

## LAW ESSAY

### *LEGALIZATION OF CANNABIS*

As drug war hysteria subsides it becomes increasingly certain that there must be a serious re-examination of the laws prohibiting marijuana. The decriminalisation of sort drugs has now emerged as an active political issue in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France and Australia. The policies being considered range from 'decriminalization', or repeal of criminal penalties for private use and cultivation of cannabis, to full 'legalization', in which cannabis is commercially sold like alcohol, tobacco and other commodities.

One of the obvious motive behind easing cannabis away from the criminal environments is to free up police time enabled them to stamp out serious drugs like cocaine, heroine and ecstasy, and with recent figures suggesting that almost half of all youngsters have dabbled with cannabis by the time they leave school, it's no shock that cannabis prosecution accounts for over two-thirds of UK drug offences.

According to findings from a recent study by the UK's Transport Research Laboratory (TRL), marijuana appears to have less adverse impact on driving ability than does alcohol.

However, adverse effects of cannabis use include respiratory damage, impairment of physical co-ordination, reduces memory and liability to learn, and links to some mental disorders such as schizophrenia, long-term effects can include increased risks and emphysema. Cannabis dependence can occur, but is not a likely consequence of the usual patterns of social life.

Also Government would have a better money maker if it was legal to buy and sell since they would definitely have the taxes laid to it. Marijuana legalization offers an important advantage over decriminalization is that it allows for legal distribution and taxation of cannabis. In the absence of taxation, the free market prices of legal marijuana would be extremely low, on the order of five to ten cents per joint.

And according to Senator Pierre Claude Nolin, Chair of the Special Committee, "Scientific evidence overwhelmingly indicates that cannabis is substantially less harmful than alcohol and should be treated not as a criminal issue but as social and public health issue".

A new study contradicts that the idea that marijuana is a 'gateway' to harder drug use, saying that appears to have been true only for the baby boom generation peaking around 1960. However, other proponents of the 'gateway' effect posit that individuals, who smoke cannabis young age are more likely to progress to stronger, more serious drugs. An alternative explanation to the 'gateway' theory is that opportunities to use

drugs and individual inclination to engage in risky and illegal behaviour determine risk of progression to hard drug use.

Forty percent of the UK population support legalization of cannabis according to recent study by the National Centre of Social Research. This is a dramatic increase from 12 percent support in 1983, representing a growing trend in both European and world opinion towards more compassionate marijuana policy.

The use of cannabis can no longer be altogether deemed criminal as society no longer views it as morally undesirable and the harm it causes is no more than the use of legal substances such as alcohol and cigarettes. The recent talks of Parliament suggest that the government is able to see the benefits to the legalization of marijuana (assuming that the proper safe guards are controls are in place), it is still illegal for an individual to possess or sell cannabis. In doing so, an individual runs the risk of an altercation with the law an act can no longer be truly considered a crime.