

**The Cronkite Report:
The Drug Dilemma - War or Peace
(Epilogue/Proposal by Walter Cronkite.)**

Every American was shocked when Robert McNamara, one of the master architects of the Vietnam War, acknowledged that not only did he believe the war was, "wrong, terribly wrong", but that he thought so at the very time he was helping to wage it. That's a mistake we must not make in this 10th year of America's all-out War on Drugs.

It's surely time for this nation to stop flying blind, stop accepting the assurances of politicians and other officials, that if we only keep doing what we are doing, -- add a little more cash, break down a few more doors, lock up a few more Jan Warrens and Nicole Richardsons -- then we will see the light at the end of the tunnel. Victory will be ours.

Tonight we have seen a war that in it's broad outline is not working. And we've seen some less war-like ideas that appear to hold promise. We've raised more questions than we've answered, because that's where the Drug War stands today. We're a confused people, desperately in need of answers and leadership. Legalization seems to many like too dangerous an experiment. To others, the War on Drugs, as is now conducted, seems inhumane and too costly. Is there a middle ground?

Well, it seems to this reporter, that the time has come for President Clinton to do what President Hoover did when Prohibition was tearing the nation apart: Appoint a bipartisan commission of distinguished citizens, perhaps including some of the people we heard tonight -- a blue-ribbon panel to reappraise our drug policy right down to its very core, a commission with full investigative authority and the prestige and power to override bureaucratic concerns and political considerations.

Such a commission could help us focus our thinking, escape the clichés of the Drug War in favor of scientific fact, more rationally analyze the real scope of the problem, answer the questions that bedevil us, and present a comprehensive drug policy for the future.

We cannot go into tomorrow with the same formulas that are failing today. We must not blindly add to the body count and the terrible cost of the War on Drugs, only to learn from another Robert McNamara thirty years from now that what we've been doing is, "wrong, terribly wrong."

Goodnight.
Walter Cronkite
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