

Marijuana: two sides of story

Reprinted from
The Eyeopener

By dean graham

In a society where marijuana and its derivatives are gaining extensive publicity and condemnation through various reports and propaganada, an attempt to view both the advantages and disadvantages seems necessary.

Because of the escalating popularity and acceptance of marijuana, the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) is resorting to scare tactics in an attempt to inhibit the vast use of this "potentially dangerous drug." Unlike most reports, the following case studies have been thoroughly researched.

According to Peter Bensinger, Director of the U.S. Justice Department's DEA, alcohol is less harmful than pot. In a report, Bensinger clarified that THC, one of the fifty-off cannabinoids in marijuana, remains in the bloodstream up to 30 days following moderate use.

He concluded that alcohol dissolves into the bloodstream within hours, without leaving a trace. It has been proven that marijuana contains over 300 different chemicals as well as 59 cannabinoids. It is also a fact that traces of THC remain in the fatty tissues (not in the bloodstream) up to one month after use.

It has yet to be proven that any of the 59 cannabinoids are harmful, in any way, to body tissues. Conversely, we find that any commercially produced alcohol is contaminated with mash residues (from malt and grain), esters, and other chemicals used to obtain appealing characteristics.

Although alcohol is excreted from the body more rapidly than THC, a residue of pure alcohol remains in the fatty tissue for days, following intoxication. Alcohol is a known nerve toxin that snaps dendrites in the brain, and corrodes the entire lining of the gastro-intestinal tract.

It has also been discovered that certain types of beer contain traces of

n-nitrosamines - organic chemicals that have proved to be carcinogenic (i.e. cancer causing). That's one more known carcinogen than they have found in pot.

Bensinger later insisted that a person smoking five joints per week "will have a greater number of carcinogens in his lung tissue than an individual smoking a pack a day of regular cigarettes." This statement was derive from tests conducted by Dr. Donald Taskin at UCLA in 1976. Dr. Taskin took a group of students, in a controlled environment, and introduced them to an unlimited supply of grass. After performing several tests, he found that the students experienced a 20 per cent reduction of air flow.

In a subsequent test with tobacco smokers, the same 20 per cent reduction was experienced when an average of 116 cigarettes were smoked per week.

In another test, Dr. Taskin found that the same 20 per cent air flow reduction was experienced by students who smoked only five joints per week. It seems that this 20 per cent constant is some type of automatic defense mechanism that the body persents to combat regularly induced res-

piratory irritant, be it Columbian gold, Player's filter, or Toronto smog.

It stands to reason that, through the course of evolution, the body has developed some sort of defense against such irritants. Although none of this has anything to do with carcinogens, Bensinger must have seen it fit to add the issue of cancer to dramatize his point.

The third and final case is base upon yet another infamous Peter Bensinger quote. He claims that "studies with monkeys using marijuana have resulted in a reduction of healthy births by as much as 40% to 50 per cent. Because of this, the NIDA (National Institute on Drug Abuse) has discontinued all pot studies on pregnant women because of the potential liability.

Bensinger based these comments on tests performed by Dr. Edith Sassenrath at UC Davis. Because monkeys cannot smoke pot like people, they were given controlled quantities of pure synthesis delta-nine THC. This is an isolated substance which is not found in nature. Of course, this fact was conveniently overlooked by the DEA. Isolated THC has yet to be studied in humans because

it is too toxic. What the monkeys were given was a man-made "super dope".

As a result, 4% to 60 per cent of the primate fetuses dies before birth. Although this delta-nine THC is not a constituent of all types of marijuana, it is only one of the 59 cannabinoids. The activity of THC is modified greatly by the other cannabinoids, especially CBD (cannabdiol). In actuality CBD acts as a neutralizer.

Dr. Sassenrath commented that Bensinger's remarks were "an overextrapolation." This is the third of three cases which exemplify the ignorance and audacity of certain members of the DEA.

After closely examining the data, it remains difficult to distinguish the facts from the fiction. The purpose of this article is not to make pot smokers out of disbelievers, but to force the reader to realize that this issue should be dealt with on a more serious level. It is obvious that the media will not publish material in favour of pot because it is safer to print imaginary horror stories. This, of course, is influenced by the majority of people who stand against the drug.

You are your own judge. I simply urge you to be more critical. But remember, big lies sell copies.

Smoking pot not so risky now

by DAN CASSIDY

Smoking pot used to be a risky business.

That climate has changed over the years, partly due to the legal system, and partly due to the ever increasing popularity of marijuana (the National Organization for the Reformation of Marijuana Laws, NORML, estimates there are 2.5 million pot smokers in Canada).

The fact of the matter is that today a simply possession charge will usually result (for a first offence) in a conditional discharge pending the fulfillment of certain probationary stipulations. Different areas use different stipulations. An allotment of hour for community service used to be popular. Often simply avoiding trouble for the next six months serves the same purpose.

This is not to minimize the potency of the Narcotics Control Act, which covers marijuana use and still carries a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment for possession. In fact, the entire issue of decriminalization centres on removing marijua possession from the NCA, and thus eliminating jail sentences all together.

Perhaps it is the apparent inevitability of decriminalization (last year only the Social Credit blocked introduction of then Justice Minister Marc LaLonde's decriminalization bill) that has caused police in Ontario and Metro Toronto to try and deal with marijuana users without laying charges. It is not uncommon for Metro police, for instance, to simply confiscate the offending dope and let you walk away.

