

Editorial

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Tool for power?

Drug testing not answer; concern is

Last week, the Justice Department announced it will start mandatory drug testing of 60,000 employees later this year. That includes folks at the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the Bureau of Prisons.

It sets a frightening precedent.

The administrative order signed by Attorney General Edwin Meese III instigates random testing for any justice-department employee who works with sensitive internal documents such as those regarding criminal investigations, intelligence and other matters.

Granted, competent minds must address these topics. But Americans are subject to more than enough government intervention. Drug testing—mandatory or otherwise—is a tool for excessive power and control over the individual. Once it becomes accepted practice in the federal government, the ripple effect of drug testing has the potential to devastate our society.

Mandatory drug testing of federal employees is an invasion of privacy. But it goes beyond that.

If an employer can't tell when a worker is under the influence and if drug use doesn't affect job performance, it simply isn't any of the employer's business.

If you have to test to know if your workers are taking drugs, you don't know them, and the problem isn't just substance abuse. It's a management flaw that can't be corrected by elimi-

nating workers just because they take drugs.

If you see somebody at work under the influence, you might overlook it the first time, maybe with a little friendly banter about the benefits of Visine. The second time, you start to wonder. If you care, you'll take the time to ask, "What's going on in your life? Is there something you want to talk about?"

The bottom line is concern. Employers have to value employee well-being over productivity and image.

It's hard to confront someone about potential substance abuse. It's embarrassing. God help us, somebody we hired has a problem. We dance around it and ignore it and hope it'll go away. We avoid talking about it because we assume they'll deny it anyway.

The government's goal seems to be to eliminate workers who are involved with drugs. But that only creates unemployed Americans who happen to take drugs. Potential victims will just learn how to conceal their drug use.

Americans must learn to confront the problem of potential drug abuse. Education and counseling are essential. Managers should be able to identify the problems and the signs of drug use and really do something about it.

"We aim to set an example." That's what Meese said about keeping drug-enforcement officials drug-free.

Examples, however, are best set by living them.

In 1987, actions still speak louder than right-wing threats.

Quibbles & bits

Union men's room entry inaccessible

• A reader brought up an interesting point about the men's restroom near the bakery in the Nebraska Union. The restroom is equipped for handicapped use, but the entryway has several turns, making it almost impossible to guide a wheelchair through. The Union Board needs to consider remodeling the entryway.

• The University of Nebraska-Lincoln isn't the only Big Eight school having problems putting books and periodicals in its libraries, according to National On-Campus Report. Despite a 7.2 percent increase in its library budget, the University of Kansas will buy fewer books this year. Kansas buys about 40 percent of its publications abroad, mainly in Western Europe and Japan, and a devalued U.S. dollar on the foreign market has left the school with less money to spend.

• Last week's "Dum Quote of the Week" came from Sports Illustrated magazine. This

week, we borrow a few lines from Playboy magazine's profile of Jessica Hahn, who admitted to being Jim Bakker's mistress: "If people want to make fun of me, they can—I don't care. I am not living my life for them anymore. To me, this is a creation. I am not being immoral or anything. I am doing something that says, 'Jessica is not a robot. She is not to be used and thrown out. She is an individual.'" She reportedly was paid \$1 million for the story and topless photos. The article included sketches of Bakker in his underwear.

• A recent study by National On-Campus Report uncovered some disturbing suicide figures on Midwestern college campuses. In a study of 77 suicides at 12 universities, researchers found that college students' suicides can be traced to three major causes: family difficulties, academic concerns and difficulties in relationships. Even more disturbing was the role of drugs and alcohol in suicides.



"SURE I THINK BORK IS POLITICALLY IN THE CENTER ... BUT THAT'S TOO FAR TO THE RIGHT FOR ME!"

Heroin would ease pain

Terminally ill also suffer from congressional procrastination

The movement to ease the awful pain of some deaths from cancer is showing signs of life. Not inconceivably, the present Congress could make the decisive move: to permit doctors administering to terminally ill patients who have failed to respond to lesser drugs, to give injections of heroin. It has been a very long fight, and Mrs. Judith Quattlebaum of Washington has led it, unflinchingly. More than 10 years ago, she undertook to organize a committee to bring to the attention of Congress, which passes laws regulating the use of drugs, the plight of Americans who suffer great pain of the kind that could be alleviated by such injections of heroin as are routinely administered in Great Britain to those who are certain soon to die.

