

Legalization: A better way to wage war against drugs

Guess what the latest drug is? 'Crank' is now the hottest drug on the West Coast. No, that is not a misspelling. Supposedly, crank has an effect much like cocaine — the creation of euphoria, energy, and violent tendencies. Sales of crank in San Diego last year reached \$3 billion by some estimates.

With the introduction of drugs like 'crank' or 'ice', hope for a solution to the drug problem grows dim. The Bush administration, as has every administration before it, has decided that tougher enforcement of criminal laws is the way to stop drug usage. After all the laws have been passed and all the money administered, the drug problem in this country will continue to worsen. Realistically speaking, drug usage will never be eradicated from our society, thus the only practical means of controlling drugs will be through the legalization of the drug market.

Opponents of legalization label legalization advocates as pro drug use, or as quitters and traitors to the 'drug war.' Legalizers do not support drug use. They are simply offering a better means to achieve the end which government has repeatedly failed to achieve.

Instead of limiting the drug trade through regulation and taxation, government attempts to prohibit it through criminalization. Prohibition has been a complete failure. The drug industry is the world's most profitable. Fortune magazine recently reckoned the global drug trade at \$500 billion annually. Of that, \$300 billion was earned in the United States. Even under increasing enforcement, the market has been growing over the last twenty years, and there is no sign of it diminishing in the future.

Not only has prohibition not worked, but it comes at a greater expense to our society. In 1980, the U.S. federal gov-

Andrew
Matthew
Columnist

ernment spent one billion to keep to keep cocaine, marijuana, and heroin of the market. The feds' spent four billion in 1988. Bush's drug war is going to cost us eight billion. These numbers do not even take into account the money spent on the state and local level. The U.S. government has also proposed sending \$260 million in aid to South American countries in their fight against drugs, this in addition to \$130 million in military aid and American troops. Actually, it is possible to eliminate the drug problem through prohibition, but it would be at the cost of perhaps \$200 billion and the complete erosion of all our civil liberties. If you were caught with crack, the police could blow you away on the spot. That would deter drug usage, but would be a hellish society.

Prohibition also creates a criminal industry which is a far greater threat to our society than the actual effects of drugs themselves. The quick fortunes made dealing drugs lead poor ghetto youths into a lifetime of crime. The drug traffickers corrupt the latin American countries' governments, bribe policemen and form small armies to protect their businesses. Rival drug dealers fight their turf wars with Uzis. In Washington D.C. this year, five people were killed each week at the hands of drug dealers. I know that I will never wear blue or red if I travel to Los Angeles.

So how would legalization be more effective? With legalization, the drug market could be regulated and taxed, as are cigarettes and alcohol. Economists could

give a long list of cases where oppressive taxes and regulation destroyed an industry. Taxes could also generate perhaps an extra \$30 billion a year in revenue, which could be put to use through educational or incentive programs to encourage people to not use drugs. Regulation of the drugs themselves could be administered by the FDA, which would ensure that the drugs meet certain safety standards.

Most importantly, legalization will remove the criminal from the drug. Old dealers will either conform to normal business practices or divert into other illegal activities. Our youths will not be tempted to a life of crime. The governments of South America could operate once again with the force of law, and policemen would not have to fear being moved down by a sixteen-year-old with a sub-machine gun.

No, legalization will not eliminate drugs from our society, much as abolition of Prohibition did not stop alcohol consumption. But under Prohibition, our society was much dangerous, and it fostered a disrespect of all laws in general. Legalization is not a panacea. For the ultimate responsibility lies with the individual. The abuse of drugs derives from the failure of people to understand where true happiness exists. True happiness comes from a love of God, family, friends, and accomplishment. Chemically induced euphoria is fake and fleeting. That ultimate choice lies with us. Until that day when each individual makes the decision to abstain, drugs will be there to fulfill the need. But until that day arrives, the proper role of government is one of taxation and regulation of the decisions which people choose for themselves.

Andrew Matthew is a junior economics major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Mail Call

Bus drivers bothered on bonfire night

EDITOR:

I am writing because I felt compelled to after hearing some of the horror stories from some of my fellow bus drivers about their experiences on bonfire night.

As you know, Bus Operations ran a free shuttle service on the night of bonfire, which included 33 large busses running routes all over the campus.

