



“Pot Is More Dangerous than LSD or Heroin” - Liberal UK Newspaper Apologizes for Efforts to Legalize Cannabis

25,000 of 250,000 schizophrenics in UK could have avoided affliction if they had not used cannabis says psychiatry prof

By Meg Jalsevac

ENGLAND, April 2, 2007, (LifeSiteNews.com) – The Independent on Sunday, a British newspaper notorious for its vigorous **efforts to persuade the British government to decriminalize marijuana, has issued an apology for its previous position and announced** that, due to new evidence concerning the dangers of cannabis, **it will cease advocating decriminalization of the drug.** This latest development should give serious pause to efforts in Canada, the US, Mexico and other nations attempting to legalize marijuana use.

On March 18, The Independent published an article by writer Jonathon Owen in which Owen listed some of the more detrimental effects of pot use and informed readers the newspaper would no longer continue its campaign to decriminalize pot. Owen’s article, entitled “Cannabis: An Apology” lamented the newspaper’s previous decriminalization efforts and began with the subtitle: “In 1997, this newspaper launched a campaign to decriminalize the drug. If only we had known then what we can reveal today...”

Owen proceeded to summarize some of the newest data recently publicized in Britain on cannabis and the shockingly high numbers of users who are facing devastating consequences.

Citing statistics released from the National Treatment Agency, Owen revealed that the **number of young people under the age of 18 who sought drug treatment for an addiction to pot almost doubled in a year’s time - from 5,000 in 2005 to 9,600 in 2006. 13,000** adults also sought similar treatment for addiction to pot.

The article claimed that the cannabis that is smoked in today’s day and age, referred to as ‘skunk’, is many times stronger than the pot of the free-wheeling 1960’s. Skunk seeds are easily accessible to anyone online where the potency of the drug is revealed by its nicknames which include AK-47, White Widow and Armageddon.

According to a separate Independent article written by Antonio Maria Costa, the executive director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “The cannabis now in circulation is many times more powerful than the weed that today’s ageing baby-boomers smoked in college. In the flower-power era, the concentration of THC, as the main psychoactive substance in cannabis is known, was typically 2 or 3 per cent. Present-day **cannabis can contain 10 times as much.**”

Owen referred to new data that asserts pot, in its present ‘skunk’ form, is considered **more dangerous than heroine or LSD.**

Robin Murray, professor of psychiatry at London’s Institute of Psychiatry, says that, in his estimation, at least **25,000 of the 250,000 schizophrenics in the UK could have avoided the affliction if they had not used cannabis.**

Owen identified several individuals who, along with The Independent, had previously campaigned for the decriminalization of pot but who now acknowledge, due to recent medical data, that key elements of their decriminalization arguments were flawed.

Professor Colin Blakemore, chief of the Medical Research Council admitted **“The link between cannabis and psychosis is quite clear now; it wasn’t 10 years ago.”** Conservative Party leader David Cameron has

abandoned his efforts to lighten penalties for marijuana and is instead working to have stricter laws and enforcement efforts implemented.

Costa condemned supporters of legalization saying that they “would have us believe that cannabis is a gentle, harmless substance that gives users little more than a sense of mellow euphoria and hurts no one else.”

“Evidence of the damage to mental health caused by cannabis use - from loss of concentration to paranoia, aggressiveness and outright psychosis - is mounting and cannot be ignored. Emergency-room admissions involving cannabis are rising, as is demand for rehabilitation treatment.”

Professor Neil McKeganey, from Glasgow University's Centre for Drug Misuse Research cautioned, “Society has seriously underestimated how dangerous cannabis really is. We could well see over the next 10 years increasing numbers of young people in serious difficulties.”

The alarming data being released by Britain's top minds is mere confirmation of data from previous studies such as a 2005 study at New Zealand's University of Otago which revealed that **pot smoking can raise the risk of a mental illness by 50 percent.** Researchers at Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland, revealed in 2004 that marijuana use can also lead to infertility in men. Long known as a ‘gate-way drug’, marijuana is also well known to lead users to more and harder drug use.

