

War on Drugs' degenerates into nothing more than stupidity

Don't fear the reefer. Legalize all drugs and our country goes down the toilet so many Quaaludes in a drug bust. I am not advocating drug use, only the decriminalization of all drugs. Why? Because the war on drugs has become a war on America (fight sound bites with sound bites), and the only winners are those who import and sell illegal drugs.

Surely the only people in favor of legalizing drugs are strung-out users, changing dealers, washed-up hip-hop and hethanistic natives of Amsterdam — land of the brave, home of the messengers. Yet earlier this year, conservative magazine *The National Review* (official motto: hippies suck) dedicated, in seven essays by leading experts, that drugs should no longer be prohibited and that to continue to do so will only harm our country. How can a war against evil harm our country? Because drugs aren't evil. They have been demonized and used as a scapegoat by people unwilling to pinpoint the real problems our society faces — one of which is being a vocal minority that imposes its moral values on a silent but willing majority. Is the drug war hurting anything? The costs are many. Drugs do cause violence. However, it doesn't come from the drug on a high; it comes from dealers selling for insanely high profits. Many experts estimate the mark-up on heroin and cocaine is over 5,000 percent. *The Economist* magazine estimates it is closer to 20,000 percent. The illegal drug market is thought to be worth \$50 billion a year. This should produce as to why dealers so eagerly fight to protect their turf. The market share equals more money and gold chains.

This artificially high price level also creates crime in another way. A cocaine addict needs as much as \$1,000 a week to support his habit. It takes an incredible amount of crime to finance such a habit. Yale law professor Steven Duke has said the drug war is responsible for at least half of our serious crime.

The implications of free-market rates are obvious — crime rates against both people and property will plummet. If drugs are legalized, a \$1,000-a-week habit becomes a \$20-a-week habit at free-market rates. Imagine the commercials: Come on down to our Midnight Madness Kilo Blowout Sale — buy one bong, get three needles free. Another cost to society is the price we pay to enforce drug laws. It costs money to arrest people, be it busting out a crack house or arresting an elderly person who grew a single marijuana plant in the hopes of alleviating arthritis. It costs to convict people. And it costs to house people in prisons.

With the amount of resources tied up in the drug war, it's no wonder so many people want it continued. The Drug Enforcement Agency exists solely because of the war on drugs. Prison builders are in favor of any policy that provides them with an endless supply of tenants. Parole officers and drug-testing companies have much at stake. And of course the ultimate beneficiaries of anti-drug laws are the importers and dealers, since it certainly doesn't pay to stand on the street corner selling legal drugs.

There is yet another cost of the drug war that is often overlooked. Many politicians have been wondering why so many children are being raised by single mothers. Often it's because their fathers, over half a million of them, are in prison — often for nothing more than the possession of drugs.

This creates a bad situation, especially for minorities. One-third of the African-American men in America are in jail or under penal supervision, largely because of drug laws and the fact that non-whites are

arrested and imprisoned at four to five times the rate whites are, despite the fact that most drug crimes are committed by whites.

The benefits of legalization are easy to see. But will these benefits be offset by increased usage? Hardly. Granted, there will be a rise in usage by those whose only reason for abstaining is a fear of the law.

But people have other reasons for not using most drugs, especially harder drugs. In a fitness-crazed, appearance-based society, who wants to look like the walking FDA experiment that

answers to the name Keith Richards? How do we head in the direction of legalization since it's impossible for politicians to call for anything less than the heads of drug dealers and users without a worthless opponent labeling them as pro-drugs or soft on crime? Politicians should note that it can be done. Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore has been re-elected twice despite the fact that he openly supports reforms in the direction of legalization.

What we need are more polls letting politicians know how the silent majority of Americans feels — a 1990 Gallup

reported that only 4 percent of Americans think the government should arrest people who use drugs.

