

Dope Penalties Reduced Under New Bill

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As prematurely, but accurately reported in our last issue the Michigan House approved a bill June 19 lessening the penalties for possession of two ounces or less of marijuana. There were only three dissenting votes on the bill that would make possession a misdemeanor rather than a felony.

Possession of over two ounces or sales would continue to be a felony crime, but with lessened penalties. The maximum penalty under the new law would be ten years rather than the current 20 year minimum for sales. Legislators expect an increase in sales conviction as a result.

Rep. Dale Warner, R-Eaton Rapids, sponsor of the legislation, said the two-ounce cutoff point was recommended by the state mental health Department. Warner originally opposed such a limit but accepted it to win support needed for passage.

He chaired a special legislative committee that studied drug use and held hearings around the state including in the Warren-Forest area at the old Trans-Love Energies commune on Second and Forest.

The bill which has the support of Governor Miliken will go on to the state Senate for approval there.

Other means of undercutting the state's barbaric narcotics law have been taken by several Detroit suburbs. Under current state law all drug offenders are charged with a felony unless local ordinances provide otherwise.

Dearborn city councilman Van Mericas has introduced an ordinance that would charge first-time drug offenders with a misdemeanor punishable by a 90 day jail term. Livonia and Berkley have similar laws on their books. However, don't go running out there to smoke dope openly. The ordinances give local police the option of whether or not to prosecute persons under the Michigan felony statute.



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