This system was designed to allow students and their guests an easy way to get to and from campus, and to relieve some of the on-campus congestion on bonfire night.

While these goals were met, some very disturbing things occurred. Several female drivers told me of the times that they feared for their lives because of drunk and violent passengers. One driver was called a derogatory term at least 20 times by her count, and one group of Aggies got so upset when the driver would not let them off at an unauthorized stop that they threatened to attack her.

The busses here at A&M are usually free from any vandalism from passengers. Luckily we all outgrew that in high school, or so I had thought. On bonfire night the busses had three windows broken out, at least two beer bottles that were thrown at the bus. One of these struck the passenger window eight inches behind the driver. Luckily, no one was sitting by the window, but what if it had struck the driver's window while going down Wellborn?

There were also hundreds of empty alcohol containers on the busses and a fair amount of vomit.

Passenger safety was also put at risk due to the drunken behavior of the Aggie "mob." We had fistfights on and off the busses, people crawling through the emergency exits while the bus was in motion, and many other disruptions of the driver. This is the scariest part. The busses only carry one money; a life is not easily replaced.

It is too bad that the actions of a few made us all look so bad. Several Aggie parents were riding the bus Friday night, and I am not so sure I put our best foot forward. Being drunk does not excuse a person from being polite. Aggies are supposed to be Aggies, drunk or sober.

To be honest, the crowd on the busses looked very familiar to the crowd of t.u. students that I sat with last year in Austin that showed their school pride by throwing liquor bottles at our band. I swore that Aggies could never be like that, but I'm not of that at all anymore.

In my four years of working for Bus Ops I have learned that the riders often take the bus for granted, both in how they treat the bus, and in how lightly they take the responsibility of the drivers.

Imagine driving your car, packed to the hilt with drunks who are threatening your life, and who are throwing things at you: beer bottles at the outside of your car, and dinner on the inside. Not a pretty sight. We make your car the size of a bus, and you get the idea of what the driver had to go through.

As a dispatcher out at Bus Ops, it angers me that my drivers were placed in that position. I hope that next year we all have our walking shoes on, and the busses stay home. Maybe the walk in the cold will sober some of you up.

Robert Hook '90
Dispatcher, Bus Operations

Walker's remarks crude, vulgar

EDITOR:

I don't care at all about LBJ or the t.u. cheerleaders, but I found Scott Walker's remarks about them in *The Battalion* on Dec. 1 tasteless and vulgar and typical of what one sees on walls in men's bathrooms.

I don't believe stuff like that belongs in *The Battalion*. It is yet another example of how Walker abuses his power as editor by publishing junk under his byline. What ever happened to responsible journalism?

Kevin J. O'Neill
Graduate Student

Editors note: The two editorials were run in the spirit of competitive journalism. There was no intent to offend anyone.

One semester's worth of sour grapes

EDITOR:

Yeah! Bonfire is finally over, the end of the semester is drawing near. No more football to worry about, we didn't make the Cotton Bowl anyway. However, there are just a few things I'd like to comment on:

For one, this rivalry thing with t.u. is going a little too far, don't you think? Yes, I understand that they suck, but I don't see why it is that we have to go make a point of telling them by vandalizing their campus. At no, they didn't vandalize ours, it was one of our own students. And even if it was a t-sip, do two wrongs make a right?

No, I think Ags should show that we are better than them by not stooping to their levels.

Also, I was under the impression that if anyone respects those that gave their lives in World War I, it would be the Aggies, so why vandalize the memorial to their heroes who gave their lives? Is this part of the Aggie spirit?

My next favorite topic to gripe about is the parking situation. Now I am not totally mistaken, it is the student body that makes this University what it is. So why are we the lowest on the totem pole?

Without us there would be no Texas A&M. The University really ought to learn to sell as many parking permits as they have places; no more less.

Of course it would also help if they had a little common sense and realized that if you only have parking for a specified number of on-campus students, it does not make sense to open up four more dorms with no parking. Come on, guys, let's think a little more.

Oh, yeah, one more gripe and then I'll shut up: this anti-apartheid thing isn't really something for us Ags to be proud of either. Everyone has a right to express their opinions. There is, after all, such a thing as the amendment.

