

## DRUG WAR GONE BAD

Drug war is a failure, gives citizens more credit and give up on a lost cause

New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson is not a typical politician. He has the courage to speak honestly on a subject considered sacred by the governing establishment: America's war on drugs. The Republican has publicly acknowledged his past use of marijuana and cocaine. Johnson believes the drug war is an abysmal and expensive failure. In an interview with MSNBC, he said, "We're spending more and we're locking more people up. Personally, I have a problem with putting people in jail for drug use."

According to the Justice Department, a record 1.86 million men and women were behind bars and another 4.5 million were on parole or probation for drug offenses in 1999. The government spends approximately \$50 billion a year on the effort to combat illegal drugs. It appears to be losing. *The Washington Post* reports 1 percent of the adult population in America was in prison in 1980. Now that number has risen to 3 percent, or one in every 32 people.

The failed effort to stem the tide of illegal drugs in the United States has only created more criminals. The time has come to admit the drug war is not only a failure, it is not winnable. Instead



JONATHAN JONES

of pursuing a lost cause, other options merit serious consideration, including legalizing drugs and viewing drug use as a health, and not a criminal, problem.

Narcotics will always be around. The illegal drug trade is estimated to be \$400 billion a year — larger than the automobile industry. Some of the billions of dollars spent fighting the drug war could be redirected into combating the traffic violations, murders, burglaries and rapes that are often rooted in drug abuse. Under the legalization scenario, addiction would be treated as a health problem, not a crime. Criminal activity of someone under the influence of a substance would be severely prosecuted, similar to drunken driving.

Legality must not imply approval. Money freed for drug education should focus on the fact that doing drugs has serious consequences. Officials lose credibility when they tell children they will fry their brains. In fact, drugs have a very real and powerful lure. Marijuana and



RUBEN DELUNA/THE BATTALION

more dangerous substances can make people feel better, less lonely and more in control of their lives. But children might appreciate and positively respond to the truth that long-term abuse is a major handicap.

Through legalization and an honest educational campaign, the government could control, regulate and tax drug use. The issue certainly merits further study. America's narcotics policy raises serious constitutional questions. Yale law professor Steven Duke said, "The anti-constitutional effects of the drug war have been so relentlessly obvious for so long that a cynic might wonder whether the Constitution is not the true enemy of the drug warriors." In a free society, purchasing and intaking substances harming only the individual should not be a criminal act. The actions resulting from these poor decisions should be the

focus of law enforcement.

Joseph McNamara, former police chief in San Jose, Calif., believes that America's war on drugs is a pointless endeavor. He said, "There is no way the police can penetrate this world unless everyone becomes a suspect, everyone gets stopped, everyone gets searched." Under no circumstances should citizen privacy ever be compromised in this way.

America's current drug policies are simply not working. For many, obtaining illegal drugs is easier than obtaining legal ones. There are real casualties in the drug war, including nonviolent criminals facing jail time for only harming their own bodies. Most of the nation's citizens are intelligent, rational people who understand the problems of drug abuse. They deserve better than the rhetoric of politicians promising to pour more money into a losing battle.

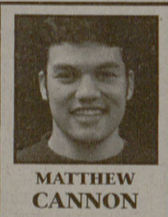
The well-documented failure of the drug war should raise questions about continuing these policies that have so little progress to show. Through legalization, the government just might be able to control the drug market in a way that works. Instead of arguing how much more money should be poured into this battle, it would be smart to begin debating of the alternatives.

Jonathan Jones is a junior political science major.

## Wildcard Voters

Hispanic voters torn between party loyalties

Somebody finally won — or sort of won — or lost the presidential election. Whatever. If there is one thing to learn from the 2000 election, it is that both political parties need a major boost from some group of voters.



MATTHEW CANNON

If either party is to break out of the current deadlock and be truly successful in the future, it must bring new members under its umbrella. One group in America today could give such a boost: Latin Americans. Although Hispanics strongly supported Al

**Republicans are unsympathetic in many areas important to Hispanics such as immigration and affirmative action.**

Gore in the last election, there is great reason for Democrats to worry about their allegiance. Hispanics and Republicans are in agreement on a number of issues. If Republicans can show a willingness to compromise, do not be surprised to see significant numbers of Hispanics switching over to the GOP in the next few decades.

Hispanic voters, and in particular Mexican-American voters, are the wild card in politics right now. The Hispanic population in America is increasing rapidly, mainly due to immigration from Mexico. A clever politician would care more about the number of Hispanics who vote: The number of registered Hispanic voters since 1994 has increased almost twofold from about 5 million to more than 8 million. If either political party could consistently win a majority of this vote in the future, it would be well on its way to winning national offices. The parties know this, and it showed in this last election in Spanish television commercials and the Hispanic speakers at the national conventions. The results of this effort were a bit confusing.

Despite the efforts made by Republicans in 2000 to reach out to them, and despite a presidential candidate from Texas who speaks Spanish fairly well, most Hispanics chose Al Gore. Gore has little experience with Hispanic culture and, judging from his pronunciation of the language, doesn't know

Spanish from his own left foot. Their support for Al Gore is strange. But what is even stranger is when you look at what many Hispanic voters care about. Despite their clear support of Gore, many Hispanics voters actually have quite a few things in common with Republicans.

