

Laws harsh on 'pot' users

(This is the second of a three part series on marijuana, its effects, and the law.)

By Leland Shaeffer

Last week several general aspects of marijuana were discussed. This week's article focuses on the narcotic laws and how they may affect the student, and on several of the hidden dangers inherent in the "weed."

Every potential user should be aware of the legal aspects of the drug. The more important laws are as follows:

A person possessing marijuana may receive a fine of not more than \$1000, and can spend up to three and one-half years in a jail, federal prison, or house of correction;

Anyone (with certain exceptions including doctors and pharmacists) selling or even giving away marijuana will go to prison anywhere from 5 to 10 years the first time he is caught, and from 10 to 25 years after that (after the first offense the sentence includes no parole, suspension, or probation for at least 10 years);

If anyone, including another minor, induces a minor into taking the drug, or if he even gives the drug to a minor, regardless if said minor uses the drug himself or not, will, the first time, be sentenced to between 10 and 25 years. If caught more than once, he will then spend between 20 and 50 years (with no parole, suspension, or probation before the minimum sentence of 20 years has been served).

Accomplices beware

What might come as a surprise to many is the stiff law regarding accomplices. Anyone being present where the drug is illegally kept or deposited, or knowingly being in the company of a person possessing marijuana, or conspiring to violate the law, may be sent to jail or prison for up to five years (by law anyone receiving a sentence of two and one-half years or less will be sent to a local jail; anything over that will be referred to a federal prison). He will be fined not less than \$500 and not more than \$5000.

What the law means to a student is this. If the student is aware that his roommate has pot parties in the room or even keeps

a supply, which is never used, hidden in his desk, he is liable for punishment. Anyone knowing of the existence or use of marijuana is expected by law to report it. If he doesn't, it is considered to be a direct act of aiding a criminal, and is considered to be an accomplice and will be subject to the above law! Naturally the police will not pursue such people every time they find a supply, but if they do find out someone had knowledge they may hold him responsible.

Anyone present at a pot party, whether smoking the pot or not, and whether they even know pot is being smoked or not, will be held liable and will definitely be arrested during a raid (police are required by law to arrest everyone present). A student who innocently studies while his roommate smokes pot could be in trouble.

Parents notified

Whenever an arrest is made for any reason pertaining to drugs, the parents are immediately notified (and will probably testify in court). The subject will automatically be fingerprinted and have his picture taken. If he was just trying it out for the first time he may be put on probation for a year or so and never receive a police record. Once a person does receive the record, however, he is considered a security risk (even more so than a bank robber, because drug usage usually

indicates a weak moral character) and will find it impossible to get any job involving the federal government, either directly or indirectly (with companies holding government contracts. In fact, he will find it very difficult to find any kind of a decent job. As Detective Garret J. Flanagan of the Boston Police Department (Vice and Narcotics Bureau) put it, "A fellow may be very smart and graduate from a good college or university, but if he gets a drug record he is no better off than if he had never gone. He might just as well have stayed at home, because all the brains in the world won't help him." It would behoove students to consider this advice while making decisions concerning drugs.

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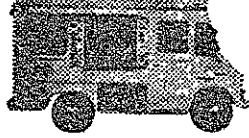
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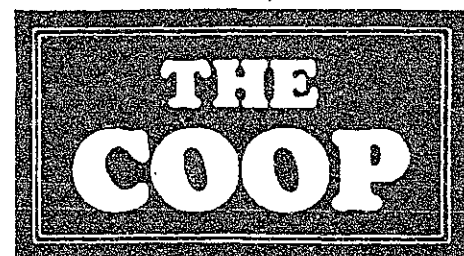
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