

Amendments may be made to possession penalties

Since the beginning of the "drug culture" many persons have complained that the penalties for possession, and in some cases, trafficking of soft drugs has been too harsh and a good number of people will attest to the fact through personal experience. At last the federal government is taking steps to "lighten" the penalties for possession.

A bill to abolish jail sentences for persons charged with possession of marijuana and hashish was introduced to Senate this week. The, in many cases, long awaited bill would remove these two "soft drugs" from the Narcotics Control Act to the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Act. The Food and Drug Act now covers hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD and "speed."

At the present time cannabis offences are provided with a maximum of seven year prison terms for possession. Jail terms under the bill would still apply to persons who did not pay the fines.

Persons trafficking cannabis and other "soft drugs" would still be subject to prison terms but with reduced penalties.

With the proposed amendments to the Food and Drug Act, possession of marijuana and hash would no longer be an indictable offence, therefore, maximum fines would be cut in half.

For a first conviction of possession of cannabis there would be a maximum fine of \$500, however, three months in prison could result if the fine is not paid.

If convicted on more than one occasion the maximum fine would increase to \$1000 or six months in jail if it is not paid.

The present law insists on a \$1000 fine, six months in jail or both for a first offence on a summary conviction. Those found guilty for more than one offence (summary) must pay a \$2000 fine, a year in jail or both.

A conviction of possession on indictment presently can call for a maximum prison sentence of seven years.

The bill would also reduce the maximum penalty for trafficking cannabis to 10 years in jail from life imprisonment.

A summary conviction is not as serious as conviction on an indictable offence.

As it is now, all cannabis offences with the exception of straight possession result in criminal proceedings by indictment. The proposed amendments would allow prosecutors to proceed either by summary conviction or indictment for all offences except possession.

Less severe sentences and shorter periods before parole may be appealed for in the case of summary convictions.

By the new bill, if a person can prove he or she has imported or exported cannabis for his own personal consumption, it would remove the seven year prison sentence.

A politicized SRC kills quorum

By LORNA PITCHER

SRC President Peter Galoska attributes council's inability to get a quorum last week to, "some people's misplaced priorities".

Galoska explained the SRC had "two or three people too few" from the present council on Monday, Nov. 18 to constitute the quorum of twelve legally necessary to do business, thus new councillors elected in the second Fall Festival could not be seated. He said most of those councillors absent were involved in some way with the provincial election taking place the same evening.

"I think it's great that councillors took an interest in the election," he said, "but those who were working should have phoned before Monday noon, as is our practice, and told the secretary he

or she wouldn't be there, so we wouldn't have wasted everyone's time."

"As for those who didn't show because they were watching election results, I think their priorities were misdirected. They were too busy watching the election to represent the people who elected them."

Galoska added two councillors did phone before the meeting to explain they would be absent. He also said he was glad council had taken former External Co-ordinator Warren McKenzie's advice to get involved politically.

He said, "It's unfair, I think, to be too harsh on council because we could not get a quorum the week before (Nov. 11) since it was a holiday weekend. We just hoped we could get one by chance. As for the



Photo by Steve Patrquin

Senate is finally looking at the possibility of relaxing the drug laws. It won't lessen the use of cannabis but it may keep from ruining a few lives.

Our building is getting crowded

By DERWIN GOWAN

"Student Union Building Expansion must come" is the message of SUB Board of Directors Chairman Roy Neale. He addressed the Students Representative Council at

their regular Monday meeting.

With respect to office space, Neale said there are about 23 groups in 15 rooms, and more are being turned away. However, office space is not the major concern at the present time. The

main concentration is on a larger ballroom, better eating facilities, and larger meeting rooms.

Council supported Neale in principle, although the motion is not binding financially or otherwise.

According to Neale, SUB expansion has been talked about since "30 seconds after the building opened." The reason the toilets are often out of order is due to overload, he explained. The Blue Lounge is serving as a lunch-eating room, not the place to sit, relax and read that it was originally intended to be. The Dean of Students should be located up there, and, according to Neale, all student services should be relocated to the building.

Expansion has been held up so far due to lack of funds and the unwillingness of student groups to get together and decide what their space needs are. Space needs must be known before they can go to an architect.

As it stands now, the present mortgage should be paid off in ten years rather than in 1978 as originally planned, most of this goes to pay interest. The debt was reduced by about \$35,000 this year.

With expansion, the mortgage could be extended and the debt would not be paid off in 20 years. Student fees could be increased, or some other form of fund raising would have to be looked into.

On question, Neale said that feasibility studies to see how well present space in the building is being used will be done. It would be better to expand the present building than build a completely new one. This is due to the fact, said Neale, that what is liked about the present building can be retained, while the undesirable features can be changed. There is no guarantee that a completely new building would be any more satisfactory than the present one.

Communists tackle hunger

The Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) Saint John Branch is sponsoring a public meeting concerning population and food.

The discussion will include the quotation of Chairman Mao TseTung: "of all things in the world, people are the most precious..."

revolution plus production can solve the problem of feeding the population," the defeat of the two superpowers and "workers and oppressed nations of the world unite."

The meeting is set for this Sunday, 1:30 p.m. in room 103 in the SUB.