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OUR VIEW

Keeping pot away from kids takes vigorous effort

Continuing conflicts between legal and illegal marijuana are well outlined in *Willamette Week's* July 22 story, "Deal With It: Oregon wants to crush black-market weed sales. But business is smoking."

Medical marijuana dispensaries in Oregon will be allowed to begin selling Oct. 1, but until then would-be consumers are in an odd twilight zone of being legally allowed to possess, grow use the drug while at the same time nobody is legally permitted to sell it to them. As *WW's* story makes clear, unlicensed marijuana entrepreneurs still face potentially stiff penalties, but this isn't stopping them from going ahead and meeting demand.

Marijuana users can also supply themselves by growing it at home, obtaining a medical marijuana card or going across the state line to Washington and buying from recreational suppliers already legally allowed to operate there — though it remains illegal to bring it back across state lines.

There is significant money still to be made selling black market marijuana, *WW* found. Though the sums cited by sellers interviewed for the story may not be correct and were taken on faith by the reporter, front-line marijuana sellers claimed to net \$600 to \$800 a week. Customers range from high school students to judges. An Oregon State University professor estimated in 2013 that nearly 320,000 Oregonians bought pot that year.

The gist of the situation: "The line between the black market and the existing legal market is often hazy." Rep. Ann Lininger, D-Lake

Oswego, who co-chaired the House-Senate committee on marijuana, says this ambiguity reinforces the need to keep marijuana — not to mention other intoxicating substances — out of the possession of young people. Irrespective of what adults may choose to do themselves, there

is good reason to believe that marijuana has a detrimental long-term impact on still-developing brains, along with adversely affecting things like study skills and safe driving.

"I believe that we need to protect kids," Lininger said. "And we protect them by shrinking the black market, talking candidly to young people about why marijuana use is a bad choice for people under the age of 21, and making policies that

allow young people who have made a mistake to move on with their lives."

Crushing the marijuana black market is a tall order. It has survived for decades despite a nationwide prohibition that was, at times, harshly enforced. Nor is it easy to keep marijuana and alcohol out of the hands of youths who choose to imbibe. Oregon's version of legalization will make this more difficult, by giving every household the right to grow marijuana and keep relatively large quantities of finished product on hand. But we have to keep trying.

Ironically, perhaps the best way to protect kids in the post-legalization era is to effectively speed things on their way, making marijuana available to adults behind a retail paywall and vigorously punishing those who sell or otherwise provide it to minors.

"We protect them by shrinking the black market, talking candidly to young people about why marijuana use is a bad choice for people under the age of 21..."

— Rep. Ann Lininger, D-Lake Oswego

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OTHER VIEWS

Up-front investment only way to make electric cars go

The (Medford) Mail Tribune, July 21

Official statistics indicate state-installed fast-charging stations for electric vehicles have recorded 30,000 uses in three years. That might sound impressive, but a closer look reveals traffic on the West Coast Electric Highway is a far cry from bumper-to-bumper. Still, the charging network was installed to encourage more use, not in response to existing demand. Patience is called for.

The 30,000-charge figure looks less imposing when you realize that there are 44 charging stations scattered around the state, and only about 6,000 electric vehicles registered in Oregon so far. Over three years, that's 10,000 charges a year, so those 6,000 vehicles used a state charging station less than twice a year on average.

Of course, some stations saw more use than others. The top station, in Portland, saw nearly 3,000 uses. The station in Ashland recorded 917, the most of any station in this region and 11th of the 44 statewide.

Electric vehicles offer emission-free travel at a fraction of the cost of gasoline, although the purchase price is higher than gas-powered cars. Range is also a concern that may keep sales down. Most electric vehicles can travel only about 100 miles between charges, and take 20 to 30 minutes to recharge at the quick-charge stations. Home charging models can take up to 12 hours for a full charge.

So driving an electric car at this point means being willing to put up with a certain amount of inconvenience



A Tesla supercharger was installed at the Arrowhead gas station in Mission earlier this year.

— rather like owners of the first automobiles, who had to carefully plan trips to be sure of finding fuel when they needed it. Still, cars improved steadily, and it wasn't long before filling stations sprouted nearly everywhere.

Critics will decry the expense — about \$100,000 per charging station — as a waste of taxpayers' dollars to benefit an elite few. But if there are no charging stations, electric vehicles will never become a viable alternative to the internal combustion engine. And the private sector is pitching in, too, installing charging stations separate from the state network.

Electric cars may be few in number now, but that number is growing rapidly, more than doubling from July 2013 to July 2014. Improvements in technology should extend the range of these vehicles, and sticker prices will come down as used vehicles become available.

Meanwhile, investing now in the infrastructure to support alternative fueled vehicles makes sense.



Looking away from abortion

In an essay in his 1976 collection, "Mortal Lessons," the physician Richard Selzer describes a strange suburban scene. People go outside in the morning in his neighborhood, after the garbage trucks have passed, and find "a foreignness upon the pavement," a softness underfoot.

Looking down, Selzer first thinks he sees oversize baby birds, then rubber baby dolls, until the realization comes that the street is littered with the tiny, naked, all-too-human bodies of aborted fetuses.

Later, the local hospital director speaks to Selzer, trying to impose order on the grisly scene. It was an accident, of course: The tiny corpses were accidentally "mixed up with the other debris" instead of being incinerated or interred. "It is not an everyday occurrence. Once in a lifetime, he says."

And Selzer tries to nod along: "Now you see. It is orderly. It is sensible. The world is not mad. This is still a civilized society..."

"But just this once, you know it isn't. You saw, and you know."

Resolute abortion rights supporters would dismiss that claim of knowledge. Death and viscera are never pretty, they would say, but something can be disgusting without being barbaric. Just because it's awful to discover fetuses underfoot doesn't mean the unborn have a right to life.

