

Just say no?

Blame the cause of drug use, not the drugs

I am physically addicted to caffeine. If I tried to go without it for a day, I would become lethargic and irritable. My head would throb, and my temper would flare.

I am inordinately fond of alcohol. If I went without it for a day, a week, or even a year, I would experience no physical repercussions. But I would miss it. I love beer, and I'm a sucker for a good single-malt scotch, but I am by no means addicted. Ibuprofen, Tylenol and Alka-Seltzer round out the list of my drugs of choice.

I've also dabbled in other drugs — the illegal kind. I've experimented with the ones that are supposed to serve as "gateways" to harder drugs, eventually leading to a life of petty crime and forsaken potential. I tried the drug that should have made me leap off of a building in the belief that I could fly. I've also tried the drug that's supposed to sap every last ounce of your motivation and eliminate your chances of ever becoming a productive member of society.

I'm not alone in this. In fact, I'm in excellent company. The current President of the United States, the Vice President and the Speaker of the House all have admitted to trying marijuana. Bill, Al and Newt dismiss their own illegal drug use as harmless experimentation, something any normal kid would have done in their place.

As politicians and responsible members of society, however, these men are quick to denounce anyone who has done the same thing. They insist that the drug user in question is well on his or her way to addiction and is certainly in need of treatment. This drug user is destroying the very fabric of society, and will inevitably find some way to waste the tax dollars of more responsible citizens. He or she ought to be thrown in jail, the keys thrown away.

I have news for these guys. Their war on drugs is lost. We've thrown billions of dollars and countless



Jennifer Mapes

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hours of human effort at the problem. We cannot prevent the production of drugs in other countries. We cannot keep those drugs from entering the United States, and we cannot eliminate the sale of drugs within our own borders.

The drugs just won't go away. A recent survey commissioned by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America found that marijuana use among teen-agers has been rising steadily for the last five years. Heroin is gaining popularity among middle-class Americans. Methamphetamines are epidemic. Teen-agers who don't have access to other drugs will sniff glue or paint, lick toads or suck on aerosol cans. According to one report, teen-agers have even been dipping cigarettes in embalming fluid for a high.

This society has a bizarre and unhealthy love-hate relationship with drugs. We've installed programs in the schools to teach children about the evils and dangers

of drugs. Meanwhile, prescriptions for the psychostimulant drug Ritalin have increased 500 percent since 1990. The same people who piously inform children that drugs are evil seem to be the first to treat a child's behavior problem with drugs.

We throw casual drug users in jail by the dozens, while we are inundated with ads for drugs that promise to cure everything from hair loss to insomnia. We fret about the possibility that children might be exposed to drugs and drug users in school while we're lining up for prescription drugs such as Ritalin and Prozac.

If we want to solve the drug problem, we need to start by examining our own attitudes about drugs and drug use.

We need to stop the hysteria surrounding illegal drugs. Yes, some of them are extremely harmful, but others are not. Any reasonable and coherent drug policy should include an honest assessment of a drug's potential usefulness — such as the efficacy of marijuana in treating glaucoma and easing the nausea caused by chemotherapy.

We need to stop demonizing casual drug users. Not all of them are addicts. Some of them are normal human beings who pay taxes and lead productive lives. We need to separate users and addicts in our minds, and think seriously about the causes and effects of addiction. Then we can think about providing appropriate treatment.

We also need to ask why so many people are using drugs like Prozac and Ritalin. These drugs don't solve people's problems, they merely mask the symptoms. Why are so many adults depressed? Why are the children angry and restless?

Drugs are not inherently good or bad. All drugs — legal or otherwise — can be used or misused. Drug abuse is a problem. Hysteria and hypocrisy are not the solution.

Mapes is a senior advertising and history major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Guy next door

Terrorists made up of more than foreigners

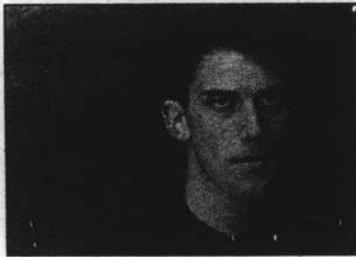
After nearly two decades, it appears that the FBI has finally captured the individual responsible for a nationwide series of bombings. If the suspect in custody is eventually proved to be the Unabomber, then all law enforcement agencies will breathe a collective sigh of relief.

