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COMMENTARY

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Friday, October 26, 2001

Letters to the editor

Marijuana convictions not minor

Thank you for printing the well-written article about ASUO Legal Services ("ASUO gives guidance for legal problems," ODE, 9/17). There is one item I should correct about state and federal drug convictions involving less than an ounce of marijuana. Possession of less than an ounce is a non-criminal violation in Oregon, not a (criminal) misdemeanor.

The point I tried to make is that many students view getting caught with less than an ounce as a minor event because the penalty usually only involves a fine; yet conviction for possession of even a small amount of marijuana now includes the stiffer penalty of the loss of federally funded financial aid for at least one year.

We at ASUO Legal Services hope students who rely on financial aid will accept this warning and not risk their education for drugs, even a small amount of marijuana.

Ilna Koleszar
 director
 ASUO Legal Services

Answer to terrorism is justice, not capitalism

You can always count on a capitalist to try to cash in on pain and suffering. On Oct. 17, Bret Jacobson had a guest commentary ("Solution to terrorism is industrialization," ODE) touting that the solution to the problems in Afghanistan was to open it up for foreign investment, assuming that their problems could be solved if we 'let' them make widgets for us.

Simple, right? A few industrialists build factories to cash in on cheap labor (remember, their industrial base has been obliterated), and everybody's happy. We get more cheap plastic crap and sports apparel, they get a dollar for every sixteen-hour workday. Everybody benefits, right? Has anybody ever considered that U.S. economic imperialism might be part of the problem?

Here's an idea: What if the U.S. government stopped financing death squads and dictators and stopped training terrorists? What if the U.S. shut down the infamous School of the Americas, where it trains foreign soldiers and paramilitaries in counterinsurgency and torture? What if the U.S. stopped military aid to genocidal governments? What if we let these people control their own destiny, and stopped treating less developed countries as a supply of cheap labor and resources? The fact is that we will have no peace unless the rest of the world has justice.

Randy Newnham
 senior
 anthropology and linguistics

Saferide should stay women-only

I feel that the issue of women's safety on campus, while generally talked about and verbally supported, is sorely lacking in heart. Many people talk about how they want their female relations and friends to be safe, yet it seems when it comes down to it, it's only talk. Saferide, an organization truly committed to the safety of women, both physically and emotionally, has taken the initiative to bring about safety in a way that keeps women from having to walk alone at night.

It deeply saddens me that there are people on this campus who feel the need to threaten the safety of their female relations and acquaintances because they cannot abide by the fact that Saferide is not a coed shuttle service. Saferide was created with women's safety in mind.

It has been statistically proven over and over again that it is men who direct the majority of sexual assaults at women. That is not to say that men cannot be assaulted, and I fully support men who choose to create an organization geared toward the sexual safety of men. However, as those who are concerned about the sexual safety of women should agree, combining such a shuttle service would defeat the purpose of both Saferide and a male equivalent.

If the goal is to make the said person feel safe and not threatened in any way, then the goal of said organization should be to remove the threatening factors — in this case, the opposite gender.

Andrea Pietruszka
 junior
 cultural anthropology

CORRECTION

In the Oct. 25 cover story "Fitting the Bill," the caption was unclear about the history of the mascot. The "Webfoot" was the University's original mascot, the mallard was a suggested image that was never adopted, and the duck on the "O" was the image that preceded the adoption of Donald.

Letters to the Editor and Guest Commentaries Policy

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Yesteryear's news

A Poor Precedent

Echoes are occasionally heard bemoaning the fact that a football coach usually draws a higher salary than a learned professor — and this on our campus. At California, they pay \$12,000 a year for coaches to whip the Golden Bear into shape. With their enormous student body such a mere trifle is not considered as extravagance and they little begrudge the expenditure — but they are setting a bad precedent in the West.

Heretofore the west has turned out teams that have been on a high plane, that have even defeated the picked heroes of the East, with expenditures that are dwarfed by California's salaries. The West has been able and content to get along with moderately paid coaching staffs. The present instance is the first radical departure therefrom, although considerable agitation has arisen in Seattle from time to time over the \$4,000 salary of Gilmore Dobie. Eastern colleges sometimes spend fabulous sums for their coaches, and it seems to be in emulation of them, rather than through any real need, that California has opened her purse strings to such an extent. It is this very thing that is disrupting eastern athletics and causing deep murmurs of protest from the thinking alumni and faculties of many of the great institutions of the Atlantic seaboard. On this coast athletics have long been of purer and less commercial nature. California, a newcomer into the conference of the West, is introducing an example that is out of harmony with the best interests of amateur sport.

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 ANNIVERSARY
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Marijuana criticism was wrong

GUEST COMMENTARY

Andy Kohnen

I have to admit to becoming somewhat infuriated upon reading "There's no hope with dope" (ODE, 10/15). The column in question paints a very inaccurate and unfair picture of marijuana and its users.

First, the vast majority of users of marijuana do not become the heavy users that the columnist discusses. In fact, marijuana has been found (by the National Institute of Drug Abuse of all people) to be one of the least addictive recreational substances — only psychedelic drugs are less addictive. Yes, even alcohol induces states of chemical dependence more often than marijuana.

Furthermore, the negative effects Debenham associates with smoking weed — principally problems with short-term memory, coordination, intake of carcinogens and changes in diet due to the "munchies" — are really only a problem with habitual users.

Marijuana can be looked at as a recreational activity like any other. Sure, it can distract the user from life's stresses, but doesn't television do this as well? If one were to watch TV for several hours per day (as many do), would life not seem to lose some of its worth? Would this avid TV-watcher's mind not atrophy from lack of exercise? Would this "couch potato" not miss out on other valuable activities because of time spent in front of the "tube"? Despite this, millions worldwide are able to juggle both TV and otherwise fulfilling lives.

Additionally, other substances — alcohol and opiates in particular — are much more apt to numb the mind and serve as an escape from one's problems.

Use of marijuana and recreational drugs in general are of far more significance and value than simple diversions. The issue here is one of civil liberty. People should have the right to control their own processes of cognition and the internal metabolic activities of their own bodies.

If a musician thinks marijuana allows her to gain a different perspective, coming up with a different set

of ideas from those she would encounter while sober, then she should have the right to pursue her art. If a philosopher believes LSD gives him a unique cognitive perspective, allowing for processes of abstract reasoning differing greatly from that of sober reality, then he should be able to pursue the truth as he deems fit.

Finally, I find the author's correlation of drug use and unpatriotic or terrorist-friendly activity to be both factually incorrect and a "blow below the belt." The Taliban is, in fact, a regime that is rather unfriendly toward the use of recreational drugs (among other civil liberties). The United States recently gave \$43 million to the Taliban in reward for declaring the production of opium illegal. The result is hardship for the peasants who depend on this cash crop to survive, and little or no change in the availability of heroin on the streets of America.

Perhaps some day the United States' drug policy will have some semblance of sanity and practicality. Until then, freedom lovers everywhere will need to push for change.

Andy Kohnen is a sophomore in psychology.



Peter Utsey