

STATEMENT OF HENRY L. GIORDANO, COMMISSIONER OF NARCOTICS, BUREAU OF NARCOTICS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY; ACCOMPANIED BY DONALD E. MILLER, CHIEF COUNSEL, BUREAU OF NARCOTICS

Mr. GIORDANO. Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the committee, I want to first thank you for giving me the opportunity of coming here today to discuss some of the aspects of the marihuana problem.

We are all concerned over what appears to be a growing national problem of drug abuse, which is expressed every day in newspapers, magazines, scientific journals, public forums, and in the home. This is particularly true respecting marihuana and the other hallucinogenic drugs.

In the past, most drug abusers in the United States were in the lower social and economic levels of our society. This is still largely true with respect to the natural derivatives of opium, such as heroin and morphine, as well as cocaine. To some extent, it is also true concerning marihuana.

Notwithstanding the statements of alarmists, I believe that only a small percentage of Americans—on an absolute basis—are currently abusing marihuana. It is the changing pattern of abuse that seems to be causing so much concern. Marihuana is moving in the suburbs, and into the middle and upper strata of our society.

At this point, I think it would be beneficial to explain what is included in the definition of "marihuana." The term embraces all of the technical and vernacular names, such as "cannabis," "hashish," "ganja," "charas," "pot," "tea," "weed," and the "tetrahydrocannabinols," the latter being designated as "THC." It is true that there are varying degrees of marihuana potency, ranging from innocuous effects of poorly harvested substances, to the severe effects of hashish, and to the powerful properties of THC, which can cause psychotic reactions in almost any individual.

As requested by your staff, I shall furnish you a description of the Federal marihuana controls. The prevailing philosophy in the United States is based on the premise that it is better for persons to function without resorting to the use of a drug so dangerous as marihuana. Abuse of the drug has been considered to be a major social threat by legislators, who have enacted and have retained the Marihuana Tax Act of 1937 (the primary Federal control).

The Marihuana Tax Act requires all persons with legitimate need to handle marihuana to register each year with the appropriate District Director of Internal Revenue and pay a graduated occupational tax depending on the activity; it requires that all marihuana transactions be recorded on official order forms provided for that purpose by the Internal Revenue Service; it makes transfers to a registered