

Yet soft drugs still seen as worst threat

The Seventies emerge as the 'decade of booze'

By CRAIG TOOMEY

A children's story:

Once upon a time, or so the story goes, a naked man and a naked woman sat under a tree in a magnificent garden. There were many other trees in the garden, but the two souls were attracted to this one splendid tree, which was laden with an irresistible fruit.

It was a beautiful day in the garden, but the man and woman were very bored as they stared aimlessly into the sky. Suddenly, an ominous looking serpent slid down the tree and told the naked beings that if they ate one of the exotic fruits from the tree, they would gain great knowledge and satisfaction. First the woman took a bite, then the man, and all of a sudden they found themselves cast out of the garden and into the world.

At first distraught over this sudden state of affairs, the two mortals soon realized that the fruit had had a mysterious effect on their heads. They felt a great sense of well-being and the cruel world did not seem half as bad as they imagined. The woman was glad to think she had brought more of the fruit along with her...

"I get by with a little help from my friends, I get high with a little help from my friends. Going to get by with a little help from my friends..."

People are doing it everywhere. From the Tassaday tribe in the Philippines to the revered halls of Wall Street. From the Kremlin to Buckingham Palace. They're drinking it, smoking it, snorting it, toking it, shooting it and eating it. Alcohol, caffeine, tobacco, cocaine, hash, grass, opium, heroin, benzedrine, dexedrine, prelude, methedrine, mescaline, LSD, MDA, STP, secondal, valium, mandrax, miltown, nembatal, codeine, aspirin... DOPE.

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And once it came, it was here to stay.

At the height of the "counter-culture," dope was the ultimate trip in hedonism. Disillusioned with the Establishment and all its evils, youth disassociated itself from the whole scene and tried to find a way to bring about social change. Some took to the streets and



organized themselves into a protest movement to show their dissatisfaction with the system. Others took to the hills to find enlightenment in their individual selves. Some did both. In these two movements dope played a significant role—and in a major way contributed to bringing people together to try to expose the Establishment and in creating an incipient revolutionary movement.

By the end of the Sixties, the student movement had failed, and the "counterculture," once hailed as the beginning of a new social order, had been assimilated into the system and transformed into a profitable enterprise by the capitalists of the very same system it was trying to change.

Today, while the student movement is slowly trying to get back on its feet again (in a different form from the Sixties) amidst a multitude of disillusioned and acquiescent youth, dope is as popular as ever.

According to the Le Dain Commission in Canada, and the Schafer Commission in the United States, the use of grass, hash and downers has increased quite markedly during the first years of the Seventies. On the other hand, the use of opiates, solvents and some hallucinogens, such as LSD and STP, have declined. They attribute this to the theory that drug users today are more "sophisticated" than users in the Sixties and have learnt from some of the "bummers" experienced with those drugs during the Sixties. The new "wonder drug," hailed by worshippers like Timothy Leary as the way to "self-enlightenment" and well-being has, like Leary himself, been exposed for what it really is.

Trends in drug use have greatly changed since the days of the counterculture. As the Le Dain Commission observed, the pattern these days is of multiple drug use. And not only are people mixing downers with hash, and stimulants with grass, but they're mixing everything with alcohol. "Alcohol," according to Dr John Unwin, former director of the Youth Clinic at the Allan Memorial and Associate Professor at McGill's Medical faculty, "is Canada's most serious non-medical drug use problem, and nobody seems to realize it." Alcohol is not only the most popular drug of adults in Canadian society today, but "it is also more prevalent among kids in grade 7 & 8 than ever before."

The Seventies is the decade of booze. National Statistics show that three quarters of Canada's population over the age of 15 have used alcohol; in fact, there are 20 times more alcoholics than there are opiate dependents, with more than 19,000 alcoholics being admitted to psychiatric facilities in 1971 alone.

"These frightening statistics are often completely overlooked by older people in our society," says Unwin. He says this is predictable since "youth have always been used as scapegoats for the drug problems in this society; adults never bother to look at themselves and see what drug addicts they really are."

"There's people living in the bottle."

What are some of the reasons for the upsurge in alcohol use over drug use today? To answer this, one must first note why alcohol has always been the dominant social drug in our society. The reason may be because of a subtle combination of several factors.

Firstly, and partly because of its legality, the potential effects of alcohol are known by almost everybody. People are widely aware of these effects—dulling of awareness, impairment of judgement or even loss of self-control—and so are not surprised by them. And certainly there is no recent tradition in Western culture which explicitly links

alcohol with the... Secondly, the Erving Goffman in any given situation is preoccupied with experience which just to get drunk is unlikely to imp...

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