

COMMENTARY

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Wednesday, February 26, 2003

Editorial

DEA raids take war on drugs to higher level of absurdity

On Monday, Attorney General John Ashcroft and the Drug Enforcement Agency drove the war on drugs headlong down the nonsensical highway, leaving puffs of tyrannical smoke behind them. Across the country, federal agents served indictments against a new, incredibly dangerous group: Glass blowers and distributors.

The danger, of course, is to any pretension of Ashcroft's sanity. Among those raided in the operation, sardonically named "Operation Pipe Dreams," were a number of local merchants, chief among them Higher Source, a store on 13th Avenue.

These raids were spurred by Ashcroft's Monday morning reinterpretation of federal law, wherein he determined that water pipes are "illegal drug paraphernalia." Water pipes can be used to smoke marijuana, so to Ashcroft, that's all they are used for. Which is of course, untrue.

One can smoke flavored tobaccos through a bong, like a glass artisan's hookah. Actually, many locations that sell (sold?) water pipes include information about the benefits of using them for tobacco (it reduces tar and particulate matter, which is likely a reason some people use them to smoke marijuana).

Ashcroft will have to wait for court decisions to know if his frightening reasoning will hold. Federal law is not nearly as clear as the attorney general that just because an object can be used to consume illegal drugs, the item itself is illegal. Federal law is also not clear that he gets to decide this all by himself.

Of course, to make his case, Ashcroft relied on silly propaganda about families and the Internet. Kids can go on the Internet and buy pipes! Families are being violated! Run for the hills!

Remarkably, Ashcroft's virtual concern for children's safety doesn't prioritize sites selling prescription drugs illegally, or child porn sites, or anything else illegal. Instead, he valiantly closes down a successful, taxpaying business providing jobs to Oregonians. Go figure.

Speaking of the economic impact of Monday's action, will someone tell us why the government is wasting money on this? Aren't there real security threats to worry about, schools to fund, jobs to create and an ever-expanding national debt to pay off?

Perhaps the worst part of this cartoonishly surreal turn of events is how completely impotent Ashcroft's action is. Getting rid of expensive art glass isn't going to stop anyone from doing drugs. (Focusing on harm reduction, education or rehabilitation might have an effect, but just try telling that to this administration.)

Finally, we were concerned that the raids missed some demonic drug paraphernalia. We humbly offer a memo to remedy the situation.

To: Atty. Gen. J. Ashcroft

RE: Overlooked drug conveyance systems

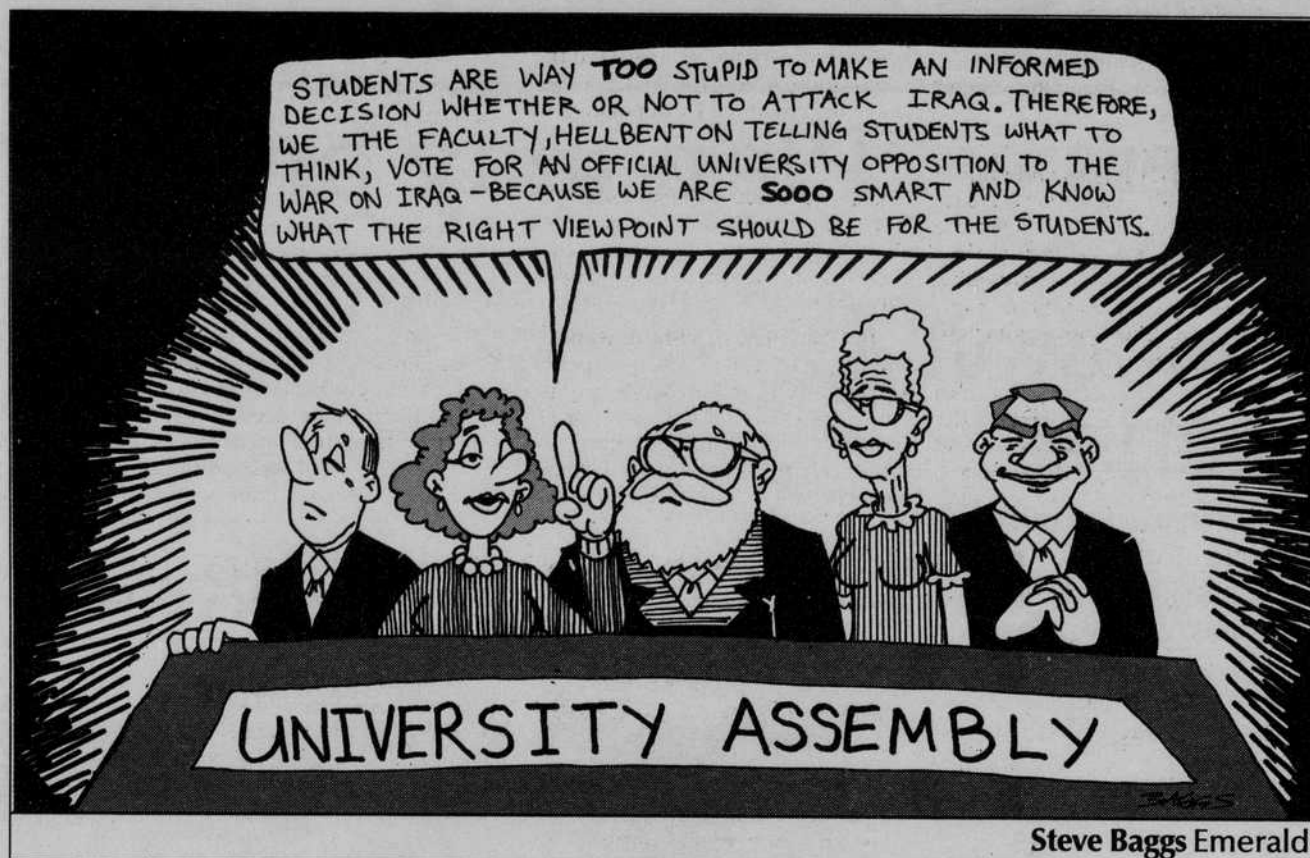
Dear Ash-inator,

We know it wasn't intentional, but a large amount of illegal drug paraphernalia was missed Monday. As a favor, we have compiled a list of items regularly used for ingesting drugs (or so we've been told) and ask that you indict the distributors as soon as possible.

