

# NORML. MARIJUANA DECRIMINALIZATION WITHIN REACH

by Mark Kalisky

Decriminalization of marijuana was just one of the issues touched upon in a recent Snowdon Press interview with the Canadian Co-ordinator of NORML, Wolfgang Sibert.

NORML, the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws was chartered in 1971 on a \$50,000 grant from the Playboy Foundation. It's Canadian Division commenced operations in the Christmas of 1976 and has been expanding ever since.

Vanier was one of the stopovers for the organization on a recent two week Quebec lecture and display tour. PRESS: What is NORML's current position on the marijuana laws in Canada? NORML: As is written in our statement of policy, NORML Canada supports the removal of all criminal and civil penalties for the private possession of marijuana for personal use. We feel that this is consistent with our democratic values of personal choice and individual freedom.

Recent scientific data, including studies by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Canadian Le Dane Commission show that marijuana is not harmful, causes no physical dependence and is not related to the addiction of the dangerous narcotic drugs.

We discourage the use of all drugs including marijuana for recreational purposes, and propose that a drug education campaign be set up to inform the public.

To put it plainly, the current Canadian marijuana laws are a farce. They do not solve a drug problem; they are only creating one. PRESS: Why does NORML feel that the decriminalization of marijuana is so important to the country? NORML: In Canada alone there are 136 busts a day for simple possession. I've seen young kids going on trial, who don't know what's coming off. They don't know that they could have a permanent scar on their names for the rest of their lives, and their parents are

reaking out also. They're marked as criminals just like murderers and rapists, as a matter of fact, you can get 7 years in jail for bringing marijuana across the border, but you can get off with only two years for manslaughter. These laws just don't make

Marijuana has many medical uses. Because it is a relaxant it helps relieve the symptoms of Arthritis, Epilepsy, Asthma, Glaucoma and migraine headaches.

PRESS: What has NORML done so far in their fight for decriminalization?

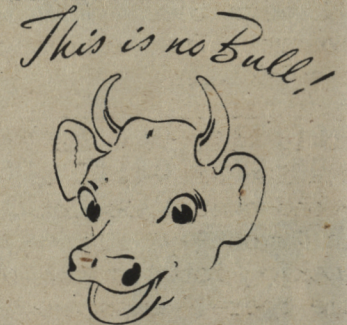
already gearing up for the next federal election. PRESS: What are the major differences and similarities between you and your American counterparts? NORML: We share the same basic goals as NORML U.S., but our laws are different over here. They have more guaranteed civil rights, and I think a more progressive attitude. They get money and free ads from Playboy, Rolling Stones and High Times, and they have numerous other benefactors.

Our basic financial support comes from the universities, doctors, lawyers, and the selling of commercial items such as stickers, buttons and "T" shirts.

In the states they have more of the 60's fighting spirit, whereas in Canada we have apathy. We'll wait for things to happen instead of making them happen ourselves.

We have tax laws here which state that if you are an organization which opposes the views of the government, you do not get a tax deduction. PRESS: Do you think we can expect to see legalization in this country?

NORML: I think we can, probably within the next ten years, perhaps sooner. We're here to make sure that if and when it does happen, it happens smoothly and properly, and that abuse is controlled.



sense. After all, who gains? Certainly not these kids or their parents or society as a whole. We're not telling them that they should go out and use marijuana, quite to the contrary, but according to the law 3,000,000 Canadians are criminals and that's creating a social hassle, a legal hassle, a financial hassle, and an educational hassle. Marijuana arrests have gone up 2,400 per cent over the past ten years.

Remember, they're not going after the pushers like they should, but the typical middle class user. It's fallen in the hands of organized crime and thousands of people are getting ripped off.

Decriminalization is for the benefit of society in general, users and non-users alike.

It has its commercial advantages too. Hemp, the plant from which Canibas comes from, can be made into valuable fabrics and paper. Farmers will have an extra cash crop and there will be extra tax money, which can be put back into drug education programs.

NORML: This year already we've initiated three court cases in Canada, claiming that marijuana is not a narcotic. In the United States we played a major role in decriminalizing marijuana in 11 states. We've been in contact with many politicians and we've received letters from Trudeau, Clark and Broadbent admitting that they favour decriminalization. We're expecting Trudeau to announce decriminalization as one of his campaign promises, which is why we're

## Fact Or Fiction???

- 1) You can have Gonorrhoea and syphilis at the same time.
- 2) Vaseline is a good contraceptive.
- 3) Irregular menstrual periods is a guarantee that you will not become pregnant.
- 4) When using the rhythm method of birth control there is 7 days mid cycle when abstinence most occur.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL  
PLANNED PARENTHOOD - 892-8141

L ( + ) E ( 3 ) E ( 2 ) L ( 1 ) : SNV