



UNIT 19: SUPPORT MATERIAL

PROHIBITION: HOW TO CONTROL DANGEROUS SUBSTANCES?

Prohibition in the U.S.A.

“Prohibition” was a period (1917-1931) in the U.S.A. when it was illegal to sell any alcoholic drinks.

In the 17th and 18th centuries a considerable amount of alcohol was drunk by the American population as it was seen a safer than poor water supplies and unpasteurized milk. On average Americans were drinking the equivalent of 260 litres of beer a year.

Many doctors and ministers of religion became concerned that this large consumption believing that it damaged health and promoted poverty by leading to addiction. Many religious denominations taught that drinking alcohol was im-



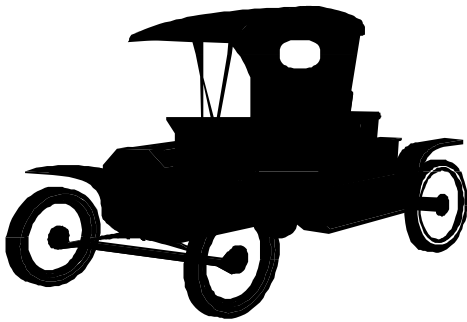
AL CAPONE (1899-1947)

Al Capone became one of the most famous gangsters of all time. In 1929, after a series of gang wars culminating in the St Valentine's massacre, he became head of the Chicago underworld. The gang was made very rich by Prohibition, mostly by supplying illegal liquor to the city.

moral, and many political reformers saw the drinking houses as centres of crime.

After some individual States of the United States prohibited the sale of consumption of alcohol at various periods during the 19th century and the early 20th century a countrywide ban on making importing or selling it was made the 18th amendment of the American Constitution in 1917.

There were many sections of society that did not support this move and especially in the big cities gangsters became very rich and powerful by supplying people with alcoholic drinks. Because they became so rich they often were able to bribe the police who acted as their protectors. Many powerful politicians were seen frequenting their bars called "speak-eases" and they also formed powerful protection for these gangsters, who often cause mayhem by fighting each other to keep control of this lucrative trade in illegal liquor.



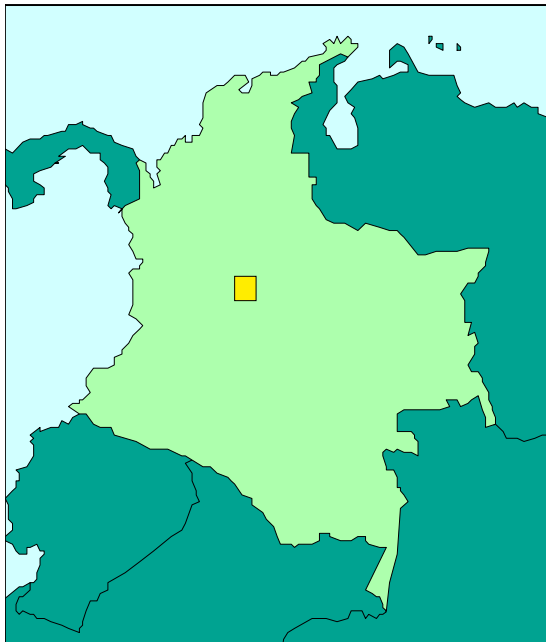
Although this "Prohibition" did reduce the consumption of alcohol it did not stop it by any means. Many people considered it a great intrusion into their traditional way of life and it greatly increase the power and wealth of the organised criminal world. Indeed it

caused much violence and corruption of the police forces in the major cities.

The amendment was finally repealed in 1933 after 16 years. Unfortunately the gangs that had grown up under Prohibition were able to adapt to other criminal activities and now they are very much involved in supplying

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS?

- Does making certain drugs illegal make it more or less easy to control them? Why?
- Do you think that certain drugs are illegal makes it less likely that you would use them? What about others?
- What are the disadvantages making drugs illegal?
- On balance what do you think ? Should certain drugs remain illegal?



COLOMBIA

Drugs do not only affect rich countries like the USA or the UK.

Columbia is an example of a country that is very badly affected by drugs. As they are addictive and illegal they fetch a very high price on the streets.

Many very poor farmers of Columbia are tempted by the

very high prices that growing the raw materials of the illegal drugs industry. Powerful gang leaders control the production and export of the drugs. They are often so powerful that normal law and order completely break down and the local population become addicted to the cheap freely available drugs. The normal economy declines and many of the population becomes addicted adding to the decline. The local government finds the burden of combating these criminals very great.

