

Postal Pot

Dennis Fitzgerald

1969

NEW YORK (LNS)—Thirty thousand joints in the mail? Could be...It's like you never know what you're going to find in the mailbox—but free dope?

“Happy Valentine's Day,” the letter said, “you are one of 30,000 lucky persons being sent free this freshly-rolled marijuana cigarette. We are doing this in order to clear the garbage from the air.”

Let's see now...30,000 times 10 makes about...Lordie! A few more multiplications like that and you could turn the whole world on. Why, what nefarious demons could be behind such a plot?

Let's make believe that you are a middle-level potentate in a mythical, subterranean land which calls itself New York City. You are secure in your position, knowing that this is only in the order of things—and besides you have an understanding with the Syndicate.

An agreeable position, it does not require (though it may once have) the rescue of maidens, the slaying of dragons, or much in the way of quelling revolts. Mostly there is the armor to be polished, the wheeling to be dealt (a few phone calls perhaps) and the dirt to be swept under the rug. Certainly nothing too strenuous or too out of the ordinary.

And then—can you stand the suspense?—one day, in the mail there arrives an envelope bearing no return address...and then you open it...and inside...inside there is a self-proclaimed Marijuana Cigarette. Which you are directed to smoke.

And you do...

But to make a story like that really believable, one must start at the other end. Make believe—being careful to avoid irreparable damage to your psyche—that you are the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the American Tobacco Co.

Poor fellow, not enough that the growing immiserization of the American proletariat has not developed as one would wish, but your profits are being gnawed upon by self-defamatory propaganda, for which you are being forced to pay. And you can't diversify quickly enough to protect your investments.

Furthermore, there seems to be a not insignificant number of younger consumers who would rather switch than fight. A rapidly increasing number, one might add; such a shame to lose so vital a market to less orthodox businessmen. But, consider: is that market really lost? Let us not confuse the immoral with the impractical.

Perhaps you could encourage a trend here—not overtly of course; too soon for that—but with discretion, imagination.

For a start, one might imaginatively and with discretion (that is, laying the responsibility elsewhere) mail, say 30,000 samples to certain key individuals. An interesting sort of pre-promotional...

Or if that sort of story doesn't interest you, make believe that you are J. Edgar Hoover, planting evidence just before a massive pre-dawn raid on 30,000 hippie pads and centers of insurrection.

Or maybe you're just some Yippie with a few thousand dollars who thought it might be a gas to mail 30,000 joints, and wouldn't it be out of sight if the Post Office caught fire in the middle of that...

Anyway, we got ours; and it was real, baby. If you were left potless, excluded from the lucky 30,000 (a spot check indicated that the mailing was probably confined to the New York environs)...well, there's always Mother's Day.

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #74, March 5-19, 1969

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