So why not let the anti-apartheid people say their thing. They are well aware of the happenings in South Africa and are opposed to them. I hope most of us are, and want to help and show support. How about a tolerance of other people's opinions?

By the way, whoever vandalized the shanty, racism went "out" in the sixties.

This is supposed to be a higher learning institution where, among other things, self-discipline, rational thinking and tolerance of other people's opinions are supposed to be taught. So, why don't we ALL start learning?

Tricia Ryan '92

Have an opinion? Express it!

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer. All letters are brought to 216 Reed McDonald, or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Faculty members talk back to Doolen about bashing of academic advising

Gary P.
Underwood
and
Emilie Oevermann
Undergraduate Advising

So, academic advising at A&M stinks. What an all-inclusive statement from a student who has had formal experience with advisors in only two departments.

Obviously we need to shed some light on a few of your observations. Granted, there are problems with advising in certain colleges; however, to proclaim to the world that "academic advising at Texas A&M stinks" is definitely not true. Perhaps your assessment results from some incorrect assumptions.

First, problems with advising are not passive — they do cause immediate distress. Ask any student who has been misadvised on his course schedule; immediate distress is felt by the sixth class day, when students are no longer allowed to add courses.

Second, the statement "Few students are directly harmed by the lack of qual-

ity academic advising," is grossly in error. Lack of quality academic advising results in poor selection of courses which ultimately results in graduates that are ill-prepared for careers in their respective areas of study, delayed graduation dates and even the dreaded academic probation — all of which lead to stressed-out students and angry parents.

You mention discussing academic problems/questions with a friend or upperclassman; we in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences call this "sophomore advice." Sophomore advice is typically a student's interpretation of academic policy and/or procedure — not a reliable assessment of fact. If a student is erroneously advised by a professional, the University has established mechanisms to correct administrative error. Unfortunately, such allowances and corrections cannot be employed when sophomore advice is at fault.

On one point, Mr. Doolen, you are correct: To many students, an adviser is nothing more than a person who signs papers. As advisers, we accept this fact and liken it to the attitude of the general population toward medical care — some people do not need the services, some require the services but choose not to get the assistance needed, some choose to minimally utilize the services and some employ the full scope of the services. In this college, students seeking the assistance of an adviser generally receive the help or advice they request.

One of the biggest errors cited in your article is the purpose of the University Mentors program. Mentors is not now, nor ever, intended to be a

probable solution to the advising problem. Mentors is "a program of faculty and staff office hours for students who just need to talk to someone." Many students simply need to talk with someone about common personal or academic problems. Many faculty and staff are willing to talk with and help these Aggies. Large classes can be compensated by a Mentor's willingness to listen and to help each person become the kind of Aggie who made A&M great.

You, Mr. Doolen, would not feel comfortable walking into a total stranger's office and asking advice on academic or personal matters. Obviously you have not been exposed to the friendly warmth and personal caring the Mentors group is known for. While the first minutes of the initial meeting are awkward, most students leave feeling they know at least one person on this campus cares. Therefore, it is a gross mistake to characterize the student-mentor relationship as an awkward one.

Like you, I agree that good advising is the key to a better education and academic base at A&M; that students need to be able to talk one-on-one with an adviser about various academic problems and that students need to discuss degree and career plans with a knowledgeable person.

All colleges (some more than others) need to strive for improvements in academic advising, as there is nothing on this campus that is perfect. To facilitate quality academic advising, the Faculty Senate adopted a resolution titled, "Standards for Academic Advising" on July 14, 1986. This document specifically outlines Texas A&M University's ideal academic advising program. The resolution is periodically reviewed and amended by the Senate and the University president.

In summary, Mr. Doolen, there are some problems with academic advising on this campus and we do need some solutions. However, a quick review of history will reveal that solutions to major problems are not reached without a logical and detailed plan of action. What we need is a plan of action formulated by optimistic students and advisers, not another person standing around saying, "Academic advising at A&M stinks."

As with all columns, opinions expressed by Guest Columnists are not necessarily those of *The Battalion*. Persons interested in submitting guest columns should contact the Opinion Page Editor at 845-3314.

Correction

The column on Student Locator in Tuesday's *Battalion* was credited to the wrong guest columnist. Michael W. Haney wrote the column. *The Battalion* regrets the error.

The Battalion

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