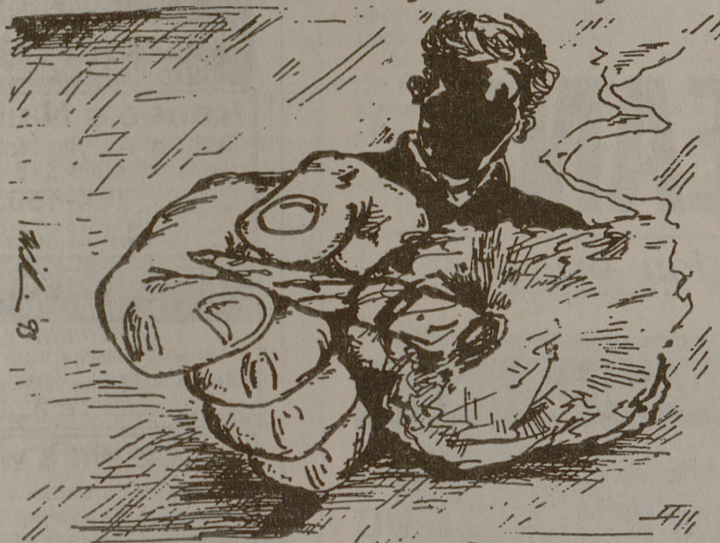


PRO CON

Should the United State legalize the use of marijuana?



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Columnist

The reason for legalizing marijuana is simple — the United States needs it. To begin with, marijuana has scientifically documented medical merit. This non-addictive, non-tolerance building drug allows glaucoma patients to keep their eyesight by keeping intraocular pressure low. In addition, marijuana use alleviates the nauseating symptoms associated with chemotherapy and AZT treatments. Ironically, the government allows use of morphine in medical practices, which is an opiate and a very addictive, dangerous drug at that.

Marijuana also has scientifically documented environmental uses. Just one acre of hemp can produce as much paper pulp as four acres of trees. Moreover, that one acre of hemp can be cultivated four times a year, at a one-fourth the cost and one-fifth the pollution created in the current wood-based process.

The hemp plant can also be used to create a stronger, warmer and cheaper alternative to cotton, and the current cotton production process could conveniently be used to produce hemp fibers.

Combine the first two arguments and the third is bound to surface — legalizing marijuana is financially advantageous. The \$840 million spent annually on marijuana related arrests could be spent attacking real crime which is a continually growing problem in the United States.

If marijuana was taxed at the same rate as tobacco, within one year, close to \$1 billion would be raised on the production and sale of marijuana in Texas alone.

The grade of hemp plant to be used in industry is non-intoxicating and not smokable. Why doesn't the government capitalize on this? They don't even have to make the intoxicating form of the plant legal.

Will marijuana ever be legalized? Well, not for at least another 20 years. It is going to take a complete change in the way America views marijuana. Americans have been programmed to believe mari-

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juana is bad, even though it's non-addictive, non-tolerance building and its side-effects are minimal when compared to currently legal products.

Former Surgeon General Everett C. Koop said himself that the most addictive drug known to man is nicotine. But the U.S. has no problem keeping that legal.

And we all know the evils of alcohol. And yet we learned from prohibition that it is to our advantage to keep it legal and regulate the industry.

Currently, 30 million Americans are casual users. Are the streets lined with lazy, drug-crazed losers, quoting "Beavis and Butt-Head" and begging for hand-outs? No.

The United States can no longer blindly follow the fear mongering lobbyist that would have you believe marijuana is evil. Americans must realize that marijuana, though a sedative it is, does not make one lazy or destroy the drive to succeed. The government needs to act on the 20-year-old debate and legalize marijuana.

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man use which have some mood altering or medicinal capacity, none is quite so controversial as marijuana.

In principle, laws are created by governing bodies in order to protect their citizens. We happen to be in a country where freedom is as much a part of the legal system as protection, so legislators

The legalization of marijuana would be chaos in this particular country, due to our puritanical attitude and probable irresponsibility of its use. Our culture just wouldn't know how to handle it.

have to decide whether a law is fair regarding these two ever-conflicting parts. Do we need protection from the use of marijuana? There are distinct cultural characteristics of our nation that suggest we do.

