

embraced marijuana and LSD along with a bevy of British rock 'n' roll bands (the Animals, Moody Blues, Pink Floyd . . .) that were into both drugs. If this countercultural movement had an unofficial headquarters, it was the Indica Bookshop and Gallery, named after the kind bud, *Cannabis indica*. Paul McCartney was involved in planning the bookshop-gallery venture, and when the right venue was found he helped remodel the interior, drilling, sawing, hammering away, plastering the walls and installing bookshelves. McCartney was Indica's first customer the day it opened; he purchased several paperbacks, including *Peace Eye* poems by Ed Sanders (*Peace Eye* and Indica were sister stores) and Robert DeRopp's *Drugs and the Mind*, a subject of keen interest to the Beatles. Every so often, McCartney and Lennon would drop by to browse books and attend Indica gallery openings. This was where Lennon met Yoko Ono, an edgy Japanese artist whose work was featured at Indica.

International Times (IT), an underground newspaper that operated out of Indica's basement, swapped stories with a worldwide network of comrades publications that advocated for ending the war in Vietnam and legalizing marijuana—two overarching concerns of Sixties rebels. Once again, McCartney pitched in, laying out ads for the paper and providing emergency funds to keep the operation viable. "Changing the lifestyle and appearance of youth throughout the world didn't just happen—we set out to do it," Lennon asserted a few years later. "We knew what we were doing."

The British authorities also knew what they were doing when a dozen plainclothes police officers raided Indica in the winter of '67, allegedly looking for dirty books while ignoring the hard-core porn shops just a stone's throw away in Soho. The cops seized copies of *IT*, deemed it obscene, and temporarily shut down the newspaper in a brazen attempt to criminalize and throttle dissent. Like their American counterparts, the Brits were using legal excuses to wage a moral battle. *IT* fought back with wit and verve, at times straining to accommodate disparate factions within "the Movement," which was never really a single, unified phenomenon.

When he visited London, Ginsberg stayed with Indica and *IT*'s cofounder Barry Miles, who introduced him to the Beatles. They all became fast friends. The world's most famous poet was seemingly everywhere in the 1960s—Moscow, Tokyo, Havana, Rome, Tel Aviv, Bombay, Vancouver, Prague. Like a molecule at full boil, Ginsberg zipped around the globe, reading poetry and touting the benefits of marijuana and LSD at every opportunity, even though his own drug intake was relatively modest during this period.

Ginsberg chanted "Om" onstage at the first Human Be-in in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park in January 1967. Twenty thousand day-trippers, beam-

ing stoned-out optimism, attended this fabled assemblage, which featured an all-star lineup of poets, rock bands, and counterculture celebrities. It was Ginsberg, now with long, thinning locks and a full rabbinical beard, who coined the expression "flower power" to describe the drug-fueled cultural effervescence bubbling in the Haight.

What transpired on that unseasonably warm winter afternoon passed instantly into the hagiography of the marijuana subculture. Although the name smacked of "sit-in" and "teach-in" (two successful modes of New Left activism), the Be-in was not convened to protest anything in particular. It was more like a huge pot party than a political demonstration. Countless joints were smoked openly. The police wisely chose not to intervene as Be-in revelers engaged in an impromptu public nose-thumbing at cannabis prohibition.

Billed as "A Gathering of the Tribes," the Be-in generated extensive news coverage, nationally as well as internationally, and set in motion a chain of overhyped events that led inexorably to the much-ballyhooed "Summer of Love." Prior to the Be-in, Haight-Ashbury had been an improvised work in progress, an evolving community of the creatively alienated. Then, all of a sudden, the psychedelic city-state was flooded by mass media and transformed into a prurient freak show with gawkers outnumbering potheads. The once vibrant neighborhood would soon be overrun by junkies, speed freaks, pimps, runaways, and cops. By summer's end, Haight Street looked a lot like Desolation Row.

