

# Letters to the Editor

March 17, 1969

Dear Editor:

I have a plan for leasing state oil lands that will satisfy everyone. As a citizen of the state I do not want to see OUR oil leases sell for 50¢ an acre.

My plan is to divide leasing income among all Alaskans eligible to vote January 1, 1969 (approximately 70,000?).

Let us put OUR oil leases out competitively with an experienced oil executive as our agent. Pay him 2% of all he can get for us and him to not profit further. 2% for paperwork and 96% for us. If he got 700 million dollars he would make \$14 million for himself. This would please those who feel somebody should make a nice pile. The Alaskans would get about \$10,000 each. That would certainly make THEM happy! And would please those who are worrying that the "little guy" isn't getting in on the gravy.

Imagine the joy among the populace. Legislators would be re-elected 100%.

Citizens of Communist countries would clamor for their governments to be more like ours and overthrow them, all for the price of a couple of battleships.

The eyes of the world would be on us. Tourism would flourish. Imagine the shot in the arm to the economy if nearly every adult Alaskan got \$10,000. The banks would be stuffed with money. New cabins would spring up everywhere. Bills would be paid. Oldsters would enroll at the U of A. Our neighbor would buy a cat. His wife would build a chickenhouse. Their son would have his eye straightened.

I would like to live long enough to see something like this happen—just once.

Mellie Terwilliger  
Tok, Alaska

6420 Benvenue Avenue  
Oakland, California 94618  
March 20, 1969

Dear Sir:

I am writing to express concern about the Alaska Department of Health and Welfare statement on marijuana. This report is so misleading that it will backfire in its stated objective.

Responsible medical and scientific opinion on marijuana boils down to, "We don't know enough about it." It is known that the drug is not physically or chemically addictive, as heroin or other opium derivatives. It is known that tetrahydrocannabinol, the chemically purified "active" agent in marijuana, seems to be pretty dangerous in early tests. (Since it was just isolated months ago, such tests are inevitably "early.") In between, there is an extraordinary paucity of sound research. One reason is that the restrictive laws make research very difficult to conduct legally.

One of the few really scientific studies is the Boston test, results of which were published last year. It is quoted briefly (and very selectively) in your state report.

But the state report gives the distinct impression that all questions are answered and that it is unanimous (except among users) that the drug is exceedingly dangerous. Plainly this is not so. Anyone who has read at all the general press on this subject is immediately aware of the gross misrepresentations in the Alaska report, created largely by selective quotations. For example, the Boston report just cited was quoted to the extent of one line in the Alaska report. Yet the general conclusions of that study were that there is no proof that marijuana is harmful. Needless to say, these conclusions are carefully omitted from the Alaska report.

It is apparent that the author(s) of the report started out with the conviction that marijuana is absolutely and unqualifiedly bad, and then gathered support for that idea. It is one of the least objective reports I have ever read.

This brings me to the danger of such a study. Millions of Americans, mostly pretty young, have at least tried marijuana. They know that the Alaska report is untrue. Their experience does not answer the difficult, long-term questions about subtle harm from continued use, but it does tell them that the extreme position of the report is ridiculous.

The result is destruction of the credibility of the Public Health Department, or any other agency which echoes it. Then when such an agency makes a JUSTIFIED warning (such as about the fully proven dangers of heroin or amphetamines) many young people will assume it is another misstatement. In this way the Public Health Department itself can contribute to use of drugs KNOWN to be dangerous.

Reports of this nature only widen an already large credibility gap between the young and their elders. It is foolish to think the young can be deceived by the mere use of an official label to mask opinion and present it as fact.

Sincerely yours,  
Richard B. Collins, Jr.