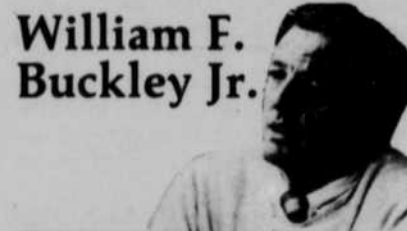
What Mrs. Q. keeps running into is: a) a part of the medical establishment that against all reasonable evidence persists in insisting that a combination of lesser drugs will accomplish the same pain abatement (there are plenty of doctors on the other sides, and the British experience is now long, and conclusive); and b) more important, those in Congress who succumb to the argument that to authorize heroin in the hospitals would be to flood the streets with this dangerous drug, augmenting the incidence of drug addiction.

But the data have been carefully accumulated and the Committee on the Treatment of Intractable Pain has in hand data difficult to contend with. If every milligram of heroin that it is proposed be legally authorized to hospitals tending to cancer patients were stolen from the hospital safes at 2 p.m. and made instantly available to street peddlers of illegal heroin, the result would be to augment the existing

supply of illegal drugs by between 2 percent and 4 percent. Since there is little likelihood that 1,000 hospitals would coordinate the circumstances for such an operation, more difficult than the Normandy landing, what we see is a threat of no consequence.

And then the most important figure of all. Since 1980, when the committee came close to winning congressional approval, 8,000 persons per year have died of cancer of that excruciatingly painful variety that might have been sharply mitigated if only Congress had acted.

The good news this season has been the activity of Sen. Daniel Inouye, who is the principal Senate sponsor of the heroin bill. He is joined by a number of



senators across the ideological spectrum. Sen. Dennis DeConcini has been very active. Add senators John Melcher, Quentin Burdick, Ted Stevens, Thad Cochran, Donald Riegle, Carl Levin, John Warner, Nancy Kassebaum, James McClure, Patrick Leahy — and, most recently, Robert Dole.

The principal opponent of the measure is Congressman Charles Rangel of Harlem, a man of great charm and persuasion who is, however, a fundamentalist on the drug problem. If heroin is bad, Mr. Rangel reasons, then why would Congress authorize its use? Well, Congress authorizes the use of napalm, and every day in every hospital, tools — and drugs — are used that, misused,

would cause trouble, sometimes death. But Mr. Rangel does not own Congress, and much turns on the position taken, as yet unstated, by the president. And on this particular issue, much turns on the attitude of the first lady, the nation's most adamant and conspicuous opponent of drug abuse. But Mrs. Reagan, daughter of a distinguished doctor and daughter of an ailing mother, knows the difference between heroin used by a healthy street delinquent and heroin administered by doctors, one of whose mandates is to ease pain.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, as chairman of the Committee on Labor and Human Resources, presides over that committee that normally would hear testimony for and against the proposed measure. He has told his colleagues that he is too busy to undertake to examine the proposed bill during this session. But congressional tradition holds that at least one committee of Congress should hear testimony; and back in 1984, the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment — which reports to the Committee on Energy and Commerce — heard such testimony. It would be altogether conventional for the Senate to waive its own hearings, accept those of the other house and move directly to a vote on the floor.

Sen. Kennedy, who often speaks of the unnecessary cruelties of life, ought to react to the principal problem before the house, which is: Every day's delay means 25 deaths in unnecessary pain. The whole of Congress should be alerted to this point. It is responsible to pass the bill — or to vote it down. What is not responsible is simply to dither away another month, year, decade, letting the agony of the hopeless subsidize congressional torpor.

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Letter

Reader: U.S. women should focus less on feminist issues

In response to Jeanne Bourne's editorial (Daily Nebraskan, Sept. 30), I believe she has a somewhat tilted perspective in her analysis of the current state of affairs of today's women. An adjusted perspective would be:

• Sexual harassment or discrimination — what would Bourne think about a man opening a door for her?

• The use of the term "wrong" in reference to a university operator saying, "You're in luck, he's single" or "Ooh, nice legs" is reactionary. Further, it is a typical response from someone looking for offense, dis-

playing gender paranoia. It may be called uncouth for instance. "Wrong" is ultra-relative as well as prescriptive in a moral sense. This is not the best issue to imply wrongdoing.

• Remember the more important issues that need attention, especially from bright, young and ambitious minds. Problems in America as well as around the world need forum and creative solutions. Try to focus on these, not on nitpicky militant feminist issues that are orders of magnitude, less in importance.

• Once in a while, remember how proud you should be to be an American woman. How many advantages

and rewards you have access to. How could you work on bringing these to other women of the world, e.g. South Africa and on and on. Most of all, relax and don't have your feelings sticking out waiting to get stepped on. Be a woman respected by men and women alike because you've worked on solutions to problems that are really important. Then the next time some man on the street yells, "Nice legs," your "I'm offended" meter won't jump off the scale.

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