

# Cannabis almost legal

OTTAWA (CUP) --- The federal government introduced legislation in the Senate Tuesday, November 26 that will make sweeping changes in the country's "soft drug", marijuana and hashish, laws.

Under the changes proposed by health Minister Marc Lalonde, the law on cannabis, (marijuana and hashish) would be more flexible and the sentences lighter.

Penalties for other offences connected with cannabis, such as trafficking, importing or exporting, or cultivation, would also be lightened.

Cannabis would fall under the Food and Drugs Act instead of the Narcotics Control Act which controls hard drugs such as heroin.

Lalonde said the present law is too harsh, inconsistent and unfair, "the law is an ass."

The proposed new law is the first legislation to result directly from the LeDain Commission on the Non-Medical Use of Drugs. The Commission recommended that possession of marijuana not be a criminal offence and suggested other penalties much lighter than those proposed by Lalonde.

The government introduced the legislation in the Senate first, instead of the

House of Commons, so it could test its controversiality. Many Liberal MPs are opposed to the new legislation and may ask for a free vote on the legislation when it reaches the House.

The main point of the new legislation is that it gives prosecutors handling drug cases a choice.

For all offences except simple possession, prosecutors will be able to initiate court action either by summary conviction or by the more serious indictment.

For simple possession, the law would permit only summary conviction.

Lalonde said the flexibility would allow penalties to reflect seriousness of offences.

The more severe penalties were included primarily for use against organized crime in the cannabis field, he said.

The penalties would be as follows:

**POSSESSION:** a fine of up to \$500, or imprisonment up to three months if the fine is not paid for the first offence; otherwise, a fine of up to \$1,000, or imprisonment up to six months if the fine is not paid.

This compares with existing penalties which range from a maximum of a \$1,000 fine or six months in prison or both for a first offence under summary conviction, to imprisonment for up to seven years.

**TRAFFICKING:** a fine of up to \$1,000 or 18 months in prison or both upon summary conviction; imprisonment for up to 10 years by indictment.

The present law provides for a maximum of life imprisonment.

**IMPORTING OR EXPORTING:** imprisonment up to two years under summary conviction; under indictment, a prison term up to 14 years and not less than three years, unless the person convicted can prove he was importing or exporting only for his own use.

This offence now carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment and a minimum of seven years.

**CULTIVATION:** a fine of up to \$1,000 or 18 months in prison or both, under summary conviction; imprisonment for up to 10 years under indictment.

The present law, which provides only for proceeding under indictment, sets a maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment. This is the only case where the new law is more harsh.

Lalonde said no provision was made for amnesty under the new legislation for those convicted of cannabis offences under the more stringent existing law.

However, he said under the Parole Act, sentences can be reviewed after offenders have served a third of the new maximum penalties rather than a third of the old penalties.

Of the more than 18,000 persons convicted on cannabis offences last year, 870 were given jail sentences. The others were fined or given suspended sentences.

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on market capacity and the channelling of student interest and capability into a job seeking function but seems to have very little to do with the educational function of the university. It would seem as well, that despite their superficially socially aware recommendations of grants to the poor student and let's give everyone a break, there would seem within a system such as the one recommended a perpetuation of class and sexual prejudices. The obvious problem will come for a large number of women students in that they will not be able to get parental support, due to the still prevalent problem of parents and institutions feeling that a woman will only get married anyway and so should not receive university

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against the recommendation because it would put a great deal of pressure on tenure considerations, since the "tenure year" would now be the last year of the normal contract.

Student Union president Dan O'Connor added that it would also mean that deferral of tenure consideration always meant extension of the contract, introducing troublesome issues into deferral considerations. Professor Heard of Political Science also opposed the recommendation, while its only defender was the Dean of Health Professions, who felt that it would let the university get rid of poor professors quickly. Not surprisingly, the recommendation was defeated, and the second contract will also be three years.

