



The United Church of Canada General Council

GC30 Use of Illicit Drugs (1984U734)

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WHEREAS the use of illicit drugs continues to be a serious problem of epidemic proportions among our youth; and

WHEREAS marijuana and the other cannabis products are the major entry drugs into the drug culture and drug dependence; and

WHEREAS the adverse health effects of marijuana use for youth as outlined in the Department of National Health and Welfare's "Stay Real" (Published March, 1983) and the Addiction Research Foundation's "Marijuana: Answers for Young People and Parents" (Published January, 1984), are very serious; and

WHEREAS changes in the marijuana legislation should produce a new law that will reinforce drug education, counselling and treatment problems; and

WHEREAS the new marijuana law should reinforce the positive and preventive role of parents in working for a drug-free youth; and

WHEREAS the United Church of Canada has a responsibility to its youth and their parents to communicate a clear position in the issue of marijuana legislation:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a letter be sent to the Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Justice, and leaders of the opposition, endorsing the letter of November 1, 1983, signed by Alcohol and Drugs Concerns Inc., Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Institute for Guardianship, Ontario Trustee's Council, Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Ontario Teacher's Federation, Ontario Secondary School Headmasters' Council, Parents Against Drugs, Ontario Principals' Association and Council on Drug Abuse-which letter includes the following suggestions:

1. There must be a court appearance.
2. An administrative record of convictions must be kept so that second and subsequent offences can be treated more severely than the first.
3. The administrative record of (2) above should be deemed not to be a criminal record.
4. There need not be the possibility of a jail term for first offences.
5. For penalties, there must be graduated minimum-maximum ranges for the first and subsequent offences, with the result that absolute and conditional discharges should not be available even for first offences.
6. With regard to penalties for subsequent offences beyond the first, there should be the possibility of a short jail term to help reinforce the seriousness of the offence.
7. Cannabis should be transferred from the narcotic control act (it is not a narcotic) to a new act, preferably one covering all dangerous drugs; perhaps to be called, "The Dangerous Drugs Act."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the 30th General Council commend to the Division of Mission in Canada the responsibility to continue the important work being done in this area.

GC30 1984 ROP, pp. 102, 531

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