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GENERAL SCIENCE

# 'Pot' Penalties Too Severe

By Patricia McBroom

► DR. JAMES L. GODDARD, head of the Food and Drug Administration, told a college audience of 2,000 that the penalties for using marijuana are "too severe."

His sentiment echoed that of drug expert Dr. Donald Louria, who remarked that marijuana, as a mild hallucinogen, must be legally distinguished from heroin, a narcotic. Dr. Louria, chairman of the New York State Council on Drug Addiction and a professor at Cornell University Medical School, criticized laws that in one instance meted out a four-year prison sentence to a college student for possession of marijuana.

"We cannot afford to legalize marijuana," Dr. Louria said, "but we must not overreact to its illicit use."

At a Cornell-sponsored symposium on drugs and the campus, the two men lashed out at Dr. Timothy Leary, high priest of the "free use of hallucinogens" movement.

The Learys of this world are "wrong in science, wrong in ethics, and wrong in social responsibility," Dr. Goddard charged. LSD is "erratic" and "unpredictable," he said. Those who use it outside of strict medical controls are engaging in a kind of "chemical Russian roulette."

Dr. Louria said he thinks LSD is "the most dangerous drug around." He termed Dr. Leary's comments in a recent national magazine "outrageous" and "irresponsible." In the article, Dr. Leary maintained that the incidence of psychosis resulting from LSD use is one in 10,000. But, said Dr. Louria, also

of New York's Bellevue Hospital, psychosis occurs once in 1,000 times even under medical aegis.

Dr. Louria said he wants to see LSD saved for the medical profession. There is some suggestion that the mysterious and potent drug is useful in treating alcoholism, neurosis, sexual inadequacy, psychopathy and schizophrenia.

But audience interests clearly lay more with marijuana than with LSD. They applauded when the panel was asked whether marijuana was more dangerous than a scotch and soda.

Dr. Louria said he believes it is somewhat more dangerous. In single doses, however, marijuana very rarely produces ill effects on personality.

Although the risk is mild, Dr. Louria warned the students that breaking the law is a serious matter. When such laws are ignored, "we are faced with potential moral and legal anarchy," he said.

In his address at Cornell, Dr. Goddard emphasized that drug abuse is a greater problem than just a few people taking chemicals for a thrill. A recent California survey showed that 86 households in the San Francisco area had a total of 2,539 medications on hand—29.5 different drugs per house.

"I am concerned about the extent of chemical intake" and the attitude of society toward this "chemical sub-culture," Dr. Goddard said.

This year's appropriation of a half million dollars for research into drug abuse is a "miniscule amount," he noted, "considering the importance of the problem to society."

CHEMISTRY

# Ants Use Chemical Alarm

► A TRULY alarming chemical has been found in ants. In the mandibles of harvester ants, a chemical known as a ketone was discovered to act as a means of communication and warning.

This ketone, called 4-methyl-3-heptanone, was found in ants trapped in glass jars sunk into the ground near an ant nest.

A drop of ketone like that found in the mandibles was placed in an ants' nest. "As it evaporated," a team of Oklahoma scientists reported, the ants "became alarmed and appeared to release the alarm substance themselves."

A little of the ketone placed in a petri dish produced alarm behavior in test ants for 15 to 20 seconds. "They quickened their movements, periodically raised their heads high above their

bodies and opened their mandibles," the scientists said.

The scientists tried putting a small drop of the chemical on an ant. "Ants which passed within three or four centimeters of the treated ant immediately chased and attacked it, with sometimes as many as three or four trying to bite and sting it at the same time."

The scientists discovering the alarm chemical in ants were Drs. D. J. McGurk, Jennifer Frost and E. J. Eisenbraun of the department of chemistry; K. Vick, W. A. Drew and J. Young, department of entomology, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater.

Mr. Donelan spoke at a joint annual meeting of the College of American Pathologists and the American Society of Clinical Pathologists in Washington, D.C.