Meanwhile, ripples from the Haight had spread across America and beyond, inspiring a spate of mini be-ins and love-ins all over the world. New York City cannabis activists organized four successive weekend smoke-ins in the leafy refuge of Tompkins Square Park, a favorite hangout of East Village hippies. At the initial smoke-in in June 1967, Dana Beal tossed handfuls of joints into a thankful crowd, which sent everyone scrambling. The same ritual was enacted a few weeks later when the Grateful Dead performed a free concert at another Tompkins Square smoke-in. (It was the Dead's first visit to the Big Apple.) By throwing down the gauntlet in such a fashion, Beal and his gang of pot provocateurs sought to force the police to choose between busting hundreds of people or letting them smoke in public. The cops caved.

The Tompkins Square puff-ins coincided with a series of pot protests in London, where several high-profile rock musicians had recently been arrested on drug charges. Detective Sergeant Norman Pilcher, from London's Metropolitan Police Drug Squad, made it his mission to bust as many pot stars as possible. First he nailed Donovan (who was fined £250 for marijuana possession), then Keith Richards and Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones. The Stones had made drug motifs a central part of their music—only to face the music

themselves when narcs crashed a party at Richard's house. "I don't have a drug problem," Richards famously sniffed. "I have a police problem." (His conviction for allowing the use of marijuana on his premises was reversed on appeal, and Jagger's three-month prison sentence for possessing four amphetamine tablets that he had bought legally in Italy was reduced to a conditional discharge.) Two members of the Beatles, John Lennon and George Harrison, were also arrested by Pilcher, who later got a taste of his own medicine when he was sentenced to four years imprisonment for perjury and evidence tampering.

"If I smoke, will I get caught?" asked the underground journalist Richard Neville, who answered his own question: "Only if you're stupid, unlucky or a pop star." John ("Hoppy") Hopkins, cofounder of the *International Times*, was one of the unlucky ones. A photographer by trade, he got busted for a small quantity of pot stashed at his London flat. But instead of showing remorse in court, he chose to make a forthright political statement. Hoppy told the jury that marijuana was less harmful than alcohol and the law was unjust. The judge didn't buy it. "You are a pest to society," he declared before consigning Hoppy to Wormwood Scrubs for nine months.

Hoppy's friends held an emergency summit in the back room of Indica. Steve Abrams, an Oxford-educated American expatriate who ran a drug-policy reform group called SOMA (an affiliate of LEMAR), urged that they undertake a multifaceted activist campaign to highlight the iniquities of marijuana prohibition. Cannabis had been banned in Great Britain since 1928, and recreational reefer remained on the margins, confined mainly to Caribbean migrants, until flower power blossomed in Merry Olde England. On July 16, 1967, Abrams emceed Britain's first "Legalize Pot" rally in London's Hyde Park. Allen Ginsberg addressed the gathering, which quickly morphed into a smoke-in of sorts as a few protestors lit up and passed joints.

A week later, SOMA placed a full-page advertisement in *The Times* of London, criticizing Britain's marijuana laws as "immoral in principle and unworkable in practice." The ad was signed by sixty-five British luminaries, including two members of Parliament, a dozen prominent physicians and clergymen, and numerous artists and writers. It called upon the government to:

- allow scientific research into cannabis;
- remove cannabis from the list of dangerous drugs and make possession punishable by a fine;
- permit the use of cannabis in private premises;
- and release everyone imprisoned for marijuana possession.

Among the signatories were notables such as novelist Graham Greene; Nobel laureate Francis Crick, the codiscoverer of the double-helix shape of DNA; and the four Beatles, who paid for the ad.

The advertisement caused a furor, but its impact paled in comparison with the latest Beatles album. The release of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was an epochal event in the history of popular music. Synchronous with the millennial spirit of '67, it tapped into a collective generational mood that had been altered by psychotropic drugs. The Beatles were speaking to—and for—millions of reefer rebels around the world who embraced the counterculture's inchoate flower-power ideal.

"Do you know what caused *Pepper*?" McCartney told a reporter. "In one word, drugs. Pot."

"But you weren't on it all the time."

"Yes, we were. *Sgt. Pepper* was a drug album," McCartney insisted.

