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Senator James O. Eastland to President Gerald R. Ford, 2 October 1974

James O. Eastland

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNAL SECURITY

(PURSUANT TO S. RES. 366, 81ST CONGRESS; AND SEC. 11, S. RES. 32, 92D CONGRESS)

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

October 2, 1974

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

From May 9 to June 13, the Senate Subcommittee on Internal Security held extensive hearings on the marihuana-hashish epidemic and its impact on U. S. security. I enclose a copy of the printed transcript of these hearings, which has just come off the press.

These hearings focused heavily on scientific evidence of physical or psychological harm -- because this was basic to any assessment of the impact of cannabis on security. All told, the Subcommittee took testimony from 21 prominent medical scientists and psychiatrists. Most of the witnesses were Americans, but six other countries were also represented in the panel. The professional standing of the witnesses who testified before the Subcommittee is attested to by the fact that more than a dozen of them were quoted in two recent articles in "Science" magazine dealing with the new evidence on the harmfulness of marihuana. The significance and scientific quality of the hearings was further confirmed to me by the attached copy of a letter which I received from Dr. Robert DuPont, head of the Special Action Office for Drug Abuse Prevention.

The collective testimony of the eminent scientists who appeared before the Subcommittee points to massive damage or potential damage to the entire cellular process, to the reproductive system, and to the respiratory system. The evidence also pointed to the serious possibility of irreversible brain damage and genetic damage.

Regrettably -- partly in consequence of the ambiguity of the Shafer report and other official documents -- there still exists a widespread impression that marihuana is a relatively harmless drug. This myth of harmlessness, it is my conviction, has played a major role in encouraging the spread of the cannabis epidemic, to the point where more than 30 million Americans have now used marihuana in one degree or another, and at least several million are already using it in a chronic manner.

To cope with this epidemic will require a national educational campaign at every level, from grade school up. Several of the witnesses who appeared before the Subcommittee made the point that education on marihuana has been difficult in the past because of the lack of hard scientific evidence that young people would find convincing. They expressed the belief, however, that, armed with the evidence presented at our hearings, it would be possible to set up an effective educational program. The thought has occurred to me that, in launching such a program, your Administration might kick it off with a statement by the Surgeon General, comparable to the famous statement on the dangers of cigarette smoking.

I submit these thoughts for your consideration. If there is any way in which the Subcommittee on Internal Security can be helpful in the planning and organization of a national educational campaign on the dangers of marihuana, it goes without saying you may count on my complete cooperation.

With every best wish,

Sincerely,

James O. Eastland
Chairman
Senate Subcommittee on
Internal Security

Enclosures

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