

MARIJUANA



A marijuana party on Chicago's South Side. Behind dark glasses are hidden droopy eyes. The room is filled by a sweetish odour

A special investigator goes to a reefer party and reveals what happens when the guests become "high" from the thin, white cigarettes. Reefer smoking in the United States is still rising, while in this country, prosecutions have increased twenty-fold since the war

by **ROBERT LUCAS**

War On The Weed In Britain

TO exaggerate the amount of reefer smoking in Britain is as foolish as to ignore its existence. Marijuana does enter the country illegally, it does ensnare weak-willed adolescents who "will try anything once," it can be bought for seven and sixpence a cigarette. But customs men maintain their strict supervision of seaport smuggling, and C.I.D. men keep a close eye on the known haunts of addicts. This is the position in the "dope war":

Insidious Danger From Abroad

Marijuana is cheap. Though hard to cultivate here, it grows wild abroad and needs little preparation before being brought in.

Prosecutions for unlawful importation or possession have increased twenty-fold since the end of the war.

It finds most of its victims among the young. When a London dance club was raided, all but one of ten men (nine of them white) who possessed the drug were under thirty.

Smoking reefers may lead to a craving for other, more dangerous drugs such as heroin and opium.

Crime—even murder, is likely through the vicious influence of or desire for marijuana. Victims are put at the mercy of unscrupulous pedlars who will bleed addicts of all their money.

Unlike opium smoking, now confined—in so far as it still exists—to seaports, reefer smoking is spread over the country.

There is no compulsory treatment of addicts in Britain, and no State institution specializing in the problem, but some public hospitals have reefer smokers undergoing cures among their patients.

FOR centuries, ever since the narcotic properties of the hemp plant were discovered in the Far East, marijuana has meant money and misery. Money for the soulless syndicate that peddles the drug; misery for the millions of misguided men, women—and children—who smoke it. It is the profitable product of a worldwide traffic. In the Middle East they call it hashish; in India it is ganja; in America it is known variously as muta or muggles, grafa or gauge, tea, grass, hay, pot or just plain reefer.

Armed with a notebook of facts and enough cash to "grease" my way past closed doors, I went to a reefer party. I had made up my mind to smoke one—no more—cigarette. The party was held in a private flat. The landlady was a jovial, friendly woman who promised us "a real great time." Half a dozen people were present, all neatly dressed and sitting around the big parlour, chatting quietly. On a table were two huge platters overflowing with sandwiches; whisky stood nearby. A stock of records were piled on a stand next to the radiogram and I could see several pairs of dark glasses lying around.

The landlady bounced in and held a match to the tip of a thick, black stick of incense. Then she put a few records on the machine. On the divan sat two dapper young fellows staring at the coffee table. It was then I noticed a handful of thin, white cigarettes in a clean ashtray. Nonchalantly, one of the men reached out and picked up one of the reefers.

It was smaller than a regular cigarette, tightly rolled at each end. I watched him flick open one end with a well-manicured thumbnail. Carefully he lit it and drew in a lungful. Again he inhaled deeply, then passed the "stick" to the man next to him.

The hostess, who already had on her dark glasses, spent quite a bit of time with me. She told me that she had been on reefer parties with "lots of big shot" musicians and other entertainers. She confessed that she had been smoking for several years and insisted that it was not nearly as demoralizing or degrading as liquor. "I wish I had known about this stuff years ago," she confided. "All the big mistakes I've made in life happened while I was drunk off whisky. I've seen so many people get loud and wrong when they're drinking. Every person in here is having a fine time, but they won't get rowdy."

The two men on the divan were smiling blissfully, oblivious to the others in the room. "Look at those two," Miss — told me. "They're high already. They're wiggling each other now." She explained that "wiggling" was the art of making witty cracks, each person topping the other. One of the girls was nibbling at sandwiches. "That child really eats when she gets high," the landlady laughed. "Of course, you get awfully hungry, that's why I brought food up here—to save all that running back to the kitchen."

I talked with another of the girls present. She was a nice-looking redhead who kept her dark glasses on

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In smoking reefers, the cigarette is held so that it barely touches the lips. Smokers inhale deeply, drawing in air at the same time as the smoke

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In depression days they cost threepence in U.S.; the price over here, 7s. 6d.



Smokers usually drink lots of "coke" and eat plenty of fruit at parties

throughout the party. I noticed that she had not yet become as exuberant as the other smokers. But she assured me that she was "high," too. She said she had "tried everything," and that reefers were least harmful of all.

Soon the sandwiches had disappeared and the liquor level had dropped several inches. There was a lot of laughter, none of it boisterous, and one couple started dancing. But the leisurely dance they did was not the type seen at liquor parties where the couple is clutched in a stranglehold. They didn't even embrace, but did a slow-motion jitterbug step called "bopping."

Someone offered me a cigarette. I shook my head. "You might as well get your stick of pot," the landlady advised. "You'll get contact-high anyway." Holding it gingerly between thumb and forefinger, I puffed a couple of times. "That's not the way," someone called. "Do it like this." He pursed his lips, put the cigarette to his mouth and showed me how to suck in the smoke, drawing in air at the same time. The air in the room was thick and acrid; it irritated my eyes. Gradually the lids started drooping, my brain drifted farther and farther away from my body and I felt aloof, detached from what was going on around me. I was talking garrulously, but I found it hard to follow the conversation. I'd wander around verbally before drifting back to the point. I laughed without knowing or caring why.

Suddenly I was hungry. I wanted to eat something, anything. The hostess brought in huge bowls of red-hot chili and I cleaned mine out in nothing flat. Then she brought us each a bottle of "coke." "Better drink it, honey," she told me. "You'll feel better."