The drug imagery on the album cover (which included a marijuana plant amid a montage of famous people) and throughout the lyrics was hard to miss. Ringo Starr rhapsodized about "getting high with a little help" from his friends. McCartney "had a smoke" and "went into a dream." And Lennon cooed: "I'd love to turn you on." The BBC proceeded to ban several of the songs from its playlist, including "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," on the grounds that they promoted the use of illegal drugs. This ungainly attempt to censor the Beatles, who were at the zenith of their influence, underscored Britain's befuddled—some might say schizoid—attitude toward marijuana and its most influential proponents. The Beatles, after all, had recently been honored by the Queen. Lennon would later claim they smoked bud in the bathroom at Buckingham Palace.

The release of the 1968 Wootton Report, a comprehensive study by the British Parliament's advisory committee on Drug Dependence, sparked a heated public debate when it gave cannabis something very close to a clean bill of health. Headed by Baroness Wootton of Abinger, a social scientist of great repute, the advisory committee indicated that an increasing number of people in all classes of British society were using marijuana regularly for social pleasure. The Wootton Report drew a clear distinction between hard and soft drugs, a distinction hitherto unrecognized by the British legal system. Cannabis, according to the report, was "very much less dangerous than opiates, amphetamines, and barbiturates, and also less dangerous than alcohol [and] it is the personality of the user, rather than the properties of the drug, that is likely to cause progression to other drugs."

At one time or another, the report noted, tea and coffee as well as alco-

hol and tobacco had been condemned in much the same terms as cannabis was dished in the Sixties. The committee poked holes in various popular fallacies about marijuana, noting that it did not lead to violence, psychosis, or dependence in otherwise normal people; nor did it create a vast constituency of junkies. "Having reviewed all the material available to us," the Wootton Report asserted, "we find ourselves in agreement with the conclusion reached by the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission appointed by the Government of India (1893-94), that the long-term consumption of cannabis in moderate doses has no harmful effects." It went on to state that "the long-asserted dangers of cannabis are exaggerated and that the law is socially damaging, if not unworkable." Specifically, the report criticized official pot policy for needlessly interfering with civil liberties. The committee recommended that cannabis law be changed so that no one would "go to prison for an offense involving only possession for personal use or for supply on a very limited scale."

Those who had become habituated to viewing marijuana as a beastly menace were mortified by the report. As soon as Baroness Wootton presented her study, stodgy British officials denounced its findings. For the Beatles and millions of their pot-smoking fans, it was just another day in the life.

High Spies

"*Out, demons, out!*" boomed the voice of Ed Sanders, who stood on a flatbed truck with the Fugs, chanting to a raucous throng of antiwar protesters in front of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

"*Out! Out! Out!*" the crowd roared in unison, as they sought to levitate the imperious, multimillion-ton structure three hundred feet into the air. A phalanx of military police stood guard, forming a ring around the high church of the military-industrial complex. Stiff and expressionless, the soldiers faced down a motley assemblage of hippies, peaceniks, and direct-action stalwarts who had come to believe after several years of polite protest that the only way to stop the carnage in Southeast Asia was to disturb the peace at home. Hundreds of marijuana cigarettes were dispersed among the colorfully costumed agitators, who "looked like the legions of Sgt. Pepper's band," as Norman Mailer wrote in *Armies of the Night*; his celebrated account of the anti-Vietnam War rally on October 21, 1967. This demonstration, which drew an estimated 75,000 people, marked a turning point for America's peace movement when a sizable contingent broke off from the main rally at the Lincoln Memorial, marched across the Potomac, and surrounded the five-sided command center of America's armed forces. For the first time at an antiwar rally,

a group of radicals tried to break through police lines and resist the efforts of federal marshals to arrest them. Amid all the commotion, Sanders and the Fugs intoned the "Pentagon Exorcism."

"*Out, demons, out!*"

Despite their incantations, the Pentagon did not budge. But the levitation ritual nonetheless had an upside, gifting to the world the indelible photographic image of daisies sprouting from the barrels of M16s held by dutiful young soldiers. The Pentagon was humbled, brought to its metaphorical knees by an authentic expression of flower power, which had gotten a lot feistier of late. In one fell swoop, that photo demystified the heavy-metal omnipotence of the U.S. military.

