far as the matter of prisons goes, I don't think it really the issue isn't, you know, is it the state or is it a corporation that's running the prison? As far as I'm concerned on this issue, they're often both as bad as each other. They're both attempting to control the movement of people. And I, as I say, I think it's a very big issue that that should be addressed. Maybe it could get on the agenda for two years time for the next,

David Marr ([01:00:18](#)):

Thank God. We've got a disagreement on our hands. I thought we were going to get through the whole afternoon in his cousin. Nauseatingly anonymity. Now we've got time for one more question. [inaudible]

Sadie Plant ([01:00:29](#)):

Continuing on from what you're saying about people trade I'd like to hear more about sex.

David Marr ([01:00:39](#)):

Well, I think that's a very good idea. And maybe quick on it, I'd like to hear more about six too, because a lot of people are taking drugs. I mean, one of the reasons to take drugs is to heighten the experience of sex. Isn't it? I mean, that's, that's one of the reasons why, why a lot of drugs are taken. Is that right?

Sadie Plant ([01:00:59](#)):

Well, first it depends what you're starting from. Well, I'm

David Marr ([01:01:03](#)):

Assuming we're talking about people starting from a low base. It, of course, when people are extremely reluctant to talk from personal experience

Sadie Plant ([01:01:21](#)):

Adding well, anyway, let's not go there. I think in many cases, you know, that is obviously historical relationship. If we look at the drugs trade with prostitution, the two go hand in glove in many, many cases. And again, this is not unrelated to this issue about people trafficking because not only is this, you know, the desperate attempts of people to improve their own lives, a big motivation for people to be moving around the world and to escape from the most terrible conditions often caused by the war on drugs in the first place, of course. But also there is increasingly this traffic in women and children and men used for sexual and prostitution purposes. I think something like eight or 900,000, oh, I forget the figures now, but I mean, it is a phenomenal number of people who are being moved around the world for, for that reason.

Sadie Plant ([01:02:13](#)):

So, so clearly the two do go together, but there's also, you know, on the more hedonistic side of it, I think perhaps recently there has been a tendency, not so much for people to be using substances, say like ecstasy or Coke as a enhancement for sex, but often as a kind of alternative in especially in the era, you know, when I suppose really ecstasy and that whole dance culture did coincide with a great deal of fear about aids and other sexually transmitted diseases. And I think people did begin to explore in recent decades kind of alternative pleasures, if you like, you know, where it was once sex would have been the only option on the menu. So there's a lot of interesting intersections of the two. Perfect.

Alfred McCoy ([01:02:59](#)):

Just historically in the at the time when drugs were finally fully prohibited in between 1914, and let's say the mid 1920s, both domestic in the United States and internationally through the league of nations, that, that also coincided with increasing restrictions on prostitution, the whole movement for the imposition of law of individual behavior that was applied par excellence of drugs was accelerated and applied also to sex and early syndicates in Australia and the United States combined the trafficking in drugs with prostitution. And actually in both Australia, I'd say and in the United States, lucky Luciano was a pioneer in this area. He was a major heroin trafficker, cocaine trafficker, and had about a thousand prostitutes working for him. And what, what, what if you look back the economic rationality within the syndicate of the combination of opiates with prostitution where it was several fold, first of all, it's physically demanding and degrading.

Alfred McCoy ([01:04:05](#)):

And so that you actually opiates are an industrially efficient drug for the use of prostitution, particularly women that are engaged in serial licks, multiple accidents a day and because the lesions and all, all of the abrasions that comes from that are of course, medicated by the opiates, as well as the degradation. Second of all, the syndicate could have the prostitutes addicted and get them functionally working for the drugs so that they would increase the output of the prostitutes. All right, moreover, they would expand the retail the scale of their, of their retailing of narcotics. And they got a perfect synergy between, between the sale of a commodity and labor. That was incredibly important in the early rise of organized crime in the United States. So historically was very important and the detaching of it has been the, there has been a kind of move in the last couple of decades, more to a effective decriminalization of prostitution, not legalization, but decriminalization, which has removed it from the realm of syndicates. But as long as both were fully prohibited, they remained inside this underground universe where there was a incredibly synergistic interaction that accelerated and amplified the power of organized crime and contribute to the growth of this black economy.

Sadie Plant ([01:05:25](#)):

Yeah. I was just going to say that it just, you just reminded me and mentioned that, you know, the relationship has often been so close that I think it used to be said, I don't know if it's still the case, but in many countries where heroin was widely used on the street that you could measure, the price of a wrapper of heroin would generally be the price of a blow job. Can I say that all the time [inaudible] and that, you know, there's often been this exact parallel. So if you want to know the price of one, if you know the price of the other, it's usually the same perhaps, well, I think fortunately

Nicholas Cowdery ([01:05:59](#)):

We're moving away from the criminalization of prostitution and towards regulation that while now they, the experience may be different than other jurisdictions in my state and new south Wales. That is certainly the case. And it's very encouraging to see, but in my state we also have the, what I hope is the thin end of the wedge and a safe injecting room established for heroin users. I think once these things begin in one jurisdiction, they will spread to another and just keep my fingers crossed that it will happen sooner, rather than later

David Marr ([01:06:41](#)):

On that slender note of optimism, we must have last stop now. But they'll Nick Cowdery will be speaking again. You're speaking again tonight, so there'll be lots more opportunities to pursue this while we're in Adelaide. Thank you very much. Indeed.

Speaker 4 ([01:07:03](#)):

[Inaudible].