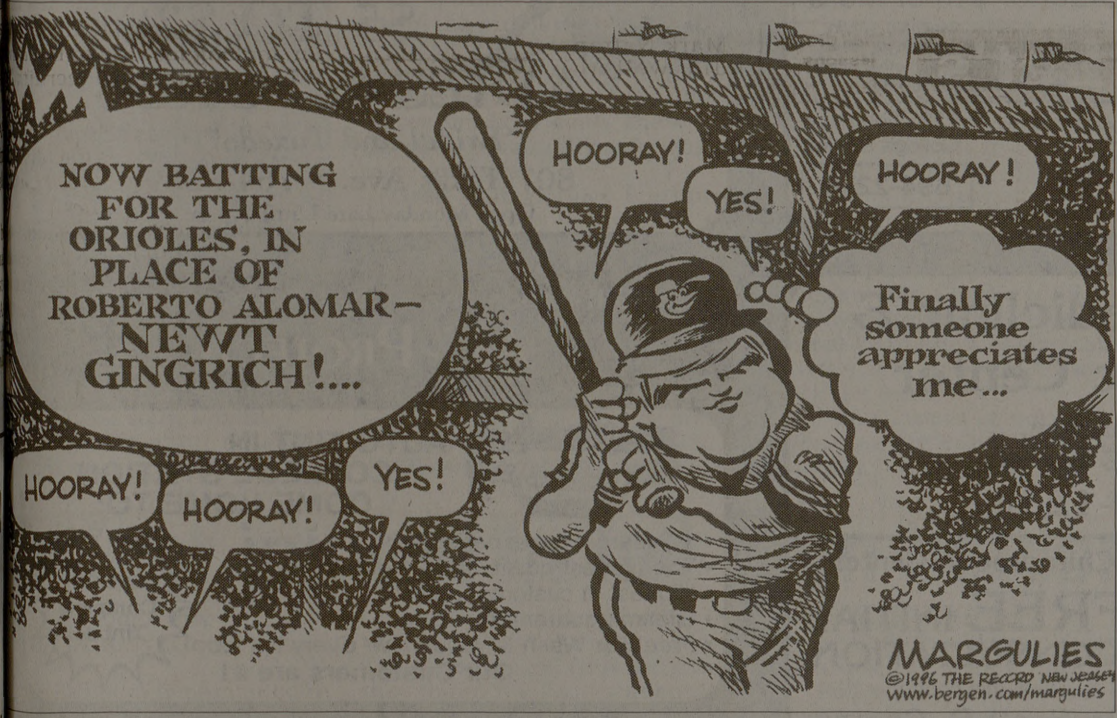
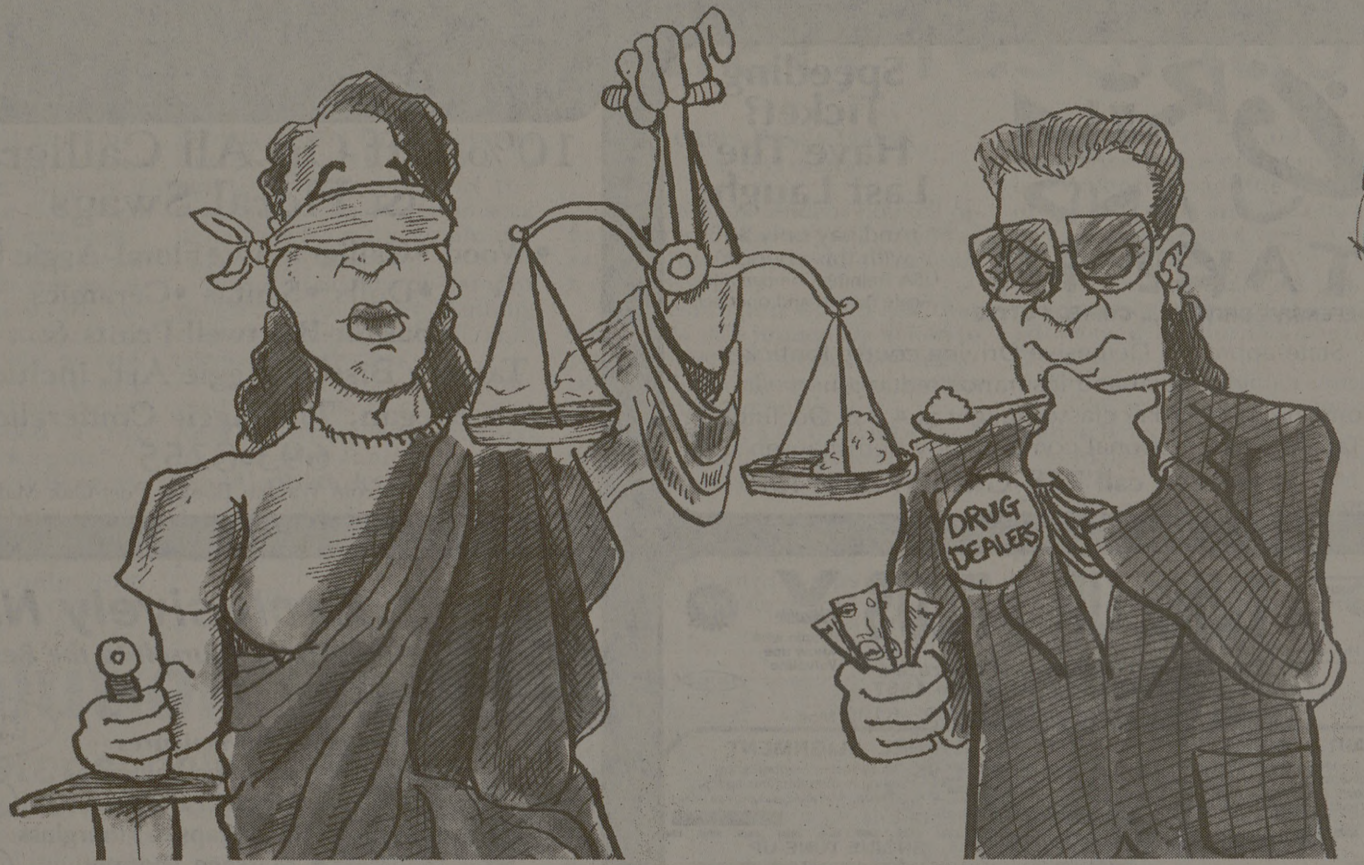
Then all it will take are a few politicians with the metaphoric guts to initialize debate on the legalization of drugs. Momentum should take us from there.