The Exorcism of the Pentagon epitomized the cross-fertilization between cultural and political radicals in the mid-1960s—a fusion championed by Allen Ginsberg and other pot-smoking activists. "A new man was born while besieging the Pentagon . . . A stoned politico. A hybrid mixture of New Left and hippie coming out something different," exulted Jerry Rubin, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement veteran who was instrumental in organizing the Pentagon protest.

Rubin attended a strategy session in New York City with a dozen other comrades who had been involved in planning the Pentagon action. Ed Sanders was there along with another East Village rabble-rouser, Abbie Hoffman. They smoked some Colombian and brainstormed about how to build on the momentum, which, they felt, was moving swiftly in their favor. Paul Krassner came up with the perfect expression to describe the stoned politico, the head who was also a fist. He was a *Yippie!*—an activist hippie. By the time the meeting was over, they were the "Youth International Party"—the full name for Yippie, an essentially mythical organization that combined New Left politics with marijuana and LSD in an effort to bring diffuse young rebels into the activist fold.

"Yippie!" was also a shout of joy in keeping with the zany antics of these political pranksters, who played upon the media's insatiable appetite for shock and sensation. Hoffman and Rubin, the two Yippie ringleaders, were adept at staging bombastic, made-for-TV events that conveyed a radical critique, such as when they burned dollar bills on Wall Street. Convinced that political protest should never be boring, they favored smoking cannabis over long-winded, leftist analysis. "Every time I smoke pot it is a revolutionary act," declared Hoffman. One clandestine Yippie caper entailed mailing thousands of rolled joints, along with a Yippie flyer, to a random list of New Yorkers.

The Yippies understood that smoking marijuana was a relatively easy way for incipient rebels to express their outrage against the establishment and flout

its laws. To get access to youth culture, one had to get high. Otherwise one would be an outsider looking in. The illegal status of cannabis proved to be a useful recruiting opportunity for left-wing organizers, some of whom went so far as to *oppose* the legalization of marijuana because they felt severe penalties for possession aided their efforts by making pot smokers angry at the society that overreacted to a nonexistent danger. Selling black-market cannabis also provided a source of income for cash-strapped causes, according to Rubin, who admitted years later that "a lot of marijuana money was re-channeled among activists and cultural aspects. All those crazy right-wingers were always saying we are getting our money from Russia, but we were getting it from marijuana smoking. How else could the movement have been financed?"

The drug issue figured prominently in Yippie tactics. After forty-three students at the State University of New York in Stony Brook were arrested for pot possession in January 1968, a hundred or so "Keystone Kop" Yippies staged a mock pre-dawn raid on campus to protest the coordinated police roundup. It was the first big Yippie media event, and it kicked off a turbulent year at colleges and universities throughout the United States. Antiwar actions became more militant and confrontational as U.S. troop levels in Indochina peaked at 542,000 in 1968 and aerial bombardment of North Vietnam exceeded the total tonnage dropped during World War II.

The turmoil on college campuses was not confined to the United States. In 1968, the barricades went up in student redoubts throughout Europe, Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia. The Sorbonne insurrection in Paris during May and June triggered strikes and rioting in several French cities, which nearly toppled the national government. "Be realistic, demand the impossible," the wall graffiti proclaimed. At one point, young rebels occupied the Bourse (the French stock exchange) and a large victory flag—emblazoned with the image of hand-rolled reefer—was flown from the roof.

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, Soviet teenagers were turning to marijuana as an antidote to East Bloc boredom. "With pupils dilated from the drug," the Moscow weekly *Krokodil* reported, "the youngsters rolled cigarette tobacco in their sweaty palms, mixed in with a few specks of hashish or grass, lit up and inhaled deeply." A Warsaw-based student magazine, *ITD*, noted the emergence of a pot-smoking hippie scene in Poland. Ditto for youngsters in Belgrade and also in Prague, where protestors adopted the song "San Francisco," the hippie anthem, during Czechoslovakia's nonviolent uprising in the spring of 1968 that was crushed by the Soviet Union.

