



# Does this nation need legalization?

by Patricia Hutahajan



Unlawful possession of marijuana carries a penalty of \$1000 fine or six months in prison and up to life in prison for further related offences. The issue concerning whether or not marijuana should be legal is more prominent than some of us think.

A few months ago, a demonstration was held at Queen's Park by individuals protesting that pot should be legal. In Alaska, marijuana is legal but there are many people who are working very hard to see pot made illegal once again. So what's the deal?

Habit would have us dictate that yes, cannabis is a harmful drug and must be illegal. But is this drug really as dangerous as some experts would have us believe? What criteria is used to determine why a substance such as alcohol, for instance, should be legal and cannabis should not?

In a recent Health and Welfare Canada publication, there are several short- and long-term effects listed about the use of this drug. Some short-term effects include impaired concentration; feelings of calmness, relaxation and talkativeness; impaired

coordination and balance; red eyes; drowsiness; and impaired motor skills.

Long-term effects include loss of motivation and interest; memory and concentration difficulties; respiratory damage; and studies suggest that normal growth of a baby can be adversely affected by regular use of marijuana by a mother during pregnancy. The publication also indicates that unlike caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine, cannabis can only cause psychological dependence.

If these effects warrant the illegalization of cannabis, then alcohol should be illegal too. For that matter, so should most of the food we buy in the supermarket. Did you know that regularly ingested chemicals such as acacia gum, alginate acid, benzoic acid, BHA, BHT, caffeine and MSG (often found in dairy products, ice cream, candy, soft drinks, meat, fish and juice) are known to cause infertility, sterility, kidney and liver damage, weakened immunity, behavioral and emotional problems, brain edema, pregnancy complications, birth defects, neurological disorders, asthma, etc. The list is very long. So why are they allowed to put this

stuff in our food if it's so dangerous?

Recently, Donahue featured the topic in a debate format. Former Justice Minister Edgar Paul Boyko voiced the opinion that although he does not use any drugs himself, cannabis is a waste of precious law enforcement time and should be as legal as alcohol (thus age restrictions should perhaps apply). Many in the audience agreed with this sentiment.

Indeed, last year there were 11,471 possession charges for marijuana and hash compared to only 2,946 cocaine possession charges (Statscan). In comparing the effects of the two different drugs, many people might agree that the police should not have to waste so much time on harmless weed users.

So where do you stand on this issue? Should pot be legal? If not, why is alcohol legal? From what I've read, seen and heard, I have observed no reason why pot is or should be illegal. It has been suggested many times, that if the government could make as much money from cannabis as it does from alcohol and cigarettes, there would not be a legal issue. What do you think?

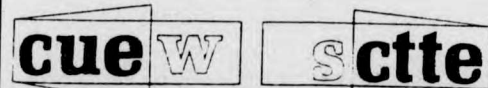
## HAS THE GULF WAR INCREASED RACISM IN CANADA?

CUEW/SCTTE Local 3 is encouraging its members and students to discuss, in class, the effects of the Gulf War on Racism in Canada this week.

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Kits to facilitate discussion have been mailed out to all CUEW/SCTTE Local 3 members.

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