And it's precisely this argument that's been marshaled lately in response to a new reminder of the fleshly realities of abortion: The conversations, videotaped covertly by anti-abortion activists posing as fetal organ buyers, in which officials from Planned Parenthood cheerfully discuss the procedures for extracting those organs intact during an abortion and the prices they command.

It may be disturbing to hear those procedures described: "... we've been very good at getting heart, lung, liver, because we know that, so I'm not gonna crush that part, I'm gonna basically crush below, I'm gonna crush above, and I'm gonna see if I can get it all intact."

It may be unseemly to hear a Planned Parenthood official haggle over pricing for those organs: "Let me just figure out what others are getting, and if this is in the ballpark, then it's fine, if it's still low, then we can bump it up. I want a Lamborghini."

But in the end, Planned Parenthood's defenders insist, listening to an abortionist discuss manipulating the "calvarium" (that is, the dying fetus' skull) so that it emerges research-ready from the womb is fundamentally no different from listening to a doctor discuss heart surgery or organ transplants. It's unsettling, yes, but just because it's gross doesn't prove it's wrong.

Which is true, but in this case not really



Ross DOUTHAT
Comment

It's a very specific disgust, informed by reason and experience.

true enough. Because real knowledge isn't purely theoretical; it's the fruit of experience, recognition, imagination, life itself.

And the problem these videos create for Planned Parenthood isn't just a generalized queasiness at surgery and blood.

It's a very specific disgust, informed by reason and experience — the reasoning that notes that it's precisely a fetus' humanity that makes its organs valuable, and the experience of recognizing one's own children, on the ultrasound monitor and after, as something more than just "products of conception" or tissue for the knife.

That's why Planned Parenthood's apologists have fallen back on complaints about "deceptive editing" (though full videos were released in both cases), or else simply asked people to look away. And it's why many of my colleagues in the press seem uncomfortable reporting on the actual content of the videos.

Because dwelling on that content gets you uncomfortably close to Selzer's tipping point — that moment when you start pondering the possibility that an institution at the heart of respectable liberal society is dedicated to a practice that deserves to be called barbarism.

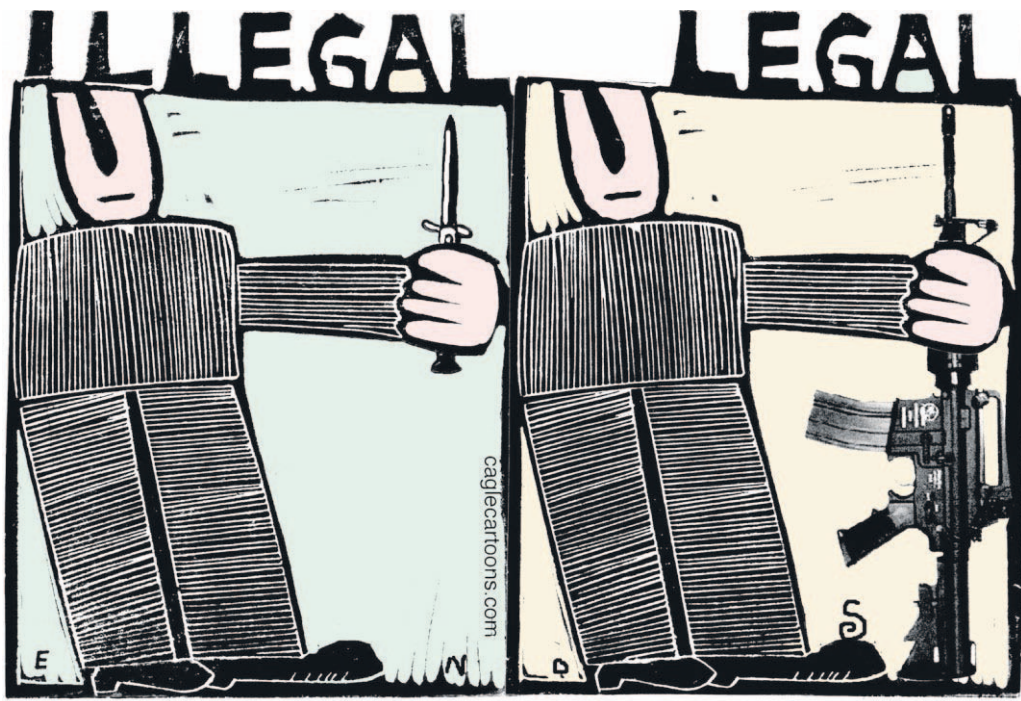
That's a hard thing to accept. It's part of why so many people hover in the conflicted borderlands of the pro-abortion rights side. They don't like abortion, they think its critics have a point ... but to actively join our side would require passing too comprehensive a judgment on their coalition, their country, their friends, their very selves.

This reluctance is a human universal. It's why white Southerners long preferred Lost Cause mythology to slaveholding realities. It's why patriotic Americans rarely want to dwell too long on My Lai or Manzanar or Nagasaki. It's why, like many conservatives, I was loath to engage with the reality of torture in Bush-era interrogation programs.

But the reluctance to look closely doesn't change the truth of what there is to see. Those were dead human beings on Richard Selzer's street 40 years ago, and these are dead human beings being discussed on video today: Human beings that the nice, idealistic medical personnel at Planned Parenthood have spent their careers crushing, evacuating, and carving up for parts.

The anti-abortion sting was sweeping; there are reportedly 10 videos to go. You can turn away. But there will be plenty of chances to look, to see, to know.

Ross Douthat joined *The New York Times* as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at *the Atlantic*



LETTERS POLICY

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