

The Great Reefer Raid

The Way It Really Was

Fifth Estate Collective

1967

On Tuesday night the 24th of January 56 Detroit citizens were arrested and held at least overnight in the City Jail. Most of these arrests—43—were entirely illegal and unconstitutional, and there is considerable doubt as to the legality of the arrests of the 13 people who were subsequently charged with selling and / or dispensing (giving away), and/or possessing, varying quantities of marijuana.

The daily “newspapers” played up the fact that some of those arrested are connected with the Detroit Artists’ Workshop, and hailed the fiasco as a “campus dope raid.” As reported in the last issue of this paper, the whole 22-man Detroit Narcotics Squad, plus 17 assorted other police agents (including State Police, FBI “men”, one FDA bureaucrat, etc,) took part in the planning and implementation of the “raid,” but there was no “dope” involved (except, allegedly, in one case not connected at all with the others except by the police and “newspapers”) and a negligible amount of marijuana. Incidentally, police reports seem to show that no LSD was confiscated.

These are the facts: The police had an arrest warrant for John Sinclair, who they termed the “leader of the city’s marijuana addicts,” which charged him with GIVING AWAY TWO MARIJUANA CIGARETTES on the 22nd of December, 1966. A warrant for the arrest of Donald Moye and Marlene Croghan, charging them with the SALE AND POSSESSION OF 381 GRAINS (ONE OUNCE) OF MARIJUANA on the 30th of December 1966, had also been issued by Recorder Judge DeMascio. On the strength of these two warrants 34 people were arrested—at 4857 John Lodge (15 people, including Sinclair and Moye), at 4867 John Lodge (4 people, including Magdalene Sinclair, who was charged two days later with POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA as a result of an obviously illegal search and seizure proceeding which allegedly turned up a miniscule amount of the herb), and at 4825 and 4827 John Lodge (15 people, including Marlene Croghan, named in a warrant, and Ron Frankenberger, who was charged two days later with Mrs. Sinclair for POSSESSION OF MARIJUANA).

There were no search warrants issued or presented, yet these four locations, and all the people in them, were searched without cause, and the people there—all of them—held overnight in jail. In each case the warrants dated back a month or more. The police were licensed only to arrest John Sinclair, Donald Moye, and Marlene Croghan—all other arrests were illegal, including those of the two people later charged with possession of marijuana as a result of the illegal action.

Fourteen more people were arrested at 647 West Forest, where the police had warrants only for MICHAEL KNIGHT, SANFORD WEINSTOCK, and NORMAN WEINGARDEN.

Weinstock was charged with SELLING AND / OR DISPENSING, AND POSSESSION OF, between 3 and 4 GRAINS OF MARIJUANA (less than one joint), and Knight and Weingarden were charged on one warrant and SELLING AND / OR DISPENSING, AN POSSESSION OF, MARIJUANA and an almost equally negligible amount. At the Forest address 11 more people were illegally searched, arrested, and detained overnight. Magazines, books and posters were also seized by police there, without a warrant.

RALPH GREENWOOD was arrested, along with two companions for whom. no warrants had been issued, on Calumet and charged on an arrest warrant with SELLING AND / OR DISPENSING, AND POSSESSION OF BETWEEN ONE AND TWO GRAINS OF MARIJUANA (almost enough for a “roach”).

These are the people who were arrested in the “raid” who were connected with the Artists’ Workshop before the 24th of January. Since then, JOHN NAGEL, who was arrested on a warrant independent of the other people (as were Charles Scruggs and Penny Pepper, and Thomas Mediva and 3 others picked up later), has decided to affiliate himself with the Workshop people.

Rumors have been heard recently that other such “dope raids” on innocent marijuana people are being planned. The only people who have cause for alarm are those who had dealings with Vahan Kapegian (alias “Louie”), a Detroit Narcotics Bureau patrolman bucking for Detective Sergeant. No one else has anything to worry about. The police cannot break into your dwelling without a warrant and make the case stick in court past the arraignment period.

The only way such raids can be pulled off is if arrest warrants for crimes already committed have already been issued. If you are smoking quietly at home and abstaining from any questionable contacts with people unknown to you for any amount of time, you should continue to do just that, or give your stash to a friend who can use it. Don’t throw reefers away!



Fifth Estate Collective
The Great Reefer Raid
The Way It Really Was
1967

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/24-february-15-28-1967/the-great-reefer-raid>
Fifth Estate #24, February 15-28, 1967

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net