

Drug abuse authority says myths worsen the problem

By JOSH MARQUIS
Of the Emerald

Dr. Joel Fort, one of the nation's leading authorities on drug use and abuse, told members of a University class on psychoactive drugs that misinformation and the "selective distortion of reality" in drug education have done far more to worsen the situation than improve it. Fort spoke to over 200 persons in the class taught by Mark Miller, director of the Drug Information Center, Thursday evening.

Fort, an author of several books on drug use and a founder of one of the nation's first free clinics, has served as a consultant to the United Nations World Health Organization as well as being a leading spokesman for the reform of drug and sex laws.

Fort expressed concern that too often the drug problem is "viewed in isolation from other drugs and from society in general, when it is essential to put all the pieces together." Fort said that America is a drug culture and that "this is best demonstrated by the fact that the tobacco and alcohol industries spend \$2 million a day encouraging Americans to consume their products at the earliest possible moment on the promise of three basic imagined virtues: eternal youth, sexual pleasure and happiness."

In discussing what he termed the massive mis-information perpetuated on Americans, Fort condemned those who "oversimplified the situation by viewing the problem with alarm and out of context." Fort said that if one carries through on this logic "that based on the possible abuses of aspirin we could get together a march on Salem tomorrow to call for strict criminal penalties for aspirin users."

Fort urged his audience to view drugs in the total context of our society. "If we are to believe all the stories we've been told about marijuana, it is a very remarkable drug," explained Fort. "One self-proclaimed drug expert will tell you one night that it will cause violent and criminal behavior and the next night that it makes people drop out and become lethargic." The doctor said that myths and "a magical belief in chemistry fostered by drug advertising" are responsible for the erroneous conceptions many people have about drugs.

Fort told the class that it is impossible to say that any one drug will have the same effect every time, or even on the same

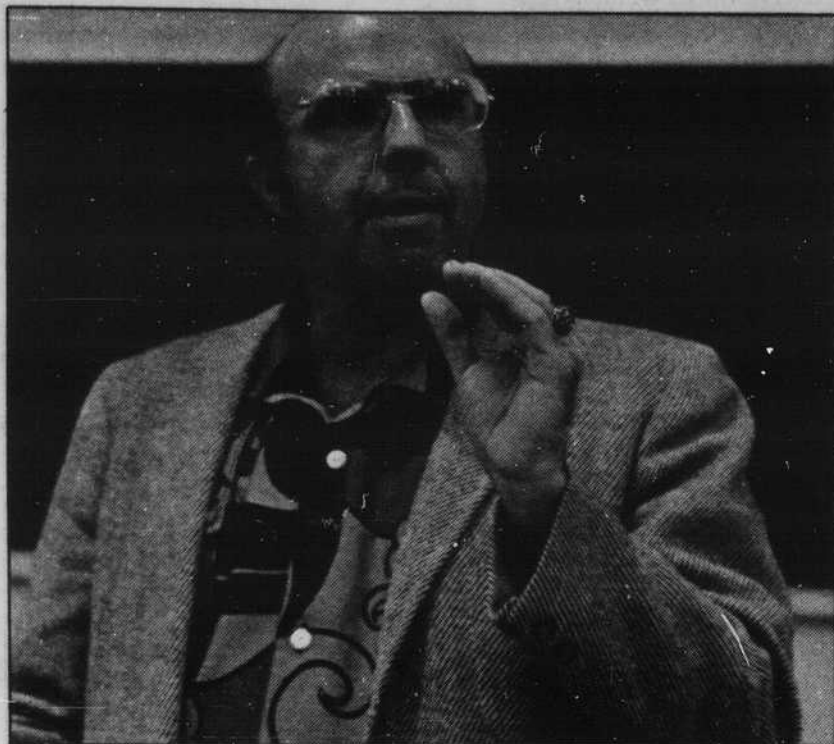


Photo by Josh Marquis

... Dr. Joel Fort, a national drug authority, addresses members of a class on Psychoactive Drugs Thursday evening.

person. "Take for example a cocktail party," said Fort. "a rite many of you have undoubtedly observed as part of an anthropology course on primitive cultures...well some people at the party will be passive, others aggressive, some flirtatious and yet other lascivious."

Responding to the myth that persons who commit crimes are so persuaded directly by the use of drugs, Fort said "there is no drug that through its properties alone can cause a person to commit an act he would not otherwise engage in."

Fort also commented on what he called the myths about the aphrodisiac effects of certain drugs. He said that unless "other social, biological and - or cultural stimuli are present" there is no direct effect between drugs and sex. In fact, said Fort, "to quote Shakespeare on the subject of wine, 'it provokes desire but diminishes performance.'"

Fort blasted many of the present drug education programs, terming them "counterproductive because of the lies contained in them." Fort said there are "four basic kinds of drug educators: the temperance worker who appears before a high school class, drops a live worm into a glass of pure alcohol and tells them the same thing will happen to them if they drink; the drug policeman who appears with a gigantic display board with needles and bent spoons; the ex-drug addict who is making \$15,000 a year from some public agency telling kids 'if you use drugs you'll end up dead in the streets like me'; the poor PE teacher who is told by the school

principal to teach a class on drugs."

