

# Justice basis of ALCC

By Don McIntosh

Ignorance is the greatest foe of the Alberta Legalization of Cannabis Committee (ALCC), a spokesman for the group stated yesterday.

As their name implies, the 100 member organization, incorporated last May under the Societies Act, wants to legalize the use of marijuana for adults, in the same way the use of alcohol is legal and regulated.

But before they can convince the authorities: politicians, community leaders, school boards - that their argument is valid, ALCC feels it must dispel a conglomeration of popular beliefs concerning the effects of marijuana use.

These beliefs fall into three main categories, all of which find support in scientific research.

Perhaps the most erroneous and widespread belief of the uninformed anti-marijuana proponent, is the belief marijuana use leads directly to heroin addiction.

This, the so-called stepping-stone syndrome, was labeled utter nonsense by the Le Dain Commission, a thorough investigation into the effects of marijuana commissioned by the Canadian government.

The commission concluded there is no evidence to support this belief. Most heroin users had first used the drug alcohol. All had consumed milk at an earlier age.

The second belief has to do with the use of marijuana causing chromosome breakage and subsequent birth defects.

A headline for an *Annals* column in 1973 read: *It's Medically Proven Grass Can Harm Babies*. Ann based her column on a report published by Dr. Stenchever in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* which showed three times the chromosome breakage in marijuana smokers when compared to the 29 non-smokers in the control group.

An unpublished section of the Le Dain commission showed no chromosome breakages in a group of 24.

Regardless, no correlation between chromosome breakage and birth defects has been proven. Such substances as caffeine and nicotine are known to cause more breakage than that reported by Stenchever. Furthermore, a study commissioned by the government of Jamaica - a country where cannabis usage is heavy and has been extended across several generations could find no evidence of an abnormal proportion of birth defect among users.



The third popular belief is marijuana causes brain damage.

Perhaps the most publicised report of brain damage is one published first in the British medical journal, *Lancet*. It reported a study of 10 heavy marijuana users showed diminution of the brain in all cases.

It was later shown of the ten: ten were repeated users of LSD, eight of amphetamines, four had suffered significant head injuries, a number used sedatives, barbituates, heroin and morphine, and all used alcohol.

#### ALCC goals and purposes

The foremost objective of ALCC is to *change* not *break* the law. The group feels the effects of the present marijuana laws are regressive and mitigate respect for the Law in general. More than 30,000 Canadians were convicted of simple possession last year. The effects of these convictions alienate youth from authority and the basis of society.

The legalization of marijuana (in the same way alcohol is legal) would effectively eliminate a large proportion of black market trade and put a large dent in the profits of organized crime - profits which are being invested in the purchase and distribution of hard drugs, and for financing

loan shark operations, prostitution and gambling outlets.

Court time, an essential social resource, now congested with marijuana cases, will be freed to deal with violent crimes.

Before Oregon decriminalized the possession of marijuana, one third of the courts' time was spent with marijuana-related cases. This time is now open for other uses, and the Oregon police have reported more cooperation from youth.

#### Final objective

ALCC is pressing for the legalization of marijuana and would have it sold and distributed by the government.

The government would also rate the drug's potency and thereby insure the user of the proper effects (he would not be smoking pot laced with DMT, for example).

#### Present status of marijuana-related legislation

When asked how long it would take before the goals of ALCC are legislated, ALCC spokesman, Dave Hill, said two years.

"That's our most optimistic prediction," he admitted.

This fall Bill S-19 will be read. The bill would effectively reduce by half maximum fines and sentences for possession, trafficking, importation, and cultivation; and change the judicial procedure for most charges to summary rather than indictment.

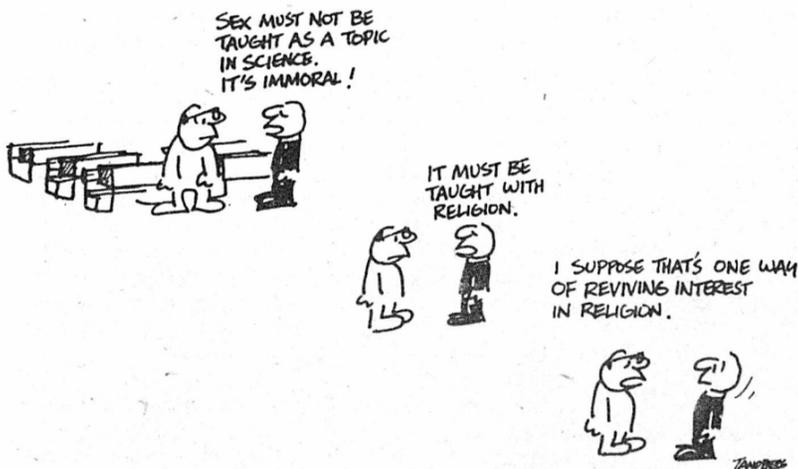
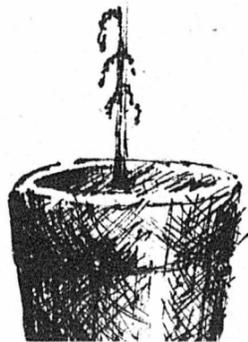
A summary conviction hands down a maximum fine of \$500 or six months in jail. An indictable conviction is much harsher and does not permit the judge to use as much discretion in determining the sentence.

A person sentenced to a summary conviction is not finger-printed or photographed; he is not listed in the criminal files in Ottawa. He is eligible to have his record removed from the active RCMP list, and from potential employers after two years. It would take five years for the same thing to occur for someone charged under an indictable offence.

#### RALLY

In an effort to inform people of the facts regarding usage and to gain support for the organization, ALCC is sponsoring a rally Saturday in QUAD from 1:00 to 5:00 P. M.

The rally will be held rain or shine, and will feature rock groups *Players' Choice*, *Hot Damn*, and sitarist *Chandra Kant*.



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IVOR DENT

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Will be on Campus TOMORROW meeting the students and answering their questions.

Come to the SUB Cafeteria at 11:30 on Fri., Sept. 30th to meet Ivor Dent and hear his views.

FEES DUE

By September 30

The last day for payment of fees is September 30th. If a student is paying by instalments (terms), the amount of the first instalment is the First Term assessment and the last day for payment is September 30th; the amount of the second instalment is the Second Term assessment plus a \$5.00 instalment charge and the last day for payment is January 16th.

A penalty of \$15.00 will be charged on any payment made or postmarked after these dates. If payment has not been made by October 15 for First Term fees and by January 31st for Second Term fees, registration will be subject to cancellation and the student to exclusion from classes.

If fees are to be paid from some form of student assistance, please refer to Section F of the Registration Procedures booklet or the calendar entitled "University Regulations and Information for Students."

Students in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research are reminded that their fees are to be paid by the date indicated on their fee assessment notice which is to be mailed to them.