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Harper's Index p. 15

# HARPER'S



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A Military Strategy for the 1990s

By Admiral Gene R. La Rocque

*With responses from Kenneth Adelman,  
Admiral E. R. Zumwalt Jr., Gerard C. Smith, and others*

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# LETTERS

## Drug Problems

As chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives' Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, I read with interest the forum "What Is Our Drug Problem?" (*Harper's Magazine*, December 1985). While I concur with many of the observations made by the participants, I find some of the rhetoric and alternatives to be defeatist.

It is true that the trafficking in and abuse of narcotic and psychotropic substances have increased. Despite record seizures of illegal substances by enforcement agencies, record quantities remain a threat to our citizens. Yet the short-term inability to control the problem does not justify proposals to abandon current policies. Although our drug problem has grown, this has been in the face of our best law enforcement efforts rather than because of them.

In short, our current policies have had a marginal deterrent effect. There is no telling how big the addict population and the supply of drugs would be if drugs were to become legal. Arguing, in a different context, for capital punishment, Ernest van den Haag has asserted that the burden of proof lies with death penalty opponents to demonstrate that capital punishment produces no marginal return. Applying his argument to narcotics control, the burden of proof rests with those, like Arnold Trebach

and himself, who seek to legalize these substances. They have not proven their position.

That is not to say our current policies are wholly adequate. What is needed is a public policy that will result in a reduced supply of drugs as well as a reduced demand for them. This means federal, state, and local education, treatment, and prevention programs that are well designed and adequately funded; cooperative and appropriately funded law enforcement efforts; and effective use of diplomacy and foreign aid to support countries attempting to control narcotics production and trafficking and to induce those that are not to do so. If both supply and demand are reduced in a balanced fashion, there will be less likelihood of increased consumption and/or increased availability.

A demand-reduction strategy encompasses treatment, prevention, and education. I find it noteworthy that the forum participants agreed that there is a need for education, although they disagreed as to what the content of that education should be. I strongly disagree with Trebach's argument that we must begin teaching people the responsible use of mind-altering substances. The more we learn about the long-term effects of using drugs, even marijuana, the more we come to understand that no drug can be labeled harmless. The aim of federal policy is not to frighten adolescents, as Lester Grinspoon suggests, but to provide informed and up-to-date medical evidence, which supports the conclusion that the only sane and responsible approach to wo-

*Harper's Magazine welcomes Letters to the Editor. Short letters are more likely to be published, and all letters are subject to editing. Letters must be typed double-spaced; volume precludes individual acknowledgment.*

cial and recreational drug usage is to say no.

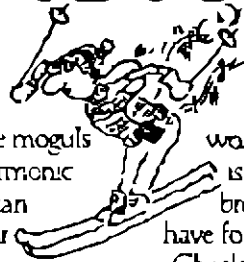
That law enforcement is part of the supply-reduction strategy is evident, but it is also part of the demand-reduction strategy. In drawing the line between what is and is not permissible, criminal law is directed toward not only the lawbreakers but the law-abiding. The message communicated by the law in this century is that recreational drug use is not acceptable behavior. This message is consistent with our traditions. Legalizing substances such as cocaine, marijuana, and heroin would send a message to our young people that drug use is socially acceptable and will not harm them. This message is not only inconsistent with our traditions but also untrue. Thus, the "moral educative" function of criminal law dictates the continued proscription of drugs.

Moreover, I believe it is naive to think that if there were a relaxation of legal restraints on drugs, the criminal would go away or be satisfied with non-threatening pursuits. Even van den Haag, in his work on the death penalty, acknowledges that there are always non-deterables. Should we change our laws to allow certain behavior because some people are not deterred? I think not.

Reduction of demand is necessary but not sufficient; there must also be a reduction in the supply of narcotics. Supply is most vulnerable to eradication where it originates as an agricultural crop. While the Reagan Administration has claimed to be waging a war against drugs, it is, in fact, the Congress that has voted to cut off all aid, other than anti-narcotics and humanitarian aid, to countries such as Peru and Bolivia—countries that have ignored their obligation to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, which requires that they wipe out illicit crop cultivation.

On a recent seventeen-day trip to Latin America, the Select Committee met with top officials of seven nations—Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. The leaders of these countries told us that if we do not move quickly to help them, their countries will fall into the hands of the drug traffickers or fall prey to anti-democratic forces,

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which can appear to be a stable alternative in the chaos created by the traffickers. We need to use diplomacy more effectively and to allocate adequate resources to help the producer countries eliminate illicit cultivation.

It is time to escalate the war on drugs, not to capitulate by legalizing these substances. To support this effort, I have proposed three initiatives. First, I have introduced the State and Local Assistance Act of 1985. It provides for grants to state and local governments to assist them in drug law enforcement and drug abuse treatment. Second, I have proposed a new U.N. initiative whereby the industrialized democracies, under the auspices of the U.N. Fund for Drug Abuse Control, would work with the source nations to develop plans to rid them of their illicit crops. Once such plans have been developed, the industrialized nations would contribute funds and technical assistance for law enforcement, rural development, and crop substitution. Third, I have introduced legislation that would deny

most-favored-nation status to drug-producing nations that are not complying with their drug control obligations.

We must continue to fight to curtail drug trafficking and end this threat to our national security and well-being. It is time to act assertively and effectively, rather than to fall victim to despair or to be victimized by utopian proposals.

