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Electronic age brings question of privacy

Many students on USC's campus have Internet accounts or accounts with commercial computer bulletin board services.

One of the main uses for these accounts at present is electronic mail, computer-generated and delivered mail that goes from one electronic mail box to another.

Messages sent across the electronic lines vary from business deals to risqué love letters to criticisms of government.

Are these flashes of information, though, as secret and private as conventional mail has been in the past? Companies that run electronic systems, the government and users of electronic mail will face an increasing question of privacy and freedom of information.

Without extensive security programs, many electronic accounts are relatively easily accessed by whoever wants to access them.

Even more tricky is the question of censorship and libel over the electronic lines. At what point can someone be held accountable for things written online?

The freedoms and privacy enjoyed by typical publications should be continued over electronic publication methods.

Just because the media is different does not mean different rules apply to publication of information.

People's mail needs to be private, people's privacy needs to be protected from government intervention, and libel laws should be evaluated for electronic publication.

CORRECTION

Gina Grant, the Massachusetts student rejected from Harvard after the school found she was convicted of manslaughter, lived in Lexington, S.C., not Lexington, Ky., as reported in Wednesday's Gamecock.

Men 'clean up well' because of women



DREW STEWART
Columnist

mount them?

• Men would not clean up the slightest thing. The world would be a junk pile if it weren't for women. Do you think we clean up on our own? There would be no need for landfills if there weren't ladies because men are inherently pack rats. We would save everything, even stuff we know is broken and ain't no good. We don't know why we do it, but I do know the only reason we throw away anything is because women make us.

• Cars would not exist. Every man, be him city or country, has at one time wanted a pickup truck. The only reason we get cars are for women. If we didn't have women to impress with our cars, we would just drive around in old rusted pickup trucks with no hubcaps or and rusted out tailgates.

• There would only be three channels on TV: ESPN, SportsSouth and The Nashville Network. The soap opera lineup would be replaced with afternoon showings of Roland Martin, Jimmy Houston and World Championship Wrestling. Sally Jessy would be replaced with "Bassmasters," and Oprah would be replaced with my show, "Summerton 29148."

• We wouldn't have to put up with Hillary Clinton, Ricki Lake or that stupid girl off of "Blossom." Wait a minute, that's a good thing! Nix that.

• There would be no songs. How many songs do you think we write about each other? About the only one we would have to listen to is "All My Rowdy Friends are Coming Over Tonight."

So, ladies, as you can see, we really do appreciate you. Could you imagine a world without women?

It would look worse than the rear end of a baboon. So the next time you and your female friends decide that men don't appreciate you, just run up to the first man you see and tell him how nice the shirt he's wearing looks.

Drew Stewart is a journalism sophomore.



QUOTEUNQUOTE

"Something's inherently wrong when you don't have a professor teaching, for whatever reason, but continuing to be paid."

Sen. David Thomas, R-Fountain Inn

Legalizing marijuana would make U.S. money



NIGEL RAVENHILL
Columnist

A 1991 Department of Health and Human Services survey indicated that almost 10 million Americans smoked marijuana regularly, 20 million were occasional users and more than one-third of the entire over-12 population had tried it. Despite this widespread use, government marijuana policy continues to exhibit the kind of hysteria formerly retained for the Red menace from China and Russia. Thirteen years after the most recent drug war against marijuana began, it is time that this country reevaluated the prohibition and legalized pot so that millions of Americans can legally enjoy a simple pleasure and the country can save billions of dollars fighting a stupid and petty battle that it will never win.

This makes social, economic and rational sense for three essential reasons. Having outlawed marijuana in 1937, the United States has done without the well-documented benefits of commercial hemp cultivation; the costs and inequity of the drug war and the imprisonment of tens of thousands of Americans are absurdly expensive; and potential tax revenue from legal and regulated pot sales is enormous.

The word marijuana is used to refer to the flowers, leaves and stalk of the cannabis plant of the hemp family. Hemp is one of the most versatile and valuable plants known to man. It can be processed into a remarkable number of products. Charcoal, methanol, ethanol, paper, oil, biomass fuel, animal and human foods, clothing, protein and fiberboard are just some of the uses. Environmentally, it is also significantly preferable than other crops. For example, unlike cotton production, which uses 50 percent of all the pesticides in the United States, hemp can be grown with hardly any chemical help.

Before the Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, hemp provided a wide variety of benefits. For example, the first Levis were made from hemp because of the plant's lasting durability. Marijuana prohibition has ended this. If you want to know the "what might have been," read the February 1938 Popular Mechanics issue. Contrary to its own legislation, however, during World War II the federal government commercially harvested the plant, a fact detailed in the government film "Hemp for Victory."

