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The War on Drugs: A Failed Experiment

Paula Mallea

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A criminal prosecutor discusses the illegal drug trade and the failure of the so-called "War on Drugs" to stop it.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon coined the term "War on Drugs." His campaign to eradicate illegal drug use was picked up by the media and championed by succeeding presidents, including Reagan. Canada was a willing ally in this "war," and is currently cracking down on drug offences at a time when even the U.S. is beginning to climb down from its reliance on incarceration.

Elsewhere in the world, there has been a sea change. The Global Commission on Drug Policy, including international luminaries like Kofi Annan, declared that the War on Drugs "has not, and cannot, be won." Former heads of state and drug warriors have come out in favour of this perspective. Former presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton agree with legions of public health officials, scientists, politicians, and police officers that a new approach is essential.

Paula Mallea, in *The War on Drugs*, approaches this issue from a variety of points of view, offering insight into the history of drug use and abuse in the twentieth century; the pharmacology of illegal drugs; the economy of the illegal drug trade; and the complete lack of success that the war on drugs has had on drug cartels and the drug supply. She also looks ahead and discusses what can and is being done in Canada, the U.S., and the rest of the world to move on from the "war" and find better ways to address the issue of illegal drugs and their distribution, use, and abuse.

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