

24 March 1970

Professor Clyde Manwell
Department of Zoology
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Dear Professor Manwell

This is in reply to your letter of March 18.

In my view, cannabis is not a dangerous drug, and is certainly no worse than the combination of alcohol and tobacco. I think it is quite ridiculous that your immigration authorities should not grant a visa to an American scientist merely because of the offence of having possession of a small quantity of marijuana. Perhaps the most telling argument that you could use to the Australian authorities is to draw their attention to the changes proposed recently in the House of Commons by the Home Secretary to the law about drugs. Two points stand out. The penalties for possession of marijuana have been cut in half and a strong distinction has been introduced between the minor offence of possessing marijuana in contrast to the more major offence of dealing in it. Bearing in mind that the present Home Secretary is committed to taking a rather tough line on these matters, I think this goes to show quite clearly that marijuana is not regarded as a major menace as, for example, heroin is. Under the new classification recommended by the Home Secretary, marijuana is in fact bracketed with the amphetamines. I think you should put it to the Australian authorities that the offence is obviously not a severe one, since it has only received a suspended sentence, and in seriousness could be reasonably compared with a minor motoring offence. I find it difficult to believe that a visa would be refused for the latter.

I had a telephone call from Steve Abrams yesterday, who tells me that he is not going to continue running SOMA, largely owing to the difficulty of getting sufficient funds for research, so I think this would not perhaps be the moment to ask him to help. If you want some literature on the subject, I can hardly do better than recommend the white paper on Cannabis which came out in 1968. As you may have difficulty in obtaining this quickly, I hope you will accept the copy that I am sending you under separate cover by airmail.

If there is anything further I can do, please do not hesitate to write to me. You may show this letter to anyone you think fit.

Yours sincerely

F. H. C. Crick