A 1998 poll by television giant Univision found that Hispanics cared deeply about a number of Republican issues, such as crime and family values. In addition, most Hispanics strongly support Republican programs for school vouchers and school prayer and put emphasize education, something George W. Bush has also emphasized heavily. Henry Bonilla, R-Texas put it best when he said Latino culture has "respect for the institution of marriage and family, a strong faith, emphasis on education, and the importance of hard work and individual responsibility." This reads like a GOP convention speech. Although Hispanics are still mainly registered as Democrats, an increasing number are not only willing to vote for Republican candidates but are willing to run as Republicans themselves. In fact, Hispanic identification with the Democratic Party in Texas has dropped in recent years from 48 percent to 33 percent.

Memo to Republicans: Do not mess this one up. The percentage of white, affluent males in America is dropping quickly. In addition, not all Hispanic voters are ecstatic about jumping into the arms of the GOP, and rightly so. Republicans are unsympathetic in many areas important to Hispanics, such as immigration and affirmative action. Attempting to erect a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border is just not going to be popular with Hispanics. Republicans have an opportunity here, but they must meet Hispanic voters in the middle. Affirmative action is supported by many Hispanics, but Republicans will not be able to match the Democrats on this issue. Instead, they should concentrate on immigration policy and bilingual education, two issues extremely important to Hispanics.

In the Univision poll, 83 percent supported bilingual education. In addition, many Hispanics are immigrants themselves and have shown a willingness to punish at the polls those who are anti-immigration. Only by compromising will the GOP be able to bring significant numbers of Hispanic voters into the party. People get what they give, and the Republicans are about to learn that lesson for better or worse.

Matthew Cannon is a senior biomedical science major.

## Professor says Clinton did not lie

In response to Mariano Castillo's Jan. 23 column.

You said that people focused on the way Clinton worded his statement about how he and Monica Lewinsky had sexual relations. Clinton's statement was: "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Ms. Lewinsky." Clinton did not lie. He did not have sexual relations. Both Clinton and Lewinsky admitted that he put his hand here and she put her hand there, and he did this and she did that. However, none of that is "sexual relations."

Remember, people in public office, particularly lawyers, are extremely knowledgeable and aware of the meanings of words. They use words precisely. So, it is the height of folly to believe that the president would go on national television and make a statement, complete with emphasis and emphatic arm and hand motion, that was anything but true, that would be easy to disprove. Clinton did not lie. So, if Clinton did not lie, what is missing? Definitions of terms. People just do not understand what Clinton said. The general public does not know the meaning of "sexual relations." The dictionary defines "sexual relations" as meaning only "coitus." Coitus has nothing to do with where he put his hand or where she put her hand or anything else. It means just sexual intercourse. Clinton did not lie.

Douglas Perret Starr professor of journalism

## Lane: a puppet of A&M administration

In response to Forrest Lane's Mail Call.

I find it ridiculous to have to read an article from the student body president telling the students of A&M how they

are supposed to behave in the new Sbsisa Dining Hall. It is not that I don't agree with him that food should not be thrown in Sbsisa; it is that he has shown very little concern for what has happened this year, especially in dorm unity. His comment that students are letting hall pride overtake their respect for the money that has gone into Sbsisa is ridiculous because the truth of the matter is that he knows nothing about what is happening in the residence halls. Had he actually been involved with the students of the residence halls, he would understand that they are losing a large amount of hall pride and unity due to the lack of Bonfire this year. Instead of Forrest Lane getting out and talking to students and attempting to voice their concerns, he has successfully acted as a puppet of the administration, only doing what they ask. I have seen Forrest do very little for the students except what the administration has wanted. When they felt threatened by the Keep the Fire Burning Organization, he was there backing their opinions. Again, the administration is upset by the behavior in Sbsisa and apparently they came kicking and screaming to Forrest to quickly and urgently write a letter to the *Battalion* to end food throwing in Sbsisa. So I have a question to ask Forrest: where have you been the rest of the year? I have had many concerns about A&M.

This year A&M has experienced a great deal more change than it has in a long time. This is the year that strong leadership and concern could make a difference for students struggling to move forward with the University. I think you care about what we think; but are you really trying to act in accordance with the students? Or are you just a figurehead for the administration?

I would urge our student body president to think about what his position really means, and maybe get out and talk to a few students. He might be surprised at some of the things he hears.

Gran Potter Class of '03

## Battalion cartoonist addresses student criticism, complaints

In response to the complaints brought to my attention by the editor in chief regarding my comic strip published last Monday, I voluntarily take this opportunity to try to clear up the misunderstanding I might have caused in not considering some particular conflicting ethnic circumstances.

The focus of the conflict was my depiction of a fictitious Asian-American professor. Apparently, my drawing showed very stereotypical characteristics that offended a group of people. Cartooning often means the exaggeration of physical characteristics and, due to the size and scale of a comic strip, it is even more accentuated. My intention while sketching this character was in no way an attempt to make fun of Asian-Americans at this University.

Being an international student gives me the opportunity to understand the downfalls of stereotypes that students have for other cultures, including my own. Words like "ignorance" and even "racism" were mentioned in some of the complaints. I invite those who wrote in and complained to take another look at the strip and try to understand its true intention: to make people realize through my character that not all Asian-Americans are math TAs. My character due to the use of that stereotype committed a huge mistake.

In the future I will try to give more thought to the possible consequences of what I am drawing and the characteristics of my graphics. Nevertheless I am a human being and I am not perfect, so I can only try to avoid situations like this.

Adrian Calcano Class of '01

The Battalion encourages letters to the editor.

Letters must be 300 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number.

The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style, and accuracy.

Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Letters may also be mailed to:

The Battalion - Mail Call  
014 Reed McDonald  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, TX  
77843-1111

Campus Mail: 1111  
Fax: (409) 845-2647  
E-mail: battletters@hotmail.com