The relief comes from not only ending one particularly nasty person's grudge against technology and its purveyors — but by bringing the Unabomber to justice, the FBI has accomplished far more.

First, and most importantly, the last thing this nation wants is the bombing of places and people to become a routine event. When we see weekly visions of blasted streets telecast from Belfast or Jerusalem, the notion that such carnage could become an everyday reality in Los Angeles or New York is unthinkable. Hence, the FBI needs to solve these crimes quickly, or at the very least present an image of control to the public through the media.

That brings us to point No. 2 — The Agency Plan to Downplay Negative Character (TAPDNC). With a less than glorious history of upholding personal civil rights under J.E. Hoover's command, its recent handling of the Ruby Ridge and Waco confrontations, and internal conflicts between the bureau's upper echelons of command and Attorney General Janet Reno, the FBI gets a needed and well-deserved PR boost.

Thirdly, the FBI is demonstrating its ability to deal with a wave of domestic terrorist activities. With the World Trade Center bombing, Americans could somehow accept the incident in their minds with the knowledge that the perpetrators



Fred Poyner

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were FOREIGNERS, and not the guy next door.

The problem is, that belief system has turned out to be dangerously misleading. We have met the enemy, and he is us.

Separatist movements such as The Freemen, cults such as Waco's Branch Davidians, and white supremacy factions like the one to which Timothy McVeigh belonged, all have showed how individuals can exploit the First Amendment for their own twisted and criminal purposes.

So the FBI walks a fine line between carrying out its responsibilities to safeguard the public and not trampling any one individual's or group's rights. Fairness in

judgment is weighed against intolerance of violence.

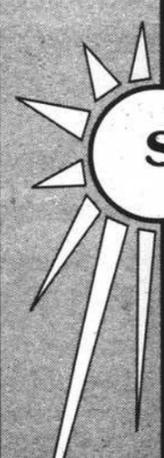
In reality, the Unabomber is only a single case in a multitude of destructive acts that occur here every day. The drive-by shooting in East L.A., the drug deal in a Miami motel room gone bad, and the drunk driver who just wiped out a family of four are all defined as domestic in origin and effect. A murder takes place in our country once every 15 minutes.

In reality, the Unabomber case is about the power of perception one person can wield over a country and its chief law enforcement agency. The perception that one man could single out targets at will with handmade pipe bombs, and escape punishment, and the fact that this perception encourages others to do the same in the future, is reason enough for the FBI to devote a 200-man task force to the investigation.

I read part of the Unabomber's manifesto when it was published in the New York Times. I remember thinking it had been wrong for the paper to print the material, on the promise from the writer that he wouldn't mail any more bombs. Is faith in that kind of appeasement worth the price? Like myself, I don't think the FBI agreed with the plan.

Negotiating with criminals goes against the FBI's nature. In cutting the deal with the Unabomber, the bureau undermined the public's confidence in the government's ability to handle home-grown terrorism — confidence and support the FBI is going to need, at least with the next round of nuts and loose screws it'll have to take on.

Poyner is a graduate student in museum studies and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



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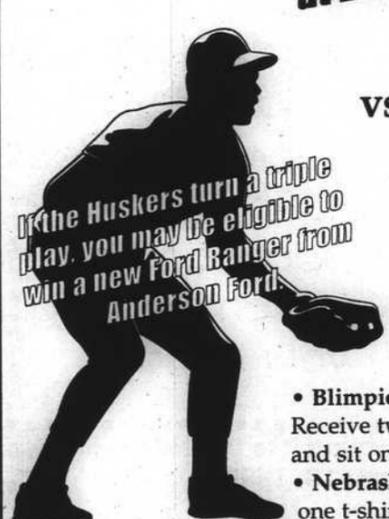
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