Another word beginning with 'C'.

TED Talk - 30th June 2020.

There are less than three months remaining before the referendum on the legalisation of cannabis is to be held, yet the public are generally ill-informed on the topic. The problem is compounded by the dearth of readable reports that comprehensively cover all aspects of the issue. Accordingly I felt that the subject would be an appropriate one to re-start the TED Talk meetings after the Covid 19 hiatus.

As a lay person, little did I know that this would lead me down an ever deepening and widening rabbit hole; the outcomes of which I have tried to summarise in the attached series of slides. I have tried to apply my scepticism equally to both sides of the argument and I recommend that you do likewise with respect to anything you read on the matter. Hopefully you will however find the notes useful. (There is a plethora of statistics available, sometimes quite contradictory. Without delving into a depth that would be suitable for writing a PhD thesis, I have used my best endeavors but cannot guarantee that I have every figure or statement correct.)

The TED talks I was able to access were all in relation to experience in the United States but given that apparently NZ follows drug use trends in the USA, rather than Europe, I felt that they were relevant to our debate. The two talks, which provided somewhat opposing views were:

The War on Drugs : https://www.ted.com/talks/ethan_nadelmann_why_we_need_to_end_the_war_on_drugs?language=en

Cannabis & Commerce: https://www.ted.com/talks/ben_cort_what_commercialization_is_doing_to_cannabis?language=en

There are a number of web sites you might find interesting for more in depth information. These are (in no particular order):

The NZ Bill:

https://www.referendums.govt.nz/materials/Cannabis-Legalisation-and-Control-Bill-Exposure-Draft-for-Referendum.pdf

Guide to the Bill:

https://www.referendums.govt.nz/materials/Guide-to-the-Draft-Exposure-Cannabis-Legalisation-and-Control-Bill.pdf

The Referendum:

https://www.referendums.govt.nz/cannabis/index.html

"Binding' or not?

https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/112525322/explainer-the-cannabis-referendum-and-why-it-isnt-binding

Health and Socioeconomics:

Radio New Zealand - These interviews were recommended by several U3A members

https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/smart_talk/audio/2018734024/prof-benedikt-fischer-discusses-the-pros-and-cons-of-legalising-cannabis

https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/saturday/audio/2018749540/how-does-cannabis-use-affect-new-zealanders-health

New Zealand Institute of Economic Research

https://nzier.org.nz/static/media/filer_public/68/bc/68bc4d23-bf82-4c9e-b3ef-09d540ff1442/nzier_wp_2020-01_cannabis_referendum_paper.pdf

Royal Society of New Zealand et al

https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/what-we-do/our-expert-advice/all-expert-advice-papers/cannabis-how-it-affects-our-health/

I have been unable to find any definitive research on the actual key socioeconomic effects (i.e. positive or negative) where legalisation has already occurred other than reported decreases in cannabis related arrests overall but an increased conviction rate experienced by racial minorities, as reported in the second TED talk referenced above.

The Black Market:

https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/journals-and-magazines/social-policy-journal/spj18/cannabis-black-market18-pages31-43.html

The New Zealand Drug Foundation:

https://www.drugfoundation.org.nz/policy-and-advocacy/vote-yes/

The Green Party:

https://www.greens.org.nz/green_party_says_kiwis_now_have_clear_decision_to_make_on_legal_and_controlled_cannabis

A school Principal's perspective (see pages 4 & 5):

https://webmail.xtra.co.nz/appsuite/api/mail/CommunityCommunicationfromtheHeadmaster.pdf?action=attachment&folder=default0%2FINBOX&id=171717&attachment=2&user=5&context=2473261&decrypt=&sequence=1&delivery=view

The New Zealand Medical Association:

https://www.nzma.org.nz/media-releases/new-zealand-medical-association-and-cannabis-2020-referendum

Say Nope to Dope

https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO2005/S00015/black-market-drug-advocates-will-be-celebrating-cannabis-bill.htm

Questions you might find worthwhile asking yourself are:

- What are the problems?
- How prevalent are these problems and what are their significance?
- Would the enactment of the Bill resolve these problems?
- Would enactment produce new problems and if so are these greater or lesser than the status quo?
- Even though not an option under the present referendum, is there a better way than that presented by the Bill?

END NOTES:

(1) The crucial difference between decriminalisation and legalisation explained:

https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/93142481/whats-the-difference-between-decriminalising-and-legalising-cannabis

(2) During one of our discussion sessions the question was posed as to the numbers using cannabis in the Netherlands pre and post its decriminalisation (note not legalisation) Turns out that this is a difficult question to answer directly given the various ways cannabis has been available in the country over the past 50 years. Suffice to say that when "coffee shops" opened usage rates went up initially and then flattened out.

For more in depth information see: https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/371/ille/presentation/korf-e.htm

In Colorado legal cannabis use reportedly increased by approximately 50% in the first three years post legalisation (2014) and has since potentially plateaued. However these figures should be treated with care as there are a number of factors which may have influenced the reported usage rates.