In their stoned reverie, the New York Yippies mistook the demographic proliferation of pot-puffing youth for raw political power during a very violent period in American history. If 1967 was the summer of love, then '68

was the summer of civil strife. The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in April ignited a spasm of arson and rioting in U.S. cities from coast to coast. Presidential candidate Senator Robert Kennedy, the next likely occupant of the Oval Office, was murdered in June. The steady drumbeat of violence continued to build while the Yippies announced plans for a massive protest at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August. "We will burn Chicago to the ground!" a Yippie press release sneered. "We demand the Politics of Ecstasy!" Other demands included the legalization of marijuana, an end to censorship, and the abolition of money and pay toilets.

The local press had a field day when the Yippies threatened to put LSD in Chicago's water supply. They also promised that Yippie gamines posing as hookers would give acid to delegates, while Yippie studs would seduce delegates' daughters and wives. And thousands of protestors would run naked through the streets. "We are dirty, smelly, grimy, foul . . . we will piss and shit and fuck in public . . . we will be constantly stoned or tripping on every drug known to man," the Yippies hyperbolized. These foul-mouthed subversives were determined to provoke a reaction from law enforcement, thereby exposing the true nature of the system for all to see. Force the Man to show his fascist face and the people will finally see the light. Such was their flawed logic.

Allen Ginsberg, among others, expressed concern for the safety of those who intended to demonstrate in the Windy City, where badge-heavy police and National Guardsmen were armed to the teeth. Ginsberg wondered whether the Yippies were leading lambs to slaughter by luring young people into a direct confrontation with forces they were ill equipped to defend themselves against. His fears were born out when city authorities refused to grant a permit for protestors to congregate at a public park during the convention. About ten thousand people showed up anyway, far fewer than the Yippies had hyped. While Ginsberg *ommmmed* to keep the peace, a lot of folks got very stoned on honey spiked with superpotent amber hash oil that mysteriously appeared on the streets of Chicago, adding to the general sense of anarchy and confusion. Several activists were knocked out of commission by the honey, prompting conspiracy theories in the underground press that the cannabinoid concoction was a CIA or FBI plot to immobilize the movement.

Getting loaded on hash-oil concentrate doubtless had an incapacitating effect, but these stoners may have helped themselves—albeit inadvertently—when they ingested the honey mixture: scientific studies would later establish that cannabinoid compounds have significant neuroprotective properties that mitigate the impact of traumatic brain injuries. This particular aspect of cannabis certainly was a plus given how many heads got smashed by billy-club-swinging cops, who went on a televised rampage in Chicago, cracking the

skulls of protesters, reporters, and innocent bystanders. Many were hospitalized. A government commission, the Walker Study Team, would later call it a "police riot." But a majority of Americans, fed up with snotty Yippie shenanigans and eager for a paternal whip, sided with the boys in blue who went berserk. Richard M. Nixon, pledging to restore law and order, rode the backlash all the way to the White House.

CBS News, citing U.S. Army intelligence reports, later revealed that nearly one out of six protesters in Chicago was an undercover agent. Jerry Rubins, pot-smoking bodyguard was always stirring up trouble, throwing stones at cops, leading crowds in militant chants, desecrating the American flag, and exhorting protesters to tie up traffic and set fire to buildings. The Yippies never suspected that Rubins' bodyguard was a mole; after all, smoking marijuana was inherently a "revolutionary act" and no cop could keep his identity secret under the herb's truthful influence. Or so the Yippies thought.

The government's use of informants and provocateurs who spouted inflammatory rhetoric in order to incite others to violence was part of a no-holds-barred covert campaign to disrupt, fragment, and neutralize the forces of dissent in the late 1960s. Law-enforcement personnel enjoyed vast discretionary powers to monitor, infiltrate, and sabotage liberal and leftist organizations. A quarter of a million Americans were under "active surveillance" by various U.S. intelligence agencies, and dossiers were maintained on the personal lives and lawful political activities of millions more.