Obvious paraphernalia: Lighters (especially with tell-tale burns on them), matches, rolling papers, soda cans, mirrors, razor blades, straws, empty pen tubes, apples (really, any hard fruit can be a pipe), aluminum foil, toilet paper tubes, scented dryer sheets (a residence hall staple), paper clips (used to clean pipes), fish tanks (makes a really cool bong, bro), any kind of spoon (you're not overlooking heroin, are you, Ashcroft?) and finally, when in a pinch in the woods — hollowed-out logs.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged.



Steve Baggs Emerald

Show up to support Higher Education Act

Guest commentary

Did you know there is currently a \$3 billion shortfall in the Pell Grant program? Before the U.S. Congress right now is the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, which establishes many programs that support higher education on a national level. The HEA funds some of the necessary programs such as federal grants and federal loans so all students can have equal access to a higher education. Some of the programs under the HEA are Child Care Block Grants, campus safety provisions, voter registration provisions, federal grants and federal loans.

The ASUO has teamed up with its national partner, the United States Student Association, in an ongoing campaign to gain awareness on all campuses about the reauthorization of the HEA. The USSA is also pressuring members of Congress to increase grants, maintain loan limits, eliminate loan origination fees, fully repeal the drug-related question on the FAFSA application, preserve good

programs such as the TRIO programs, and increase support for child care.

At noon today in the EMU Fir Room, the ASUO is having a press conference to educate and mobilize support from members of the community. Members from the congressional offices of Rep. Peter DeFazio, Sen. Gordon Smith and Sen. Ron Wyden are going to be attending the press conference to show support for the ASUO campaign and also for reauthorization of the HEA. Students who are directly affected by the HEA also are speaking at the press conference because they are the ones who need the provisions to pass. This bipartisan coalition will work to benefit all students because all students are somehow affected by the HEA. Show your support for the HEA and the ASUO campaign by showing up.

It is necessary that all students begin to realize that it is necessary to increase funding for federal grants such as the Pell Grant so more students can graduate debt-free. All students need to support the ASUO by signing the yellow postcards stating that you urge Congress to reauthorize the HEA and increase fund-

ing for federal grants. By stopping in the ASUO office and filling out a postcard, you can have your voice heard when the ASUO hand delivers these postcards to members of Congress on the National Student Lobby Day on March 11, 2003.

As a recipient of federal grants, I realize the importance of gaining awareness and urging congressional leaders to fund higher education programs. There needs to be an increase in federal grants so students do not have to graduate with enormous amounts of debt.

Let's stop inhibiting students obtaining a higher education by limiting the amount of grants they receive or worse, by prohibiting them from receiving and aid because of a drug conviction. Let's increase child care for nontraditional students who cannot afford child care yet want a better education.

It is about time congressional leaders hear students. Equal access for all. Higher education is a right!

Nick Hudson is an ASUO legislative intern, the Barnhart/Riley Complex president and a freshman political science major.

Letters to the editor

War resolution will damage University credibility

The University has no right whatsoever to take an official stance on the possible war with Iraq. This is a public university, not a political party. It is the duty of the University and its faculty to educate us broadly so we become good leaders in tomorrow's world, not to preach political views and indoctrinate us with their beliefs.

A college or university should have no official stances on political issues, it is for students to decide for themselves what they believe in, not to have it dictated by the school they attend. It is bad enough that the liberal elements on campus do everything in their power to silence the other points of view, but passing an official resolution on a political issue is going too far.

I will not tolerate the University treating its students with such blatant disrespect. We do not pay \$10,000 plus to be told what we believe.

I am aware that Oregon State University, to their everlasting shame, passed a

resolution condemning the possibility of war. This has not only severely damaged their credibility as an institution of higher learning, but it also showed that the OSU senate does not respect the different opinions which exist at any university. We can do better. We don't have to sink to such a low level of disrespect.

If the University Senate passes this resolution, it will not only alienate a large group of students on campus, but it also will severely damage the credibility of our fine university. If it passes and the University takes an official stance on the war, I personally will lose a lot of respect for the University.

Zachary White
 sophomore
 history

Students should actively support grant availability

It is within the confines of institutions such as the University that we students are given the opportunity to gain the skills necessary for our respective career paths, if we can make it that far.

The reality of student loan debt and the possibility of having to go to school off and on in order to work to pay tuition are becoming more prevalent. This is

partly because the cost of education is increasing rapidly. Moreover, the ability to receive funding in the form of grants is more stringent than ever before.

All of these issues have been at least partially addressed by the Higher Education Act, but there is more that is required from Congress in the form of reauthorizations of certain provisions in the act.

The bottom line is: Students need more grant opportunities and less loan debt overall, and the provisions account for this in part through Pell Grants and maintaining student loan limits. Whether you have taken out loans or received grants yet does not mean you won't need to at some point. This matters.

Let your elected officials know that you have done your "homework" and found that the HEA reauthorizations are crucial to student success and come vocalize your support or simply come to learn more about the HEA at the ASUO-sponsored press conference today at noon at Johnson Hall.

Be active; take your educational opportunities seriously.

Shannon Tarvin
 freshman
 biology