Fort said that our "problem is institutional pollution, the interference of governmental and bureaucratic institutions into our living rooms and bedrooms." The drug expert said that "the more willing our society is to drown its troubles in alcohol, pills and other drugs, the less willing it is to deal with real problems on a confrontation basis." Fort asked whether "parents should be more concerned about the rise in the use of seasonal (reds) by high school students, or why the students feel it necessary to stay drugged in school."

Speaking on one of his own main concerns, Fort said that the effects of jailing people for marijuana offenses have turned thousands of otherwise perfectly responsible citizens into ex-convicts with the accompanying stigma and ostracism from many jobs and activities.

Fort said he believes "it is immoral in itself to make people criminals for their private behavior and, failing that logic, it simply doesn't work." Fort cited statistics claiming that as many as 26 million Americans have tried marijuana at one time or another. "This represents quite a gap between the people and the law," said Fort.

However Fort conceded that "the reality of the situation is that if marijuana was legalized it would not be through the efforts of reformers but probably through the profit interests of tobacco companies. Fort concluded that the effect of drug laws have too often tended to attract people to those same drugs, rather than deter them.

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Friday, May 18
EMU Terrace
3:30 Tom Schwenzer
4:00 Eric Park
4:30 Linda Road
8:00 Barn Dance
EMU Ballroom

Willamette
Valley
Folk Festival

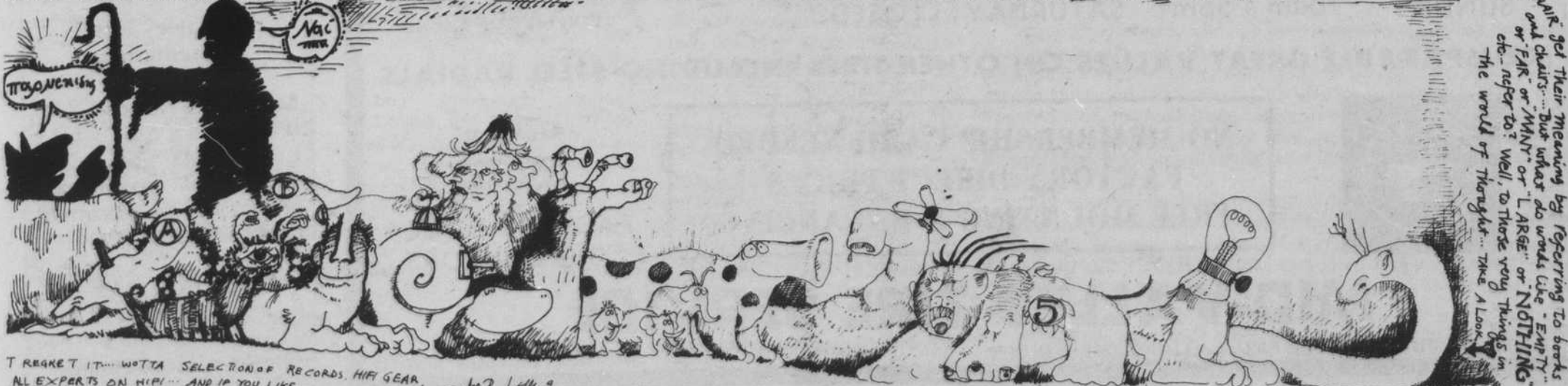
Saturday, May 18
Music School Amphitheatre
12:00 Livewood String Band
12:30 Maggie Barclay
1:00 Chris Wetteland
1:30 Bony Elbow
Ridgerunners
2:00 Diane Adams
2:30 Wheatfield
3:00 Willie and the Egyptians
3:30 Twilo Scofield
4:00 Just Call Me Squirt
4:30 Kathy Smith
5:00 Heavy Guage String
Band
5:30 Mance Lipscomb

Saturday night
Mance Lipscomb
in concert
8:00 p.m. EMU Ballroom
\$2 at
Chrystalship
Sun Shop, EMU Main Desk
and at the door.

the asuo
cultural forum
and
the university
folk music club

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VIER DESTROYED #04YER, POOR THINKER, HAS BY SUNK IN THE OLD POND OF DESPOND BY BUT TWO LOGICAL PAIR O' DUX (see pg. 15) - Also - © WITH AYER VANQUISHED, GEORGE'S OLD TEACHER, THE MA-
PHYSICAL WORLD (see pg. 15) - THE MARALPH AND ONE OF THE DRINKERS OF ZION'S EVER FLOWING RIVERS OF WISDOM & COMPASSION, SET MASTER, PROFFER THEIR COUNSEL (pg. 15) GEORGE TO SEEK OUT THE SPIRIT
SET THE TASK OF BEING HEADSMAN TO SOME OF THE MORE DIFFICULT & DANGEROUS IDEAS - THEN GEORGE MUST BORROW THE TRICKY IDEA OF "NOTHING!!" - (ya see folk, words like "book" and "change"



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