*Representative Charles B. Rangel  
Washington, D.C.*

After fifteen years of "wars on marijuana," it is obvious that wars cannot solve social and health problems. There are alternatives to these wars that would not result in marijuana being sold in candy stores.

With regard to marijuana, two practical forms of legalization have been worked out. The first, "limited legalization," allows adults to possess and cultivate marijuana for their own use. This has been the law in Alaska since 1975 and has worked well. It

will also be voted on next November in Oregon. The advantages of this system are that it undercuts the black market and allows people to spend thousands of dollars they currently spend for marijuana on other products. At the same time it allows the government to send a message that the sale and commercial cultivation of marijuana are illegal—and allows enforcement resources to focus on those areas.

The other alternative is regulation and taxation. A model bill for this type of system has already been drafted. It is modeled on alcohol policy, with some major differences: no advertising allowed and no marijuana bars or public use of marijuana. The system would allow the government to control the sale of marijuana. This would result in licensed rather than criminal retailers, purity and potency labeling, and the eventual weakening of organized crime. It would also raise between \$10 and \$15 billion in annual tax revenues. This money could be spent on education and discouraging

ment programs especially aimed at our youth.

*Kevin Zeese  
Washington, D.C.*

*Kevin Zeese is national director of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML).*

Anyone who gets his or her information from the field rather than from lab tests or ideologies knows that millions of Americans take drugs for millions of reasons; getting "high" can mean anything from sheer hedonistic fun to a serious spiritual quest. Unquestionably, there's a downside, but drug use does not equal drug abuse. Human consciousness is always searching for what William James called "the great Yes," since most of the time life tells most people "No." As our great pragmatist, James would no doubt have laughed at the decidedly misguided, ineffectual policies that tyrannical puritans like Rudolph Giuliani would have us believe are really best for us.

History shows us that when mil-

lions of Americans want something, they'll do anything to get it—even to the point of deciding that the law is wrong and that it needs changing. In fact, until a series of laws were passed in 1914-1936, Americans had uncontrolled access to what we now call "controlled" substances.

Whenever Americans have heard that their government "knows best," they have reached for their rights—and that's what millions of our citizens are telling authorities by their daily decisions.

*John Howell  
New York, N.Y.*

*John Howell is editor in chief of High Times magazine.*

Libertarians will find much support in the forum on drug problems for their contention that the most dangerous addiction in any society is the addiction to government power. The seductive "gateway" drug in this analogy is paternalism, which, once tolerated, progresses to ever increasing

doses of coercion and may lead to the ultimate abuse, totalitarianism.

People who produce, distribute, sell, buy, and use drugs are engaging in mutually voluntary transactions and doing as they see fit with their own bodies. Those activities, at least among adults, are none of the government's damned business. In their aggressions against such people, it is the drug law enforcers who are committing truly criminal acts. Isn't it about time that we abolished the goon squads and encouraged Rudolph Giuliani and his colleagues to find useful work?

*Allan Walstad  
Johnstown, Pa.*

If you had a forum on abortion, your panelists would hardly confine themselves to the economic and medical aspects of the subject. At least one panelist would be committed to the proposition that women have a right "to control their own bodies." Your forum on drugs, which

*Continued on page 77*

## LETTERS

Continued from page 7

dealing nicely with health, economics, and law enforcement, included no one who believed that we have the right to control our own bodies. Isn't it logical to believe that the government has as much, or as little, right to ban drugs thought to poison our bodies as to ban books that might poison our minds?

David Kahn  
New York, N.Y.

### Counseling the Pro-Lifers

I have rarely been as offended by anything as I was by the excerpt from the manual "How to Start and Operate a Pro-Life Out-Reach Pregnancy Service Center" ("Pro-Life 'Abortion Clinics,'" *Harper's Magazine*, December 1985). When will the pro-life advocates realize that abortion is a difficult enough decision for most young women to make? The idea that pro-life clinics should be near abortion clinics to catch the unsuspecting and most vulnerable is disgusting. Abortion is not a decision most women make lightly. It is a desperate decision made when there are no other choices. The false advertising and non-disclosure suggested in the manual reek of fraud. Do these people think their message is so important that it should be allowed to destroy the need for honesty and integrity?

If the pro-life advocates are really worried about unwanted pregnancy, why don't they take positive steps to reduce the problem? I'm willing to wager any amount that the "abortion clinic" offers no birth control information. Birth control, and proper use of it, is the only solution to this desperate situation. We can reduce abortion only if we reduce unwanted pregnancies.

Maya Weisman  
Eugene, Ore.

The excerpt from the manual for establishing pro-life "abortion alternative" centers shows an obvious disdain on the part of the anti-abortion groups for the health and well-being

of both the pregnant woman and the fetus.

Before the slide-show viewing, the woman is told to feel free to smoke, and during "abortion counseling" she is invited to have a cup of coffee with the counselor.

It is common knowledge today that expectant mothers who don't forgo tobacco and caffeine products often have babies with low birth weight and related health problems. It seems that the pro-life groups, while urging women away from choosing abortion, do little to foster concern for the health of the fetus they wish to bring to life.

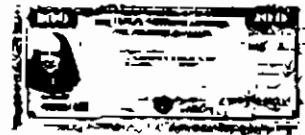
Michele Kantor  
Santa Monica, Calif.

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