PeSt to the NEWS

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MARIJUANA

The word "assassin" was originally derived from the Arabic word "hashshashin," which means eaters of hashish. This bit of etymology tells something about the world's practical experience with the de humanizing effect on those who use hashish, one of the two products of the cannabis plant.

The other product of cannabis is marijuana. During the last few years, its illegal use has reached epidemic proportions as a result of a militant propaganda campaign by marijuana users, unsub tantiated claims that it is harmless, and frivolous statements by prominent persons. The Illinois Bar Association came out for partial legalization, and Mrs. Gerald Ford casually told reporters that she is "sure" her four children have experimented with marijuana.

Fortunately, everybody hasn't taken the advice of Illinois lawyers or followed the example of the First Family, because a moun tain of scientific evidence is beginning to accumulate that marijuana use results in massive damage to the cellular process, to the repro ductive system, and to the respiratory system.

The principal ingredient in marijuana tends to accumulate in the brain and creates the serious possibility of brain damage, distortion of perception and reality, chronic passivity, and lack of motivation. These effects are all the more dangerous because its early use is deceptive: the marijuana user is not aware that an irreversible deterioration of mental functioning has begun.

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Other scientific data show that marijuana causes genetic damage and mutation, weakens immunity to disease, has a "precancerous" effect on lung tissues, and severely damages the process by which cells are restored and replaced in a healthy body.

The evidence suggests that marijuana is far more dangerous than tobacco or alcohol. Marijuana damages the lungs and respiratory system ten times as fast as cigarette smoking. It usually takes years for a social drinker to become an alcoholic and drink himself to death or out of a job. Marijuana, however, can destroy our young people in a couple of years, before they ever have the chance to know life and the excitement of confronting its challenges.

Many state legislatures are considering proposals to legalize marijuana. This would be the greatest disservice we could do for our young people and for society. Legal respectability would open the door for marijuana manufacturers to conduct an advertising cam paign that would rival the tobacco companies, the soft drink companies, and the whiskey distillers in convincing the unsuspecting consumer that their products are a positive good.

If we legalize marijuana or remove penalties for its use or possession, hundreds of thousands of young people who have refrained from using it will be tempted to try it. Like Russian roulette, they might get by safely with one casual experiment; but then, again, they might not.

There is **NO** argument FOR marijuana. The myth of harmlessness propagated eight years ago at Berkeley has been completely disproved. In the opinion of many scientific experts, marijuana is actually [11]the most dangerous drug with which we must contend today."

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