

# Marijuana Bill Trips Michigan Senate

Ben Habeebe

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State Senator Roger Craig (D-Dearborn) has introduced a bill in the Michigan Senate that would exempt marijuana from the application of the general narcotics act.

Craig wants the judiciary committee to hold hearings to determine whether it's appropriate to consider marijuana and opiate derivatives together.

"What I want to do is to begin a dialogue to determine whether competent authorities, considering the matter unemotionally, will place marijuana under the same law, or for that matter, whether marijuana actually is a narcotic," said Craig.

Craig said his purpose is to learn more about marijuana.

"I don't want to get to smoke it myself," he said, "I think we ought to get to know about its effects. If marijuana makes people madmen, which I personally doubt, I think we ought to get to know that too."

Craig said that one of his main objectives in introducing the bill is to make penalties more commensurate with the crime. He said that evidence seems to indicate that the implications of using marijuana is so dramatically different from using opium derivatives such as heroin and morphine. Yet, he said, a person can get from 20 years to life for selling the stuff.

Craig is not hopeful that the law will pass this session. But he does think he can get people talking and listening.

"I have a number of allies in the senate who want to promote discussion," said Craig. "And most of the senators will listen. The problem is getting them together to listen—they're so busy."

Craig thinks that one of the major problems in getting a debate going is the limited number of people who are actually concerned with the marijuana smoker.

"The smokers aren't a very large constituency, he said.

Craig isn't worried about how his own constituents in the suburbs will react.

"If they understood my motivation, I think they would agree with me. I think they would agree with anything I do as long as I do it maturely," said the senator.

Craig thinks the authorities have used marijuana as an excuse in the past to bust people whose general behavior patterns they opposed.

"Authority resents some of these behavior patterns," said Craig. "They're strange. They don't conform to anything we would do. They dress funny—they wear beards and beanies—and that's really threatening.

"It's scary to us who are in the establishment. And they look for all kinds of reasons to make them conform to the norm," he added.

The senator believes that nonconformity is no crime. And he said there should be no penalties for nonconformity and that it is wrong to use pot as an excuse to roust people.

"One of the extreme threats to our society is the people who will not tolerate or allow nonconformity," he said.

From Inspector Joseph Brown of the police department narcotics squad Craig's bill brings another kind of reaction:

"I'm certainly not in accord with that... I'm just not and I certainly don't want to discuss it on the telephone."

Finally we got the inspector to comment a bit further, “We’ve got a law on the books and I think it’s a good law. And we want to enforce it to the best of our ability.”



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