

Student Essay on Canadian Law and the Question of Marijuana

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Essay

"Canadian Law and the Question of Marijuana"

In Canada, it is a criminal offence for the possession of any drug. I think it should stay this way. The Canadian Government should not decriminalize marijuana because decriminalization would lead to more users. If small possession of marijuana became only a "ticketing offence rather than a crime punishable in jail" (Justice Minister Martin Cauchon), more people would use it, use it more often, and users would also start at a younger age.

There are many reasons why we should not take steps to encourage the use of marijuana. Heavy marijuana users do badly at work, may drop out of school, and may develop psychiatric problems in the future. While no one can die by smoking too much marijuana, as a person could by taking too much alcohol or hard drugs, chronic use can cause cancer, and users are more likely to take risks while high, which could lead to death. Marijuana also impairs short-term memory, learning ability, and intelligence. By decriminalizing marijuana, the Canadian Government would be sending the message that it is okay to smoke marijuana and that marijuana is harmless. Therefore users would start at a younger age, and other teens would be more likely to smoke up as well, believing that it is safe and knowing that they would only face a small fine if caught. But, as David Griffin of the Canadian Police Association points out, "there is no such thing as safe use of illicit drugs, including marijuana."

Another strong point against the decriminalization of marijuana is that marijuana is a "gateway drug." This means that once a person gets use to smoking marijuana and the things that come along with it, such as lying, cheating, stealing, and participating in criminal behaviour, experimenting with harder drugs and traveling further down the criminal path is likely. Studies have proved that most hard drug users begin by taking marijuana and alcohol. Once the highs of marijuana begin to wear off, users may turn to harder drugs to find more stimulation, and to get the high they need.

The negative results of the decriminalization of marijuana would definitely outweigh the positives. The Canadian Government should maintain a firm stance on the issue of marijuana, and should continue to take measures to detour teens from marijuana use, rather than promoting it.

--SQ 2005 Grade 10 Civics