

# Drug scare

## Money bottom line to problem

By Mark Baldridge  
Diversions Editor

"Of course I've tried marijuana, but I didn't inhale."

In today's political climate, admitting to the use of drugs, even drugs as innocuous as marijuana, amounts to career suicide.

No matter how remote in the past your drug use was, it can be held against you on Judgment Day. It might amount to the most critical issue were you to run for public office.

"Are you now or have you ever been ..."



a kind of political spring cleaning.

Anyone was suspect. Any cultural phenomenon, from the "British Invasion" to the fluoridation of tap water was perceived as threat.

In those days it was the Commies that had everyone in a sweat. But really, of course, it was never the Commies.

It was whoever was hated and feared most.

Union organizers, Jews, socialists, intellectuals, homosexuals, Hollywood stars and rock 'n' roll musicians: the politically incorrect of a previous generation.

Today we're in the throes of a post-Cold War hysteria. The enemy has vanished, its most frightening maneuver yet. The finger that has grown rigid pointing goes on pointing.

The staggering volume of propaganda on the subject of drugs and drug use points to this as the critical fear issue of the decade.

Several years ago the system limited itself, for the most part, to pointing out the health hazards of specific drugs; there are many.

Today we are smothered in blanket statements of the moral and civic evil of drugs in general. "Users are losers," don't ya' know.

It's gotten so that one feels compelled to point out once again that any drug can be abused and that many are actually helpful.

There is a strong sense in the current climate that individuals can't be allowed to decide these things for themselves. Monoxydyl, the miracle hair growth drug, is available only from your doctor. Who knows what mischief pranksters would get into were it sold over-the-counter? Just look at the Nair fiasco.

You can purchase powerful rat poisons, handguns, condoms and beer, but you won't get penicillin without a prescription.

There's just something wrong with altering your consciousness, no matter how ancient or universal the human tradition behind it. That's what we're told.

But don't be fooled; it's not about drugs, it's about money.

Persecution of offenders only raises the price of the substance. Remember your Economics 101: the law of supply and demand.

Assuming the demand for illegal drugs is a constant, regulation against drugs will drive the price up in direct proportion to the enforcement of the law. Controlled substances are now at an all-time high. Who is making the billions of dollars on drugs that are being made each year?

Some people are getting very wealthy.

The worst thing that ever happened to the Mafia was the repeal of prohibition. They learned their lesson well, I think. They'll never again make the mistake of failing to cooperate with the system.

And there are perennial and none too unlikely rumors that the CIA is involved in the cocaine trade.

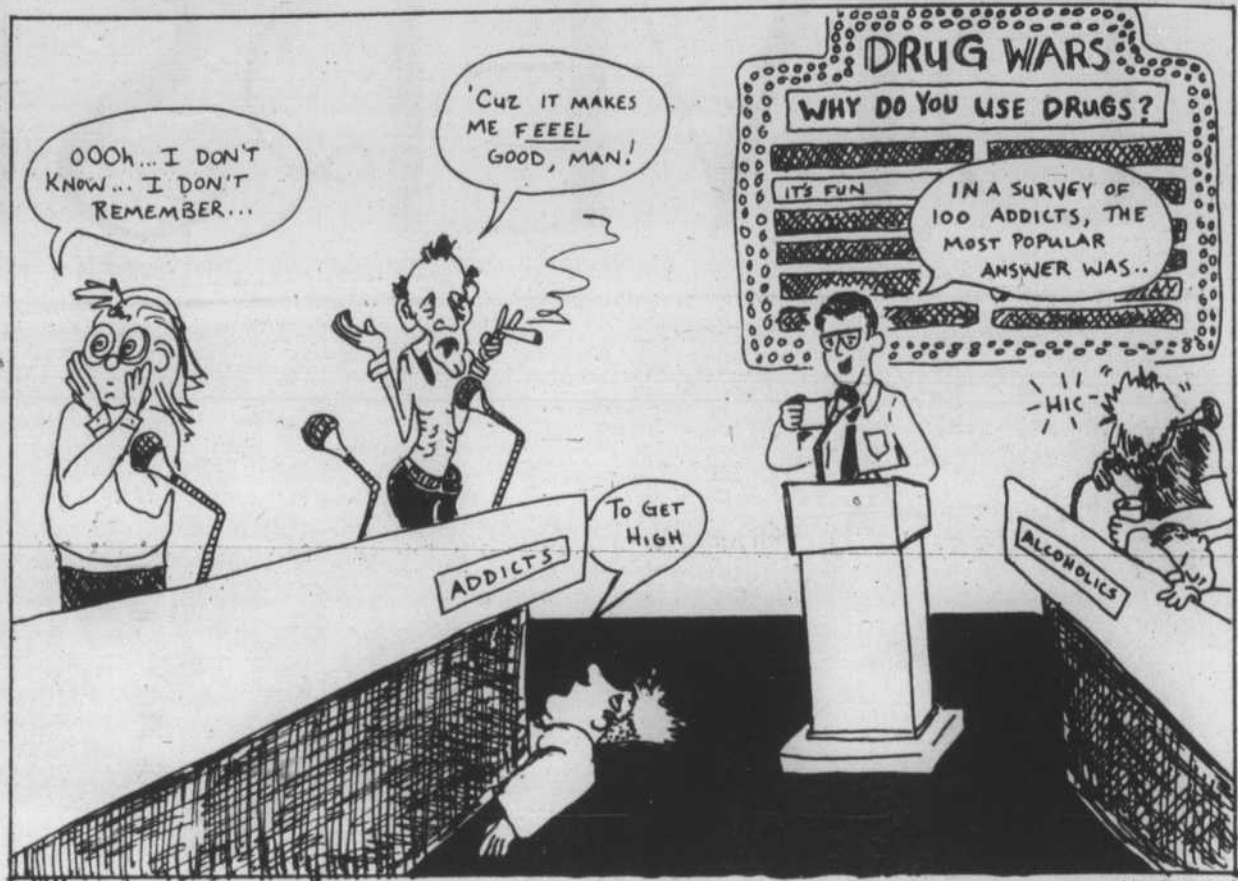
And then there are the inner-city kids who have built an entire culture on the drug trade. There's a lot of money to be made there, and even with its risks, it beats flipping burgers.

