

Drug abuse in Britain

12 June 1999

To the editor:

I'd like to comment on the article about the Drugs Summit in Australia (<http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/may1999/drug-m27.shtml>).

The situation here in Britain is very similar with rising levels of drug addiction and also a seemingly all pervasive *drug culture* among the youth.

In my home town, Leeds, every estate or inner-city area claims to be the largest drug centre of Leeds. The drug problem is everywhere. Along with it is rising levels of crime as addicts commit burglaries to feed their habit. Most houses will have a burglar alarm and in the really bad areas ground floor doors and windows have to be fitted with security gates.

I agree entirely that the underlying causes are the hopelessness of youth, they see no other possibility of a fulfilling existence. This is also connected to the lowering of the cultural level of society and to the vacuous and dominant fashion/youth culture.

I work with ex-homeless young people. Some of them have had serious drug addictions in the past, such as heroin, and they've managed to break out of them. Drugs like ecstasy result in paranoia and depression, and the youth decide to come off them.

However, their lives still seem to revolve around drugs, albeit *less* harmful ones like amphetamines and cannabis. Going to a night club at the weekend and getting out of your head on drugs, and taking the rest of the week to recover, is the pattern of their lives, it forms the main topic of conversation. At the same time it is quite amazing that they are well-informed about what drugs do to human physiology. They know, for example, how speed or amphetamines takes all the nutrients, enzymes and substances that maintain well-being and health, and sends them in a surge through your system lasting only a few hours and which leaves you completely drained for several days. Apparently it is easy to spot a speed addict or "phet-head" by their

thin-faced, drawn appearance which is a consequence of the malnutrition induced by speed.

The use of cannabis is probably quite common among older people, even white-collar workers who feel the need for a narcotic substance to release the pressures of today's working conditions.

The so-called "drugs tsar", Keith Hellawell, appointed by the Blair government to deal with the drugs problem, also advocates the decriminalisation of drugs.

Only with the creation of a different form of society, one based on collectivism, will individuals be able to achieve a fulfilling existence independent on the chloroform of drugs.

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