The government and anti-drug Reefer Madness hysteria has lamentably clouded the issue of commercial cultivation. Hemp produces a myriad of valuable products beyond the twisted, hand-rolled cigarettes that remain in the spotlight of the drug controversy. Sadly these great advantages are overshadowed by a desire to cleanse society of those unsavory marijuana elements who either sell it or smoke it.

Being arrested for drugs has become a very hit-or-miss affair. The root of this is the 1986 Anti-Drug Act that arose from a legislative desire for tougher, although not necessarily saner, penalties. If you are convicted under federal law, this act obliges judges to hand out the strictest punishment available, so-called mandatory-minimums. During the preceding 200 years of American legal history a judge could exercise his discretion in reducing sentences based on extenuating circumstances and convincing appeals for mercy.

The 1986 Act suddenly took this power away from the bench and handed it to the U.S. attorney, who now decides where and when and if a mandatory-maximum will apply. Should the attorney choose to "enhance" the case by framing the charge under the federal statute and you lose, you're toast. In a guilty verdict the judge is forced

to sentence you to the maximum term, and visions of parole will just dance in your head until your sentence has been served. The only avoidance of this hardship is to testify against someone else and hope that you can provide enough names, dates and information. Caveat emptor, these plea bargains are not guaranteed.

Now why should people admittedly involved somehow in drugs be coddled? Here are three Anti-Drug Act examples from the real world. First offender Michael Irish helped unload a boatload of hashish and received 12 years, and fellow first offender Charles Dunlap rented a truck used by a friend to import pot and received eight years.

In 1991 Mark Young introduced two growers to a representative of a New York drug dealer. With no history of violent crime and two suspended sentences for very minor felonies over a decade earlier, he touched neither the money nor the drugs. His simple introduction led to a charge of "conspiracy to manufacture," and the attorney chose to enhance the charge and shoot for life imprisonment.

Young had no information to plea bargain and was sentenced to life at Leavenworth prison with zero parole. Had he been tried differently, he might have received a seven-year sentence. So you the taxpayer will spend almost \$1 million for this nonviolent felon to spend the next 40 to 50 years in jail. The big problem stemming from this unnecessary influx of inmates is that judges have recently begun ordering prisons to reduce overcrowding. Convicts with no possibility of parole such as Young will have to remain in prison while more violent criminals will be prematurely released into your communities. Personally I would much rather clear the prisons of the benign elements of marijuana trafficking in order to provide long-term institutional residence for the far more odious elements of mankind who really warrant exclusion from society.

In 1970 16.3 percent of all federal prisoners were drug offenders. In 1994 it

was 62 percent, and by 1996 seven out of every 10 prisoners will be in for drugs. There are more people in jail simply for drugs today (over 200,000) than the entire national prison population in 1970. Over half of the Justice Department's 1991 budget (\$3.8 billion) was spent on anti-drug programs including the federal Bureau of Prisons and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Since 1982, about \$30 billion has been spent to combat marijuana, 4 million Americans have been arrested and over 250,000 have spent at least one year in jail. You get the picture. This is ridiculous.

All this money combats a drug that is measurably safer than either tobacco or alcohol. If the 400,000 who annually succumb from tobacco smoking were to collectively die in one day, tobacco would be outlawed the following morning. There has never been a single death nor a case of lung cancer exclusively linked to consumption of any amount of pot. Unlike caffeine, alcohol or nicotine, smoking joints is not physically addictive. The marijuana prohibition has also sharply curtailed its role in medicine, for which its retail sale remained legal until 1937.

Some will endlessly preach that pot lowers testosterone and sperm levels, causes psychosis and makes you stupid. Wrong. Were the virility argument true, I would question why Jamaica has not been severely depopulated. I would also argue that television renders the average person incomparably more insipid and stupid than pot could ever do, and for evidence I offer you Ricki Lake and Sally Jesse Raphael.

Michael Caputo, Ph.D., and Brian Ostrom Ph.D., published their highly interesting study "Potential Tax Revenue from a Regulated Marijuana Market," in the American Journal of Economics and Sociology (October 1994). They consider such angles as how government could tax legal sale, estimates of market size in terms of both users and revenue and factors that could reduce tax revenue upon legalization.

Their conclusions are that "the marijuana industry in 1991 was estimated to generate \$5.09 to 9.09 billion of untaxed revenue." Additionally, as production and processing costs are extremely low, almost all of this revenue is profit and thus subject to taxation.

Personally I don't really care whether others choose to get stoned. I prefer a cold beer, and for a high I'll take skiing and windsurfing any day. But marijuana is not the dangerous evil of government portrayals. The greater loss is that in enacting a repressive prohibition against it (an experiment that miserably failed when applied to alcohol), the government curtails exploitation of a valuable agricultural crop that can provide so much.

Let the Deadheads go in peace, and give me a house of hemp.

Nigel Ravenhill is a graduate student in mass communications.

The Gamecock
News: 777-7726
Advertising: 777-4249
FAX: 777-6482

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