in the United States. Most addicts supplied by the state now get methadone; less than 100 still receive heroin. Clinicians lean on their patients to quit drugs altogether. Meanwhile, a healthy black market in heroin has sprung up outside the legal system.

The Netherlands is also cited as having a commonsense approach. There, many kinds of street drugs are available on a quasi-legal basis at cafés in a designated section of town. These places are described as seamy and unattractive, inhabited by lowlife, not the focus of cultural attention. Although addicts from other countries are attracted, the citizens of the Netherlands have not been swept up in a drug craze, observers believe.

However, the Dutch and American cultures differ sharply, according to Peter Reuter, a researcher at the Rand Corporation. Only 6% of the respondents to a school survey in the Netherlands in 1984 said they had used marijuana in the preceding year—one-tenth the U.S. rate. But it is risky to make comparisons across cultures or over time.

Above all, it is important to be specific about which drugs are being considered for legalization, according to Reuter. For example, it would be "irresponsible" to suggest that anyone be allowed to use PCP (phencyclidine), an extremely destructive chemical that seems to trigger violent behavior in some. Yet it might make sense to decriminalize marijuana. What about cocaine, the one that is causing the trouble today?

The researchers who know cocaine best and spend the most time treating addicts seem to oppose any step that would make it easier to obtain. Herbert Kleber, founder of a treatment clinic in New Haven and professor of psychiatry at Yale University, is typical of this group in his rejection of decontrol schemes. He has called cocaine "clearly the most addictive drug that I've encountered." If it were legalized, he would expect more addiction and more crime. Because the difference between the production cost of cocaine ($3 per gram) and the market price ($60 per gram) is so great, he says, the government would find it very difficult to underprice the criminal peddlers. If the price were set high, criminals would continue to prosper. If it were set low, every shoolchild could afford it.

"We don't need a change in the law," says Kleber. "We need resources for treatment." Because funds are short, volunteers for treatment in New Haven must now wait 4 to 6 months to be taken in. Leaders of drug treatment programs say they would not be put out of business by legalization. Just the opposite; they expect waiting lists would grow even longer.

One powerful force that might bring the cocaine plague to an end, some analysts say, is the unpredictable current of fashion. Once a drug gets a reputation for being ugly and dangerous, its popularity declines—rapidly among middle-class users and more slowly among the poor.

This is perhaps what happened to the "heroin epidemic" of the 1960s, which seemed about to sweep the nation, but stabilized in the 1970s to a population of 150,000 down-and-out addicts. Surveys hint that cocaine use has peaked, too, and that the increase in cocaine demand in recent years does not represent a big increase in the number of users, but reflects a rise in the amount of drug being consumed per addict.

If it is true that the cocaine fad is running downhill just as society is mobilizing to battle it, the scenario would seem to fit neatly into a pattern described by David Musto, psychiatrist and historian at Yale. In his classic description of the boom and bust periods of drug enforcement, *The American Disease*, Musto suggests that public attitudes go through a regular cycle: experimentation and promotion of new drugs by enthusiasts, followed by widespread use and tolerance of abuse, disillusionment, and finally prohibition and sharp intolerance of abusers.

"There is reason to believe we are in a period of growing intolerance," Musto says. "Law enforcement is now the favored solution and people have given up on treatment." He thinks the public is "angry about drugs and drug users," frustrated, and out to punish. There is not much sympathy for the problems of the addicts or for basic research on addiction. Middle-class people, who are "great consumers of social attitudes and media information," have already turned away from cocaine, but the poor have not. Education, health warnings, and even police threats do not penetrate this level of society very well.

"It is very important to sustain a research program over the long term" and to support treatment facilities, Musto argues. Even though the cocaine fad may be passing, the addicts it created will be around, using drugs and needing help, for many years.

Among the critics of drug enforcement there clearly is no consensus. No one has developed, or is willing to put forward, a plan for getting from the present drug policy based on criminal punishment to a new, more tolerant system. There does seem to be a common feeling, however, that criminal sanctions have reached the limit of efficacy and that future investments will bring steadily diminishing returns.

■ ELIOT MARSHALL

Pay Cap for Grantees Has Up Side for NSF

With its penchant for keeping a grip on agency purse strings, Congress last year imposed a ceiling on what the National Science Foundation could pay a small number of high-powered outsiders it brings in for short-term duty at the agency. The limit was set at the top level for federal civil servants—currently $77,500. In the appropriations bill enacted recently, the legislators extended the pay limit extramurally, capping the salary funds NSF can pay an individual through its research grants.

NSF frequently picks up a portion of the salary of a principal investigator holding an NSF grant. The new provision restricts NSF to paying no more than its proportional share of a $95,000 annual salary. What NSF sees as the good news is that short-term employees in the foundation's home office are included under the $95,000 cap.

NSF has chafed under the salary limits imposed on these short-termers, many from high-demand fields. Those affected are called "IPAs" because they come to NSF under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act which allows agencies to engage employees of state and local government and nonprofit institutions on a cost-sharing basis for a limited period. Most IPAs come from academe and NSF says they cannot afford to interrupt their careers and relocate in Washington with its high cost of living. The new cap may crimp things for some more generously remunerated PI's out there, but it means a tidy pay boost for the IPAs.

■ J.W.

Britain to Set Science, Math Goals for Kids

The British government, concerned about the inadequate performance by school children in science and mathematics, is looking at a series of nationwide "attainment targets." In physics, for example, a child should know simple properties of magnets by the age of 7, that some materials conduct electricity by the age of 11, about the dangers of electricity by 14, and about the measurement of electrical energy by 16.

The introduction of prescribed attainment targets is a central component of government efforts to establish a national "core curriculum." As such, they mark a substantial shift from the previous tradition under which the content of school courses was left primarily to the teaching profession. ■ D.D.