

Police chief causes fury over drugs

A CHIEF Constable today caused a political storm after claiming cannabis could eventually be legalised in Britain.

Keith Hellawell, head of the West Yorkshire force, will tell tonight's BBC *Panorama* programme of the "positive effects" drugs have on some young people.

His remarks coincide with a new report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), also featured in the programme, which calls for the drug to be decriminalised.

Mr Hellawell calls for drug education for under-12s and questions whether cannabis is habit-forming.

He says: "I think people

**By UK News
reporters**

are not being honest about the positive side of drugs, that drugs do give people a good feeling. A 'buzz' they call it.

"Some of the feelings you get from some of the hard drugs are good. I've never taken them so I'm not speaking from personal experience. What I am doing is listening to people and reading about it.

"So there are positive effects of drugs for the time being on some of the people who take them. But of course, there are hugely negative effects as well. And unless we are realistic and honest and open, the children will only lead to and

will only jump onto the positive effects."

But Tory MP Sir Ivan Lawrence, chairman of the Commons Home Affairs select committee, strongly criticised Mr Hellawell's remarks.

He told BBC Radio: "This chief officer is part of the new breed of sociologically soft chief police officers.

"It's like saying burglary is rising and detection is falling, therefore we must legalise it."

The IPPR report says current government policy for drug education is "inconsistent" and calls for a controlled experiment in decriminalisation of cannabis.

■ **Panorama: Report from Needle Paradise is on BBC1 tonight at 9.30pm.**