There are many fundamental reasons for marijuana to be made legal: economic principles, commercial and medicinal purposes, and even morality. However, there are more important reasons for it to remain illegal: politics and practicality.

Marijuana's commercial and medicinal purposes are numerous as they are in other illegal drugs. The Novocaine your dentist uses, and Benzocaine — found in many over-the-counter topical ointments — are all synthetic clones of cocaine. Should we legalize cocaine?

The fact that marijuana is a drug, does not make it harmful. But there is another factor that does.

Marijuana can't be immoral because it's just a plant and doesn't do anything malicious. We do. Humankind, and particularly Americans, are the enemy in this battle because we as a society do dumb things. We get "buzzed" on our drug of choice, operate cars or machinery, and kill each other or ourselves. Our government can't allow "pot" to be legally involved with the likes of alcohol, and here's why.

Although alcohol and cigarettes are by far more dangerous than marijuana, we've been using them gleefully in this country since its founding. They are more or less socially acceptable, and therefore have remained legal. Pot, on the other hand — through the puritanical nature of the U.S. — has been associated with the foulest segments of society and has been deemed innately evil as a result.

In Holland marijuana is legal and not a problem for its citizens. Crime stemming from the drug is almost nonexistent. In Jamaica, "Ganja" is illegal due to pressure from the U.S., but it is socially acceptable. Sweet little old grandmothers smoke and sell it. It's as much a part of their past as alcohol and tobacco is to ours.

The legalization of marijuana would be chaos in this particular country, due to our puritanical attitude and probable irresponsibility of its use. Voting for it would be political suicide.

Our culture just wouldn't know how to handle legalized marijuana.

Frank Stanford is a graduate philosophy student

Bring us your poor ... your poison

FDA fails to control contaminated food imports

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has failed greatly in recent years to halt the importation of Central and South American produce contaminated by pesticides banned in this country. Despite the FDA's efforts to forestall this problem, three factors allow the tainted products to reach domestic markets and American dinner tables.



JASON SWEENEY
Columnist

Only one percent of the one million plus shipments of food that enter American ports annually are able to be inspected by the FDA. This is the result of low manpower in the face of perpetually increasing imports. Due in part to an inadequate and non-growing number of inspectors, FDA inspections between 1991 and 1992 dropped a staggering 13 percent, a five year low.

The import levels will only continue to grow, especially with the passage of NAFTA. Since 1987, Central American imports have tripled. Mexican produce imports alone are presently worth an estimated \$1.2 billion.

A second factor to consider revolves around how the FDA ineptly deals with guilty parties. When produce is halted in port, the FDA inexplicably allows the importer to retain custody of the produce while samples of it are being analyzed. During this layover many im-

porters simply unload their wares in spite of the FDA. Others merely bounce from one port to another until they have located a place where such impediments do not exist.

Elsewhere, the fines and monetary losses that importers must sometimes sustain are negligible when compared to the profits seen upon sale of the produce. For instance, importers must all post a bond with the Customs Service to import here. This bond is set commensurate with the value of the produce in the originating nation, and those found in violation of FDA regulations must forfeit this bond. To illustrate the insignificance of this bond forfeiture, peas in Central America may be worth only 15 cents per pound, while the same peas are worth perhaps 85 cents more per pound here. It is easy then to see why importers would risk losing this bond.

A third factor smacks of simple idiocy. Many of the pesticides that are illegal to use in this country are legal to manufacture here. Chemical companies sell their products abroad, and the chemicals we're supposed to be protected against are ultimately reaching us. In the past two years, for example, heptachlor — a pesticide banned for use in the U.S. but produced in Illinois — has been found in Costa Rican cantaloupes, Mexican carrots, and Guatemalan squash bound for the U.S.