In recent years, several countries have been vigorously debating whether to legalize marijuana and other drugs. Under the rule of former Canadian Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Paul Martin, the Liberal Party pushed for several years to have pot legalized in Canada, despite a Canadian Supreme Court ruling that declared it within the federal government's jurisdiction to instead outlaw it. Some Canadians thought legalization to be so essential that they formed a political party called the Marijuana Party with the express goal of having the substance legalized.

As previously reported by LifeSiteNews.com, Focus on the Family Canada research director, Derek Rogusky condemned the Liberal Party's efforts to decriminalize marijuana. Rogusky pointed out that decriminalization in fact leads to greater cannabis use.

In the Netherlands marijuana decriminalization was accompanied by large increases in the number of users, particularly among youth. From 1984 to 1992 the rate of cannabis use among students increased by 250%. **Rogusky added that adolescents who use marijuana are 85 times more likely to begin using cocaine than teens who have never smoked marijuana.**

In April of 2006, newly elected Conservative Prime Minister Steven Harper dropped the Canadian legalization initiative.

Just a month later, Mexican Prime Minister Fox rescinded statements issued from his office which initially seemed to indicate his approval of drug legalization. Fox later refused to sign a bill into law which would have legalized marijuana, heroine and cocaine in specific quantities and instead announced, “In our country the possession of drugs and their consumption are, and will continue to be, crimes.”

Canada's National Post newspaper vehemently condemned Fox's decision insinuating that political leaders in Mexico and Canada were mere pawns being manipulated by the US. The Post denounced the decisions to leave cannabis illegal saying that to do so was merely yielding to the “war on drug-style hysteria which dominates U.S. drug policy.”

Another National Post writer, Alan Young went even farther and ripped into the Conservative Canadian leader and his policies – accusing the government of “rewriting history” and causing “millions of people to suffer needlessly”. Young ridiculed Harper's stance on marijuana saying, “Only in the world of science fiction can a

plant become public enemy number one. But the oracle has now spoken, and Canadians will probably have to endure another decade of a misguided drug strategy that converts cannabis consumers into common criminals.”

Young voiced his relief that a medical exemption for marijuana would remain in the Canadian criminal code. Contrary to the scientifically proven data quoted in Owen’s article, Young emphatically claimed “We know pot works and we know it has a high margin of safety, but we don't really know how it works.”

Young blasted governments for disregarding or “even hiding” data that would prove the effectiveness of marijuana in health care but heralded Canada as the future of medical marijuana as “we are the only country in the world where patients have a constitutional right to use marijuana as medicine, and where the government has a constitutional obligation to produce this medicine or to facilitate reasonable access through other channels.”

Interestingly, at the end of Mr. Young’s article full of encouragement for the broad use of medical marijuana and expostulation on its benefits, he admitted that he is, in fact, a shareholder in Cannaset Therapeutics, a for-profit company dedicated to the research and development of medical marijuana.

Read the full Independent article with links to further coverage of the issue:
http://news.independent.co.uk/uk/health_medical/article2368994.ece

Read Previous LifeSiteNews.com Coverage:

Mexican President Fox Reverses Decision to Decriminalize Marijuana, Hard Drug, Possession
<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2006/may/06050402.html>

Canada Conservative Government Scraps Plan to Decriminalize Marijuana Use
<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2006/apr/06040401.html>

Smoking Pot Doubles Mental Illness Risk
<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2005/mar/05030102.html>

Further indications of the trend in Canada were shown today in a full-page opinion piece in the National Post advocating the legalization of marijuana.
<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2006/jul/06072707.html>

Marijuana in Canadian Drugstores by 2006
<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2005/sep/05092202.html>

Prime Minister Martin To Re-Introduce Marijuana Decriminalization Bill Without Changes
<http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2004/jan/04010608.html>

URL: <http://www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2007/apr/07040203.html>