Controlled substances are controlled to a certain end, and that end is the money to be made.

And it makes pretty good sense to me, too. Were all illegal drugs made legal tomorrow, the U.S. economy would lose one of its firmest underpinnings.

When I think of all the drug money spent on Japanese stereos, speed boats and flashy cars in a single year, it makes my head spin.

For God's sake, keep that reefer off the shelf!



Lisa Pytko/DN

## Self-proclaimed cultural elite writer compelled to discuss family values

Last week I heard an interview with Bob Night, a Washington D.C. lobbyist for family values, on a National Public Radio show called Fresh Air.

Although he won't admit it directly, Bob's family values, like those of most politicians, are described in strangely circular ways. A family is a mother, a father and their children, and don't let the cultural elites tell you otherwise.

But hey, that doesn't mean that other people can't be families. Depending on who's listening, single mothers and their children may or may not be families.

If they happen to depend on public assistance for a few months after they leave some scumbag who beat them, they most certainly cannot be a family.

Gay people can't be a family if you're talking to a conservative group, but they can if you're talking to large mixed groups.

As the only self-proclaimed cultural elite I'm aware of, possibly the only one extant, I am morally compelled to discuss this issue further.

Bob's family values, don't you see, are inextricably linked to fundamentalist Christianity — a particularly oppressive branch of an otherwise matured and tamed religion. He said to Terry Gross of NPR, in all seriousness, that the relaxation of divorce laws and the campaign to guarantee civil rights for all persons — regardless of what they do in their own private bedrooms — was "the first step toward the criminalization of Christianity in this country." Bob believes this.

Well, Bob, maybe Christianity should be criminalized. After all, other lifestyle choices are criminalized in many states in many



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ways.

In some states in this country, it is not legal for a man and a woman, even legally married, to touch their lips and tongue to each others genitals. Why?

I wonder if these legislators are themselves so repressed that they become aroused while creating sexually oppressive legislation. More bizarre and less likely fetishes are widely accepted among mental health professionals.

Or perhaps they enjoy oral sex more if it is illicit. I know I do. Drive to Michigan sometime and make love in the back seat of a car and you'll see what I mean.

"Oh baby, you know we could be arrested for this?"

"I hope they throw us in the same cell . . . forever. . . ." Slurp.

Laying aside, for the moment, the question of whether the government of this country has constitutional authority to legislate the chemical compounds that you can willingly place into your body, let us consider property rights.

In 1984, the Congress granted the Drug Enforcement Agency and local law enforcement agencies sweeping powers to confiscate property that agents suspect is involved in the trafficking of drugs. The laws are called forfeiture laws, somewhat euphemistically. Make no mistake, it is in no way voluntary.

You don't need to be convicted of any crime.

You don't need to be charged with any crime.

No proof need ever be offered to any court, no court order of any kind need ever be obtained.

You don't even need to be aware that your property has been used in committing a crime for which no one was convicted or even charged.

I haven't plagiarized that sentence from "Catch 22." This, unfortunately, is reality.

Today, in the land of the free, you can lose your car, home, cash, bank accounts, plane, boat or other property by acting suspicious. Acting suspicious is easier to do if you're black, but everyone can get in on this act.

If you want to try this, you should know that the best way to act suspicious is to pay for something in cash — a plane ticket for example. Something that the government would prefer you to use a

See LONGSINE on 9