

"Drugs attract people who want attention so ultimately they can say, 'I told you I was sick, Ma.' They are the lonely ones who really find it difficult to have a warm and loving relationship. They can't love; they go on drugs. It's really a cry 'look out I'm'drowning.'

"The inquiry was tough: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire pushing their trollies round a supermarket - unable to get through the day without their tranquillizers - had a new look at themselves and were less critical of the young people."

Looking back, Le Dain doesn't pretend that the findings of the Commission have done more than create a coming-together of the people. But that's a satisfying thought for him. He looks back on the four years with compassion and a new understanding.

Fun they missed

"It never once got out of hand. I was frightened only when we were at a hearing and this huge guy looking like Ché Guevara walked slowly up the hall towards me. I thought, 'oh-God, is this it?' When he reached the platform, he had a cigarette in his hand. He broke it in two, handed it to me, smiled and walked away."

His sympathy, too, is towards the police. "These middle-aged guys see the kids, young and beautiful, having the sort of fun they missed out on and they have to arrest them."

His own formula for living is simple: a) a challenging and satisfying job, b) marital happiness and good personal relationships, c) keeping one's head straight. He hopes his own kids won't be attracted by drugs. When his eight-year-old daughter Jennifer was asked if she would or could smoke pot. She replied: "Oh no - it would hurt Daddy's pride too much."

A body blow

The findings of the Le Dain commission seemed to hold out a crumb of comfort to the cannabis smoker with one hand and then deal him a frightening blow with the other.

The sop was to confirm the teenage belief that "on the whole the physical and mental effects of cannabis at the levels of use presently attained in North America would appear to be much less serious than those which may result from excessive use of alcohol."

But the body blow was their opinion that cannabis could damage an adolescent's maturing process.

This is because cannabis changes the user's perception of his body image and personal identity. The commissioners felt this could have a lasting traumatic impact on a 13- or 14-year-old who hasn't learned to cope with this kind of experience.

Frequent cannabis use affects short-term memory, attention and possibly academic

performance and the ability to absorb knowledge. Heavy use certainly was destructive in those areas.

And if further discouragement were needed, the commissioners found that cannabis impaired driving ability and could interact with alcohol causing more damage. And long term use could result in mental deterioration and disorder.

It could play a part in the spread of multi-drug use by stimulating a desire for drug experience and dispelling inhibitions about drug experimentations.

It was not known what the moderate use of cannabis should be as opposed to excessive, so a social policy discouraging the use of the drug use generally was recommended by the majority report.

However, one of the commissioners disagreed on this. Criminologist Marie-Andrée Bertrand rejected the majority view that cannabis could damage maturing adolescents. And she didn't think that cannabis users went on to other drugs. She felt that legalization seemed less harmful than the evils of prohibition.

More tolerant attitude

On marijuana, the commission recommended that Canada should adopt a more tolerant attitude in its laws. But they could not reach agreement on its harmfulness or on legal suggestions.

A three-member majority, including Chairman Le Dain, recommended abolishing all possession penalties but at the same time maintaining reduced penalties for trafficking, importing and cultivation.

It was advocated that there should be legal changes which would make it possible to smoke marijuana or hashish publicly or in private without penalty - but police could seize and confiscate the substances.

It would be okay to grow marijuana for personal use with no penalty, other than seizure by police if the plants were found.

There would still be penalties, but smaller ones for importing, trafficking, possession for the purposes of trafficking and cultivation of sale. However, giving small quantities of hashish or marijuana to others would not count as trafficking.

Commissioner Ian Campbell agreed with all the recommendations of the majority except on the abolition of all possession penalties.

He argued that if the government repealed the prohibition on possessing cannabis, this could only be interpreted by young people as society's seal of approval on cannabis use. He also rejected the idea that the criminal law should not be used to regulate private behaviour and morality. He felt that the use of cannabis had done real harm to many young lives and said for this reason he thought there should be a deterrent provided by legal prohibition.

The conflict in the commissioner's findings must have been read with interest by the 1,300,000 to 1,500,000 Canadians who it found have tried marijuana at least once. ♦

Crossbred sheep produce more

Lambs grow faster and ewes produce more offspring when they're crossbred. That's the finding of Dr. J. A. Vesely of Agriculture Canada's research station at Lethbridge, Alberta, who headed an experiment at the Manyberries substation to discover the extent to which crossbreeding improves lamb production.

The experiment began in 1967 and lasted four years. Four breeds were involved: Romnelet, Columbia, Suffolk and North Country Cheviot. Each year, lambs were raised from each of the four pure breeds, 12 two-breed crosses and 24 three-breed crosses. The lambs were born in the spring and grazed with their mothers until mid-summer before going to a feedlot for 75 days. Their feed in the lot was 50 per cent chopped alfalfa hay, 40 per cent barley and 10 per cent dried molasses beet pulp.

Purebred lambs averaged 52.9 pounds at weaning and 90.9 pounds at marketing; two-breed cross lambs averaged 55.2 pounds and 97.4 pounds; and three-breed cross lambs, 60.3 and 101.1 pounds.

They had hybrid vigor

"The average weaning and market weights of the two-breed crosses were higher than those of the purebred lambs mainly because of their hybrid vigor," Dr. Vesely explains. "The increased growth performance in the three-breed cross lambs was due to the hybrid vigor in the lambs as well as their mothers."

The crossbred lambs also had a better track record for surviving until marketing. Seventy-five purebred lambs, 38 two-breed cross lambs and 86 three-breed cross lambs survived out of 100 lambs born in each group.

"Twinning is another benefit to be gained from crossbreeding," Dr. Vesely says. "The purebred ewes increased their numbers at lambing by 38 per cent and the two-breed or three-breed cross ewes increased theirs by 43 per cent. The crossbred ewes also raised 15 per cent more lambs than the purebred ewes."

Crossbred ewes probably have a longer productive life than purebreds, and Dr. Vesely is continuing testing to see if this is true. "But crossbreeding cannot be practised without purebred animals," he cautions. "Pure breeding and crossbreeding have an equally important place in animal production. The decision to practise either pure breeding or crossbreeding rests with the producer." ♦