

Crime says top doctor

It would even improve public health, he claims

By Sophie Borland

DRUG use should be legalised to cut crime and improve health, a top doctor has said.

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore, a former president of the Royal College of Physicians, suggested that relaxing the law on substances such as heroin, cocaine and cannabis would not increase the number of addicts.

This could save vast amounts of taxpayers' money, he suggests.

Campaigners in favour of legalising drugs and making them available for free on the NHS claim it would cut crime as addicts would no longer steal to fund their habit.

They also believe that it would lower rates of diseases such as HIV, as users would not share infected needles because clean equipment would be provided.

Sir Ian said he fully supported remarks made by Britain's leading barrister, who last month demanded a review of drug laws.

I personally back the chairman of the UK Bar Council, Nicholas Green QC, when he calls for drug laws to be reconsidered with a view to decriminalising illicit



Advice: Sir Ian Gilmore

drugs use,' he said. 'This could drastically reduce crime and improve health.'

Others argue that such a move would mean less chance of users being harmed by other substances taken with the drugs.

A significant proportion of heroin deaths are believed to be caused by an overdose of quinine, which dealers often combine with the class A drug to make it appear as though there is more.

But critics warned that Sir

Ian's views were 'misguided' because they encouraged drug use.

David Green, director of think-tank Civitas, said: 'Legalising drugs would simply result in a lot more people taking them.'

'The general consensus from research is that drug-taking is part of a dysfunctional life which involves crime. The argument that crime rates would go down is misguided.'

He added: 'I cannot see how public health would be improved.'

'If it is a lot easier to take substances, there would be more people on drugs and therefore requiring medical attention - so overall health rates would deteriorate.'

Anders Ulstein, of the Europe Against Drugs pressure group, said: 'Legalising drug use will not solve any problems.'

'Lots of people appear to have a very ideological stance on this without coming up with replacement methods of stopping people from taking drugs. This debate is very harmful.'

Sir Ian's remarks were welcomed by groups campaigning for reforms in drugs law. Danny Kushlick of Transform, a think-

tank which believes that making substances illegal causes more harm, said: 'Sir Ian's statement is yet another nail in prohibition's coffin.'

'Physicians are duty bound to speak out if the outcomes show that prohibition causes more harm than it reduces.'

Sir Ian made his remarks in a final email to colleagues before standing down as president of the Royal College of Physicians this month.

But his relaxed attitude on the availability on drugs contrasts sharply to his views on alcohol.

He accused Labour ministers of 'irresponsibility' for failing to stop supermarkets from selling cheap booze.

And he said the party's 24-hour drinking laws would allow pubs and bars to put profits before customers' health.

His comments on drugs follow those of Professor David Nutt last month. Professor Nutt, who was sacked as the Labour government's top drugs adviser after saying alcohol was more harmful than ecstasy, said Britain needed a radical new approach to drugs laws, which he said could include the regulated sale of some drugs.

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MOCKED by female scribes over her third marriage - to guitarist Steve Cooney - perky Irish pop singer Sinead O'Connor, 43, pictured, declares: 'I am not on the Earth to be bullied by women journalists who envy my freedom, my courage, my talent and my a**e.' Adding the afterthought: 'I have a fantastic a**e, which has been responsible for the conception of my four lovely children by four lovely men.' A 'four by four' - like Ulrika.



THE apparent indifference of wealthy Pakistanis to the plight of their homeless poor during the current floods threatens 'a bloody revolution that would harm them more than anyone else', warns a letter in Karachi's Express Tribune. Written by an anonymous businessman, it calls for rich businessmen who don't pay their taxes to each donate an initial 50million rupees, around £370,000, to start 'a fund for the Pakistan nation'.

LIB Dem leader Nick Clegg says he's 'holding the fort' while David Cameron is on holiday. Not literally, I hope. The expression dates from a military order wired by Union General William Tecumseh Sherman in 1864 to General John M. Corse at Allatoona, Georgia, during the American Civil War. His actual words were: 'Hold out, relief is coming.'

THE la-di-da actress and cake maker Jane Asher, 64, must be appalled at Howard Sounes' memoir of her ex-boyfriend, Sir Paul McCartney. Too well brought up to indulge in a kiss-and-tell memoir about their five-year romance ('63 to '68), Ms Asher - wife of trenchant cartoonist Gerald Scarfe - never discusses the matter publicly. But I expect she'll write about it one day, though. Tastefully, of course.

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Heart warning to women over red meat

EATING red meat twice a day can increase a woman's risk of heart disease by nearly a third, a study has shown.

The study found those who ate two servings of fresh or processed red meat daily were 30 per cent more likely to suffer heart disease than women who ate just half a portion.

Substituting red meat for a serving of nuts cut the risk of heart disease by 30 per cent, eating fish instead lowered the risk by 24 per cent, while swapping red meat for poultry

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slashed the risk by 19 per cent, the survey also found.

Researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, in the U.S., studied the diets of 84,136 women aged 30 to 55 between 1980 and 2006. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire saying how often they ate 116 different food items.

During the research period 2,210 suffered non-fatal heart-attacks, while 952 others

died from coronary heart disease. Study author Adam Bernstein said: 'Our study shows that making substitutes for red meat or minimising the amount of red meat in the diet has important health benefits.'

However, nutritionist Marek Doyle warned: 'There's a big difference between fresh, unprocessed red meat and something like a hamburger, which has been processed and is less healthy as a result.'

'Avoiding red meat altogether deprives us of a rich source of protein and iron.'