

Wyoming Tribune Eagle of April 14: "Drug war? No, drug mess." Casper Star Tribune April 16: "Nixon's unnecessary war on drugs."

"Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did." So said John Ehrlichman, the former Nixon White House lawyer who served time in prison stemming from a conviction related to his role in the Watergate scandal.

"The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people. You understand what I'm saying," he continued with writer Dan Baum, who published the Ehrlichman comments in The Harper's April 2016 issue as part of a lengthy write-up, "How to Win the War on Drugs."

"We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news," the Nixon man explained in the 1994 interview.

Mr. Ehrlichman's posthumously-published confession confirms what many of us have known or suspected for decades: The Nixon Administration's "War on Drugs," unjustly prolonged by subsequent presidents, served as the means to crack down on leftist protesters and black people. Today this war against ordinary Americans rages on, with incarceration rates for black drug offenders exponentially higher than for white offenders. Along the same lines is the disparity between sentencing for crack cocaine vs. regular cocaine.

Ironically, John Ehrlichman, adviser to former President Richard Nixon, initially rejected the latter's overtures. In 1968, when Mr. Nixon first asked the young lawyer to join his administration, he heard an unflattering answer.

"You are highly susceptible to alcohol. I'm not interested in coming away from my practice and my family and going out and beating my brains out if this is going to be a problem."

When he was tired or on medication—a common occurrence—even one drink could push Mr. Nixon over the edge. Although he made a solemn promise to Mr. Ehrlichman to quit drinking, he did not stick to it for long. Henry Kissinger, who had plotted with the president to keep the Vietnam war going as a campaign strategy through the 1972 presidential race, began to refer to him as "our drunken friend."

Drinking and domestic violence are often linked, and there is evidence that Mr. Nixon hit his wife Pat on many occasions. "I'm not talking about a smack," wrote Nixon aide John Sears, quoted by Fawn Brodie in her book on Nixon. "He blackened her eye."

When someone susceptible to addiction doubles down on persecuting others for lesser flaws, it's meant to obscure his or her own problems. When this susceptible someone assumes a leadership role, look out. To win this unholy war on drugs, says Baum, our government needs to muster the wherewithal to decriminalize marijuana.

There will be problems. He offers that legal marijuana in Colorado is following the economics of alcohol: Daily smokers make up only 23 percent of the state's pot-smoking population, yet they consume 67 percent of the weed.

Of all the plants humanity has grown, none has been praised and denounced as often as marijuana. Christened *Cannabis sativa* in 1753 by Carl Linnaeus, marijuana's hemp cousin is one of nature's hardiest specimens, needing little care to thrive. It flourishes under nearly every possible climatic condition.

E L. Abel's book, "Marijuana: The First 12,000 years" is an exhaustive and inspiring tour guide. Anything anyone says or has said about hemp and/or marijuana is covered. When we arrive at the modern era, we find that lying, hypocritical politicians legislated away intrinsic human rights.

Only seven percent of Americans think the United States is winning its war on drugs. Few are interested in throwing down more money to try to win. That's according to a Rasmussen Reports poll released already back in 2012.

In March 2016, the Brookings Institute weighed in with a lengthy John Hudak essay, "The Medical Marijuana Mess." Among other people and things, the essay describes Rabbi Jeffrey Kahn and his Takoma Wellness Center, a medical marijuana dispensary located just six miles from the White House. Like many dispensary owners, Rabbi Kahn asserts that he provides his customers with much-needed medical treatment. He says the decision to go into this business was inspired in part by the suffering of his in-laws, which gave him a new perspective on pot, and a desire to help patients who wish to avail themselves of medical marijuana. Today the rabbi has patients who suffer from the same illnesses from which his in-laws died, but they find relief at his dispensary.

A follow-up column will provide further details on Mr. Hudak's findings, along with his recommendations to our government to reduce the mess he examines.