It is still expected that the Board of Governors will deal with the regulations in a week. However, if they wish to consider the document fully it may be another year before the approval process is complete. One wonders if anyone is pondering what the three years of tenure regulation hassles means about the existence or non-existence of a consensus of the Dalhousie community.

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companies and the Arab states.

The oil companies until recently had faced the problems of oversupply and too much competition. The "energy crisis" is a snow job, charged Laxer, because the companies spend more money on advertising than they do on developing new production. Their profits have soared and competition is being squeezed out.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has benefited from mammoth increases in royalties.

The Americans are not really interested in a national energy policy; Laxer accused them of building a continental energy policy, one which will include development of both Arctic oil and gas and the Athabasca tar sands.

The oil production companies should be nationalized, he said, without compensation. The oil companies long ago recovered their investments, he said.

education, and because of the means test will not be eligible for full loans or grants. It would seem then that there will be a financial block to a number of students including women and particularly the borderline middle class students who fails to qualify for grants and yet cannot get parental support. The increased attempts of the high school system to stream students away from university studies will put undue pressure on students in these groups and result in otherwise deserving students being channelled into a vocational field or straight into the job market, which with high unemployment seems a poor solution, simply for reasons of a financial nature.

One of the problems which the report seems to delegate minor importance but which would appear to be a major stumbling block is the fact that it would be necessary to convince the other provinces to go along with the scheme. Nova Scotia or even the Maritimes could not implement the scheme on their

own since the tuition would then remain much lower in other provinces and the students would naturally chose to attend there. It is imperative that the tuition fees be kept in line with the other provinces not just for the consideration of the student drain but also because of the system of allocation of funds for student loans from the federal Government. It seems highly unlikely that the federal government would be willing to drastically alter their loan commitment base for just one province. It seems equally unlikely that the other provinces would agree to the scheme, particularly those which seem to be moving in the direction of increased subsidization and more readily available university education. This consideration would seem to reduce this entire section of the report to a ridiculous state in that implementation would seem to be with so far distant that it would have to be done again anyway or an impossibility.

# Drapeau screwed

MONTREAL (CUP) - Mayor Jean Drapeau on Nov. 28 lost his two thirds majority in City Council which is required to approve the annual budget, other municipal spending and bylaws.

Drapeau's Civil Party lost one more seat to the Montreal Citizens' Movement as a result of eight judicial recounts stemming from the Nov. 10 municipal elections. Seven of the recounts confirmed previously declared results.

The MCM's additional seat came in Villeray district where the recount transformed Andre Berthelet's 52 vote defeat by the Civic Party's Charles Martel into a 34 vote majority. Of the 55 seats on the municipal council the Civic Party holds 36 and the MCM 18.

The new alignment places potential power in the hands of Democracy Montreal's lone election victor, 66-year-old Nat Aronoff.

An alliance between Aronoff and the MCM could create problems for the Civic Party in getting approval for recommendations.

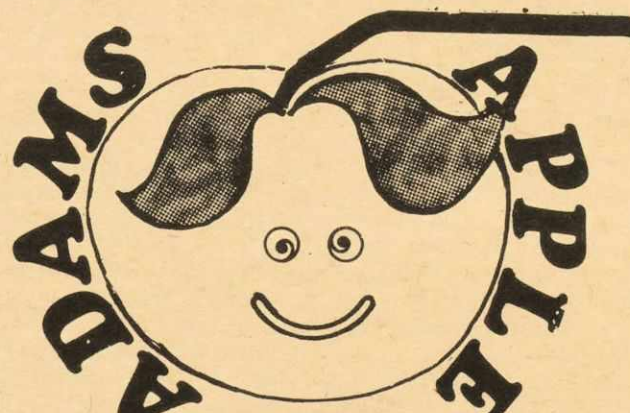
Under the city's charter some Executive Committee recommendations can be approved, rejected, amended or referred back to the committee only by a two-thirds majority of the council.

For the last 10 years the \$510 million Montreal civic budget has not even been discussed in city council.



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