"Hoover University," located at Quantico Marine Base in Virginia, specialized in teaching spooks how to penetrate left-wing networks. Students who attended this elite FBI academy were instructed not to wash for several days in order to project the appropriate counterculture image when they approached radical groups. The more astute spies recognized that if they insinuated themselves into the radical wing of the antiwar movement, they might be expected to share a joint now and then with their newfound comrades.

Smoking marijuana during an undercover assignment "required a much higher degree of training than merely smoking a cigarette," acknowledged former FBI agent Cril Payne, who wrote about his time as an undercover leftie. During breaks between lectures on the New Left, drug abuse, and FBI procedure, Payne and several G-men would sneak away to get stoned. "We were definitely a happy group as we floated over to the dining hall," Payne recalled. "Just as we had suspected, the food did taste better, especially the second helpings." Payne could hardly keep from laughing as he watched his classmates "systematically appropriate ever-increasing portions of the official Bureau stash."

Payne fooled his surveillance targets by posing as a pot dealer. This way he could easily explain how he was able to support himself without a regular job

and why he split the scene for brief interludes. "And since there was a certain aura of mystery and intrigue surrounding marijuana dealers, many of whom were viewed as modern day folk heroes, I wouldn't be expected to divulge extensive information about myself," Payne later explained. The fact that he supplied, rolled, and smoked reefer further enhanced his credibility as a dealer and a counterculture radical. "My undercover experiences brought me to the point where I considered marijuana use a normal social occurrence," said Payne, who confided that he found the altered state of awareness brought on by cannabis to be "both pleasurable and relaxing." He eventually left the FBI, disillusioned with the suits who ran the Bureau and somewhat sympathetic to the earnest young radicals he consorted with during his days and nights undercover.

Pot-smoking politicians were prime targets of FBI dirty tricks conducted under the auspices of COINTELPRO, the Bureau's political counterintelligence program, which entailed a multipronged assault on the New Left, antiwar activists, black power proponents, and the underground press. In a once-classified directive to FBI field offices, J. Edgar Hoover delineated a far-reaching twelve-point plan to neutralize left-wing leaders and journalists. "Since the use of marijuana and other narcotics is widespread among members of the New Left, you should be on the alert to have them arrested on drug charges," Hoover ordered. "Any information concerning the fact that individuals have marijuana or are engaging in a narcotics party should be immediately furnished to local authorities and they should be encouraged to take action."

Nearly every major police department in the United States initiated undercover operations against the hippie subculture, underground weeklies, and political protest groups. Marijuana laws provided police with all the leverage they needed to harass young people, racial minorities, and anyone else with nonregulation haircuts. Some pot arrests were clearly politically motivated. Lee Otis Johnson, a black militant and antiwar organizer at Texas Southern University, was sentenced to a thirty-year jail term for sharing a joint with a narc. (In Texas, the average jail term handed down in murder cases was ten years.) A federal court later annulled the verdict on the grounds that Johnson had been targeted because of his political opinions.

John Sinclair, a cultural worker and community organizer in Detroit, was sentenced to ten years in state prison for giving a couple of joints to an undercover cop who had repeatedly nagged him for some weed. In addition to forming a LEMAR chapter for Wolverine weed-lovers, he launched the White Panther Party, which was renamed the Rainbow People's Party after it relocated to Ann Arbor in 1967. He urged his youthful followers to join in a "total assault on the culture," a phrase popularized by Sinclair's friend Ed Sanders.

Built like a giant panda with exploding curly hair and wire-rimmed glasses, Sinclair was an outspoken supporter of the Black Panther Party, which the FBI pegged as public enemy number one in the late 1960s. The Panthers emphasized self-determination for the black community and proclaimed the necessity of bearing arms for self-defense. While Panther leaders occasionally smoked reefer, they told their members not to use drugs while engaged in party activities. Marijuana was never central to Black Panther politics like it was for Sinclair. While in jail, Sinclair wrote "The Marijuana Revolution," a panegyric to pot. He believed that cannabis heightened his awareness of the world, boosted his creativity, and promoted solidarity among different peoples—a credo from which he has never deviated.