I was still high when I said good-

bye to them several eternities later.

It was almost a week before I felt normal again.

Songs have been written about reefers, and the public is blissfully unaware of the meaning or origin of the lyrics. In 1928, Louis Armstrong recorded a jazz classic called "Muggles." It is a collector's item today. Later, Stuff Smith wrote "If You're a Viper," in which the vocalists "dream about a reefer five feet long," and Don Redman composed the juke box favourite "Chant of the Weed." A few years back, when the song "La Cucaracha" was popular, millions of Americans sang a tribute to marijuana without even knowing it.

Perhaps it is the connection of the jazz world with marijuana that has led to the mistaken belief that there is some special link between the

"weed" and Negroes. In Chicago, two coloured officers work in the narcotic detail under Sergt. John F. Mangin. It was Mangin who exploded the myth that there is a Negro monopoly on reefer smoking. "We find it just as often on the near North Side as we do on the South Side," he reports.

One of the best—and certainly the most lyrical—description of what marijuana does to you is given by Mezz Mezzrow in his book, *Really the Blues*. He writes: "When you first begin smoking it you see things in a wonderful, soothing, easygoing, new light. All of a sudden the world is stripped of its dirty grey shrouds and becomes one big bellyful of giggles, a spherical laugh, bathed in brilliant, sparkling colours."

"Nothing leaves you cold any more; there's a humorous tickle and

great meaning in the least little thing, the twitch of somebody's little finger or the click of a beer glass. All your pores open up like funnels, your nerve-ends stretch their mouths wide, hungry and thirsty for new sights and sounds and sensations; and every sensation when it comes is the most exciting one you've ever had. You can't get enough of anything—you want to gobble up the whole universe just for an appetizer. Them first kicks are a killer."

That's one version, of course.

I can still remember that certain moment after taking several drags when I just couldn't catch my breath. I couldn't drag enough air into me, it seemed, even though the air poured into my lungs in huge gasps that wracked my chest. Then the gasps for air turned to sobs, and I could feel myself weeping hysterically. I know it was silly, crazy, but I couldn't stop. Finally, after a seemingly endless cry, I settled back exhausted.

Armed with this first-hand experience about marijuana smoking, I set out to learn the medical facts about the drug. Marijuana has a long history that reaches back into religious rites. The stimulant not only prepared a bashful bridegroom for marriage at the wedding feast, but also made warriors eager for battle after the frenzied war dance.

Whether or not one-half of all jazz musicians "blow hay," as has been claimed, more than one "name" musician has had his share, and many a great and would-be-great jazz, blues, and bebop artist must have his "stick of pot" before going onstage. The boys in the band advance two reasons for smoking reefers:

1. The terrific strain of playing high-tension jazz and bebop night after night with no let-up

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Dope Gang Lines Up for interrogation at San Francisco police headquarters. "Reefer" pedlars have been jailed in the city for up to six years; many avoid detection



calls for superhuman nervous energy and physical stamina. Liquor may serve as a stimulant for a while, but soon fails to give the jazzman a lift; and, besides, whisky dulls the brain instead of making it razor-sharp, as "tea" allegedly does.

- 2. There is a widespread belief that a musician who is high off "Mary Warners" plays more brilliantly. High, screeching notes on a trumpet or wild, uninhibited runs on a saxophone are easier to execute, they say.

However, tests conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service showed that musical ability was not improved, although most patients under observation thought so.

First objective report on reefers came from a special committee appointed by the late Fiorello H. LaGuardia, then mayor of New York City. Its verdict: the evils of the drug were highly over-rated. Tests conducted subsequently at the U.S. narcotics hospital at Lexington, Ky., bear out this conclusion. Taking six addicts, government doctors supplied them with up to seventeen cigarettes daily for a period of thirty-nine days. The researchers noted that the first flush of exhilaration wore off in a few days; the patients calmed down, began to complain of headaches, irritated throats, and painfully swollen eyelids. None grew violent, but were unco-operative when subjected to long, tedious physical and mental tests. The report of the study also showed that:

Marijuana does not affect the senses of touch, sight and smell.

Reefer smoking over a period of time does not become habit-forming.

Inhibitions are broken down, but normally law-abiding persons will not commit crime under its influence.

"Tea" will induce sex fantasies by dulling the higher nerve centres; may result in perverse activity.

Reefers, as well as any other drug, are used by persons, regardless of race or colour, to escape the realities of life, to solve the problems created by the economic and social pressures of modern, jet-speed civilization. Floating high on his personal cloud of marijuana smoke, the down-trodden, disillusioned, dejected individual can look down on the tough, competitive world and feel safe, secure and superior—for a while.

Dr. J. D. Richard, formerly head of the U.S. hospital at Lexington, concludes:

"The real harm that results from the chronic use of marijuana is the development of the habit of escaping all discomfort and all unpleasantness by the use of some substance. . . . This may change an energetic, efficient, valuable member of society into a regressed, valueless person who has side-stepped life. He may not be a danger to his group; he certainly does it no good.

"Such an effect—the disintegration of a personality—is worse than death; a substance able to produce it should be avoided as one would avoid the plague."

[*.* This article was written by Robert Lucas of the American magazine "Ebony."]

Warning Of "Devil's Weed"

First British showing of "Devil's Weed," which must be passed by local councils, is in Liverpool this week. It stars Lila Leeds, Hollywood actress who went to prison as the result of a reefer party



In an outbreak of reefer smoking which sweeps Los Angeles, a new victim (Lila Leeds) makes a fateful experiment, hard to go back on



Secret deals with dollars and the weed are made in cafés and bars



Weakness of will put her behind bars. Finally she helps the police