

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE,
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION,
Washington, D.C., October 31, 1967.

Hon. CLARENCE J. BROWN, Jr.,
House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. BROWN: This is in response to your letter of October 24 requesting more information about my views on marijuana. Your assumption is correct that my own opinions regarding marijuana are based upon "the published studies of colleagues." Enclosed is a bibliography citing many of the articles, books, and pamphlets which I have reviewed. The list includes articles about marijuana from the lay press as well as the scientific literature. I have relied upon the latter in forming my opinions.

Any physician or scientist must rely upon the knowledge available in scientific literature in reaching a decision. It is a rare case, indeed, when any single research study can provide a comprehensive answer to a problem of any complexity.

I have not expressed any conclusive judgments about marijuana; rather, I have emphasized that we know too little about the possible effects of long-term use of the drug. I do not think that this view is inconsistent with my opinion that the present penalties for possession and use of marijuana are disproportionate to the hazards presented by the drug.

I have never suggested, nor do I believe, that we should eliminate criminal penalties for the distribution of marijuana. The drug was dismissed by the medical profession long ago as having any unique therapeutic value; I can conceive of no benefit in giving it legal status in society.

You also asked about the status of the research long-term effects of marijuana. The FDA is dealing with the problem of drug abuse, but we have concentrated on those drugs over which the Congress has given us jurisdiction; that is, stimulants, depressants, and hallucinogens other than marijuana.

In terms of the FDA's statutory authority, however, this Agency does not have a primary responsibility in marijuana research, although our studies in the social, physiological, and psychological aspects of drug abuse are often relevant to marijuana.

Marijuana research is going forward in the National Institute of Mental Health (I am enclosing a listing of these studies). I am not in a position to report on the conclusions of this research, but I am sure NIMH would be as helpful as possible in this regard should you wish to pursue this matter.

If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely yours,

JAMES L. GODDARD, M.D.,
Commissioner of Food and Drugs.