

Don't legalise cannabis, say Communists

Morning Star Reporter

A STATEMENT opposing legalisation of cannabis, but urging amendments to the law, was adopted by the Communist Party Executive Committee which met at the weekend.

This was agreed after hearing a report on the health and social consequences of the use of cannabis which was given on behalf

of the party's Science and Technology Committee, by Dr. Brian Leonard, university lecturer in pharmacology.

The statement said:

The increasing number of cannabis offences, reflecting its more widespread use, has aroused concern among all those who appreciate its harmful effects.

But it is important to keep the problem in perspective.

The total number of cannabis users, regular and occasional, is estimated at 33,000, compared with some half a million alcohol addicts.

Fall victim

There have been demands for the legalisation of cannabis. It is argued that this would take the cannabis user out of the orbit of the illicit pusher, and so reduce the number who fall victim to the more dangerous drugs which he sells.

But there is ample evidence of the health hazard involved in the use of cannabis itself.

The act of legalisation would give it the seal of respectability and open the door for its wider sale.

That is why the Communist Party is opposed to the legalisation of cannabis.

Serious defects

However, there are serious defects in the law. A number of recent cases have shown the dangers to civil liberty and the way in which innocent people can be hounded by the police.

The law must be amended to deprive the police of the arbitrary powers they have at present to search individuals and premises without warrant.

It must also be amended so that possession of drugs or occupation of premises on which drugs are used is no longer an absolute crime, irrespective of intent or knowledge as at present, which is clearly unjust and capable of abuse.

It is the punitive attitude to those who take drugs which leads to the framing of laws giving the police such excessive powers.

Treat patients

Addicts and drug users should be regarded as patients in need of treatment, not as criminals. The criminals are those who traffic in drugs.

Penalties for the possession of cannabis should be far less severe, and should not include imprisonment.

The heavier penalties should be reserved for cases where there is evidence of pushing.

There is need for a public Government report giving the latest statistics on the extent of the problem, the range of sentences imposed and information on treatment and cure, together with proposals for amending the law to distinguish clearly between addicts or users and the pushers.

The problem of drugs is basically a social problem, a reflection of the deep-seated crisis in capitalist society and much more rational educational work needs to be done by the Labour movement to counter its growth.