The war on drugs is over, and the good guys lost. But, like Prohibition and Vietnam, it was a war we should never have been fighting.

To follow such an unwise policy any further won't stop the country from getting high; it will only guarantee a hard come-down.



Jason Jackson
 Senior Marketing major



Media stereotyping shows irresponsibility

The media are liberal and report everything with a bias. News people are involved in a conspiracy to wash the American people and turn into socialists.

These are two of many comical arguments some conservatives have used in their attack on the media, and frankly, they are just attempting to deceive the public. The fault of critics is their failure to see the distinction between editorials and reporting.

Journalism may be liberal and write editorials with a bias. However, his or her column is an opinion found on the editorial page. Columns are not reporting news facts, but are taking news events and giving readers one perspective. Reporters write news stories based on facts. Their job is to inform the public of the events taking place throughout the nation and the world without injecting their personal views.

It is not a hard concept to grasp. The media are associated with change. Investigative reports seek to uncover injustices throughout the nation, and the media continually challenge the status quo. It is considered the norm. It is the purpose of this push for change that people label the media as liberal. However, this quality of the media has nothing to do with political or moral ideologies.

It has to do with something called truth-seeking. The media seeks the truth, whether through suspicious practices by a local representative or Watergate.

When a reporter pressures a Republican politician or asks an awkward question, conservative talk show hosts take an isolated incident and whine about the liberal

bias in the media. It's similar to saying Texas A&M is a terrible school because one student tells somebody he or she doesn't like it.

These same critics fail to pay attention when a reporter or another representative of the media pressures or asks an awkward question of a Democratic politician.

The media do not selectively criticize or investigate public officials based on their party affiliation. The media do it because that official owes the public an explanation.

The media investigated Bill Clinton when his alleged affairs surfaced. They questioned him about the Whitewater scandal. They criticized him when his health care plan failed.

Hillary Clinton went so far as to avoid the media because of the attacks on her by the press.

Should the media be labeled as conservative because they are critical of Democrats? Of course not. Reporters were trying to find the truth in what Clinton was doing. Clinton is a representative of the public, and the public has a right to know if he is involved in a potential scandal.

If people would take the time to do a little research, they would find journalists are split down the middle in terms of having a conservative or liberal philosophy.

These are the facts. Yet some conservatives continually deny these facts, and instead focus on isolated and unrelated incidents when the media appears to have a liberal bias. I suppose it is easier to blame the media rather than admit to the facts.