The greatest concern in all this pertains to the possibility of health risks. Between November 1991 and August 1993, the FDA discovered more than 400 produce shipments from Latin America to be tainted by pesticides illegal in the U.S. One such inspection last year in Dallas revealed Mexican pep-

pers with two types of DDT, which was banned over a decade ago. According to Dr. Bill Plapp, professor of insecticide toxicology at Texas A&M, DDT has been found in recent studies to be a potential carcinogen in humans.

Since late 1991 alone, the FDA has recorded over 60 instances of the pesticide endosulfan being used in six Latin American nations. Endosulfan contains the hormone estrogen which at high concentrations is believed to be a potential cause for breast cancer.

This problem worries many who see the potential for a real public health disaster. J. Kevin Donohue, of the General Accounting Office, said, "With adulterated food coming into this country, sooner or later we're going to have a major problem..." The National Academy of Sciences announced this summer that current pesticide residue levels were of risk to children, and that the government must examine ways in which to lessen this threat.

Somehow, the FDA seems inclined to sidestep and belittle this issue. FDA official Gary Dykstra said, "We do not see any public health problem now with produce coming into this country..." If these pesticides were non-problematic, then why were they made illegal by Dykstra's own agency?

This matter seems to be a perfect scenario in which to "reinvent government." Expanded appropriations must go to agencies like the FDA so that they can more effectively perform their all-important role.

Jason Sweeney is a senior political science major



COLLEGE STATION, TX
DEC 3
1993
MAIL CALL

Want to light up? Go to the Regents' office

One of William H. Mobley's final acts as president of our fair university was to declare the entire campus a smoke-free environment. All buildings, offices, dormitories, etc. are now off-limits to smokers. Smokers were thrown outside into the heat of summer and the cold of winter. For better or worse, Texas A&M University is now completely smokeless, except for the Board of Regents office.

On Wednesday, Nov. 24, 1993, Ross D. Margraves, chairman of the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents, did the unthinkable, twice. On two separate occasions, Mr. Margraves lit up within five feet of the scion of smokers on the A&M campus, Dr. William H. Mobley. Was the reprisal swift, terrible, unmerciful? No. Margraves enjoyed his cigarettes in the comfort and warmth of the Board of Regents office, located on west side of the Memorial student Center.

Therefore, to all the students, faculty, and staff members who do not like to sit outside in the heat, cold, or rain to enjoy their few minutes of pleasure, feel free to make your way to the regents' office. You will find ashtrays in abundance, along with central heat and air and plenty of seats.

Heck, if enough smokers complain, maybe we can get the regents to rescind Mobley's mandate; we have a friend in the chairman. I wonder if the flights to

New York, courtesy of Barnes and Noble, were non-smoking flights?

Elizabeth F. Brown
Class of '93

Condoms do not protect spiritual life

In John Scrogg's Nov. 23 column he implies that mere factographic education about the disease, funneling more and more money into the vaccine research and distribution of condoms is adequate in dealing with the AIDS problem.

Since the virus nowadays spreads mostly sexually, it is often wrongly assumed that having protected sex is risk free. John and many others forget that humans, unlike the animals, also have a mental and spiritual life (often called their soul), which condoms cannot protect.

This spiritual life can easily be ruined or damaged by any sex outside marriage, particularly by a promiscuous one. The intensity of pre- and extramarital sex of young people in the U.S. is unsurpassed in any other civilized country in the world, and so is the instability of relationships, particularly that of marriage. The American people reach a sad record of having about every other marriage destroyed by a divorce, in which intensive pre- and extramarital sex of the divorced people is one of the heaviest factors.

What does it help you protecting your physical health by a regular use of a condom if you are headed towards destroy-

ing your psychological and spiritual life? A wise person will not only protect his or her body, but the "soul" too, and for this the only reliable protection known is chastity and abstinence.

Many people in the public media and in public education forget that humans do not have to act according to their basic instincts, sex being one of them. To stop the advance of AIDS we need a little self discipline and not the distribution of more condoms in public places.

Instead of blaming governments, research institutions and communities for not doing enough to stop AIDS, everybody should start with himself.

Daniel Grohol
Graduate student

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