As word of Sinclair's cruel but not entirely unusual punishment circulated via the underground press, he became a cause célèbre among marijuana smokers. "Free John Now" posters and bumper stickers appeared in counterculture enclaves across the country. Abbie Hoffman ran onstage during the Woodstock rock festival in August 1969 and tried to deliver a message about the plight of John Sinclair to half a million people who had made the pilgrimage to Max Yasgur's 600-acre farm in upstate New York. Just as he started to talk, the microphone went dead and Peter Townshend of the Who bonked the Yippie leader over the head with an electric guitar. This brief snafu hardly dimmed the luster of the three-day "Aquarian Exposition," which featured thirty-two musical acts, with Jimi Hendrix performing a stirring acid rock rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" for the grand finale.

It was the counterculture's greatest moment in the sun, even though torrential downpours turned the festival site into a huge, muddy mess. Beset by a critical shortage of food, toilets, and medical supplies, Woodstock could have easily been a disaster. But the stoners somehow kept it together and America did a double take. Journalists noted that marijuana smoke was ubiquitous at Woodstock and according to police there was not a single fight. "It was a chance to show the world how it could be if we were running the show," said veteran Merry Prankster Wavy Gravy, a Woodstock emcee. Never before in the USA had a joyful declaration of dissent come from so many people collectively breaking the law. Woodstock was the biggest smoke-in of all, and there weren't enough jail cells in the entire state to hold all the people who were openly puffing grass and hash.

Woodstock was where the youth rebellion crested and the Sixties counterculture swelled to mainstream proportions. By the end of the decade, estimates of the number of pot smokers in America ran as high as 25 million. With the possible exception of jaywalking and speeding on highways, pot smoking had become the most widely committed crime in the United States. Meanwhile, the

truly criminal war in Southeast Asia continued to grind on. President Nixon, ignoring public opinion, which had turned against the war, tried unsuccessfully to pound Vietnam into submission.

Faced with the realization that five years of street demonstrations and other forms of protest had had little tangible impact on U.S. foreign policy, antiwar activists grew increasingly frustrated and desperate. Shortly before Woodstock, Students for a Democratic Society, the nation's largest New Left organization (with 100,000 members and 350-plus chapters), imploded and gave birth to the Weather Underground, a violent splinter group with Armageddon fantasies. Firepower eclipsed flower power as the Weather fanatics vowed to "bring the war back home." They embarked upon a bombing spree that targeted property rather than people. After an explosion leveled the Whitehall Induction Center, where military draftees enlisted in New York City, a Weather dispatch claimed responsibility for the attack, asserting that it was meant to show support for the Vietcong, "love," and "legalized marijuana." Such acts unintentionally gave credibility to Nixonian hard-liners, who seized upon incidents of violence (often provoked by government agents) in an effort to quash political dissent in America. The antiwar movement as a whole was tainted by the unfavorable impression generated by its ultramilitant wing.

In the late 1960s, the social fabric of the United States appeared to be unraveling. Bombarded by daily television images of street fighting, campus upheavals, black power radicals, and pot-smoking longhairs, an increasing number of Americans feared their country was on the verge of collapse. To many onlookers, the widespread consumption of marijuana was a symptom, if not the cause, of public disorder and moral decay. Henry Giordano, who succeeded Anslinger as chief of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, told Congress that calls to legalize pot were "just another effort to break down our whole American system."

The serrated marijuana leaf had become a totem of rebellion, a multivalent symbol of societal conflict. Condemning cannabis was a way to denounce the social and political movements that were in open revolt against "the American way of life." And continued support for criminal penalties against marijuana served as a symbolic means of asserting the legitimacy of the dominant culture. Denigrated by politicians and deified by dissidents, the little flower that millions liked to smoke would end up being the focus of "an immeasurably costly game of cops and robbers," as Robert Stone put it, "that made our difficulties with drugs, a marginal problem in most civilized countries, into an endless pep rally for repression."