The stereotype of a liberal media can be torn to pieces with a little research and an ounce of common sense. Then again, maybe I'm just another biased journalist.

If people would take the time to do a little research, they would find journalists are split down the middle in terms of having a conservative or liberal philosophy.

Columnist

Jon Apgar
 Sophomore Journalism major

PS. If Cummins was really writing for cash, I'll be happy to compensate him the 23.8 cents he paid for Friday's edition plus the remainder of the semester. I've probably got a quarter in my couch, although I'll want my change.



MAIL CALL

Words of wisdom miss the true mark

Regarding Aaron Cummins' Oct. 14 Mail Call, "Transgender story crosses the line":

How dreadful. Aaron Cummins is canceling his subscription, and to make matters worse, Jose Diaz de Leon and his 34 friends are unhappy with what they read in the newspaper.

I guess The Battalion staffers should quit their jobs and give up the pursuit of journalism.

There may, however, be a more reasonable solution. After all, Cummins is obviously a wise man and seemingly knows what news should be printed and what should not.

Perhaps if Cummins were willing, he could serve as a "truth" adviser to The Battalion and take on the mundane responsibility of determining what the less-learned masses need to know.

Diaz de Leon and his 34 friends (if they're not too busy searching for a bike with 34 seats) could serve as Cummins' staff. The only sad fact of the matter is that Cummins does not meet the age requirement to serve this country as president. Why, if Cummins could be on the ballot, things would be so much easier.

Alex Walters
 Class of '97
 and former Battalion staffer

unwilling to come forth to ask questions. That is what "Coming Out Week" is about: providing a forum to banish ignorance and fear.

E. Kay Maas
 Class of '00

Fans should show support for team

Regarding Bryan Goodwin's Oct. 10 column, "Fair-weather fans invade Kyle Field":

Thank you for the wake-up call. I have been very disappointed in my fellow Aggies. I was very enthused to be here my freshman year. I went to all the games, all the midnight yells — I loved the Spirit.

I took a year off and was sad to see that I am now pinned the obnoxious one in the crowd. Someone even told me to shut up because the players couldn't think. Regardless, I kept on cheering. I yell until my voice is no more while I hear others muttering negative comments behind me at the games I can attend.

It's the negative attitude that is bringing the Aggies down. Whatever happened to standing through the good and the bad? Why do the "fair-weather" fans even bother going to the games? It's a disgrace to the school. Texas A&M is known for its excellency in education as well as its enduring spirit and traditions!

Julienne Kaup
 Class of '98

Humor in column comes only in irony

Regarding Shannon Halbrook's Oct. 10 column, "Mars Company crosses line of decency":

I saw the humor in an almost half-page spread on M&M's, but mainly in the fact that it simply did a good job expressing the idea that Aggies lack motivation in intelligent thought and causes.

Aggies should be able to pride themselves in the fact that some of the most creative and intelligent minds of our decade attend

our University, and we should be ashamed of the fact that such intellect is wasted complaining about cyclists, pedestrians and M&M's.

I love and respect Aggie traditions as much as the next student, but I still find it shameful that the only things that inspire Aggies to defend their convictions are fee increases or a threat to one less log on Bonfire. Perhaps it's time for our leaders at The Battalion to give us more to think about and less to laugh about, before their motto becomes, "Inquiring Minds Want to Joke."

Janell D. Davis
 Class of '97

The Lady Aggies deserve support

After reading John Balch's and Josh Concklin's responses to Aja Henderson's "Females win the battle of the sexes at A&M" column, I had a dream. This dream involved an Aggie land with:

(1) Coed yell leaders that led yells in support of A&M without offending their opponents. The women's soccer team made a conscious decision in 1980 to eliminate the "Beat the Hell Outta" yell because of the social violence problem, and the current yell leaders would probably end this tradition if they spent one hour of community service with the Twin City Mission shelters.

(2) A Bonfire that burned the clutter (not trees) that inhibits people's lives, as the original Bonfire so effectively did for the "Ol Aggs."

(3) 70,000 enthusiastic Aggies watching the nationally ranked women's soccer team play on Kyle Field!

Carol Sullivan
 Class of '82, '86, '92

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 300 words or fewer and include the author's name, class, and phone number.

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For more details on letter policy, please call 845-3313 and direct your question to the opinion editor.