

Over a lifetime, the average taxpayer will spend four months working on tax forms. The GAO says the cost of compliance exceeds \$100 billion—1 percent of GDP. All that money, time, and creative energy could have gone to building a better business, curing diseases, or spending quality hours with the family.

Our tax code is an enemy of freedom. It has to be simplified.

Mr. Stossel is co-anchor of the ABC News program *20/20*.

JACOB SULLUM

SCIENTISTS at the National Institute on Drug Abuse are very excited about anti-drug “vaccines” that use the immune system to neutralize psychoactive chemicals. Although the products developed so far seem to be only modestly effective, the ultimate aim is to prevent drug use by taking all the fun out of it. NIDA sees the vaccines as a potential drug “treatment” tool, which raises the possibility that they could be forced on people arrested for drug offenses as an alternative to jail. British politicians, meanwhile, are looking forward to the day when drug-use preventatives are added to the list of mandatory vaccinations for children, ultimately protecting all citizens from addiction by rendering them incapable of enjoying forbidden pleasures.

This Orwellian scenario is a logical extension of what federal appeals-court judge Richard Posner aptly calls the government’s

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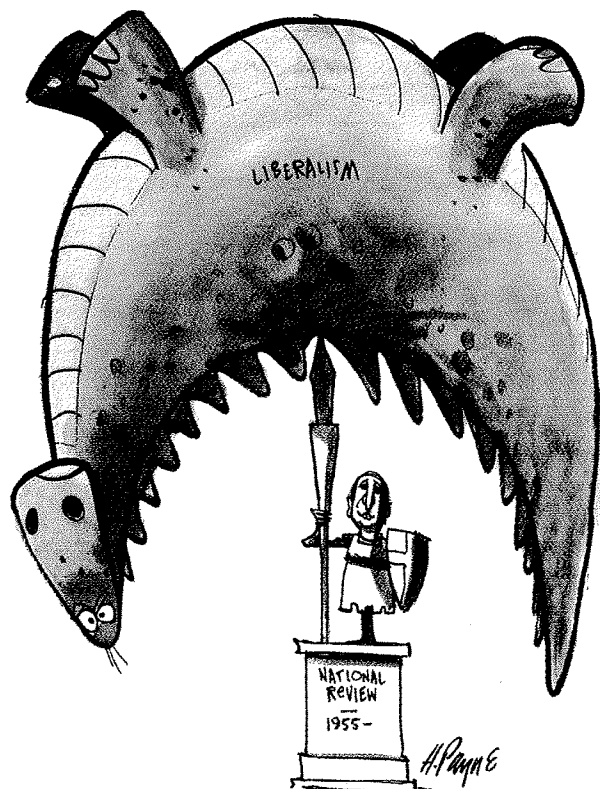
“quixotic campaign . . . to prevent people from consuming an arbitrary subset of mind-altering drugs.” The government has been trying to control our minds indirectly for close to a century, since Congress passed the Harrison Narcotics Act in 1914. Why not take the fight directly to our bloodstreams?

The pleasure-suppressing injections drug warriors dream of exemplify the prohibitionist mentality, which seeks to promote virtue by eliminating temptation instead of fostering self-control. The same arguments that we hear for banning the currently illegal drugs can be applied with equal or greater force to alcohol: concerns about addiction, violence, acute poisoning, long-term health damage, accidents, impaired productivity, and reckless sexual behavior. Yet somehow we manage to address these dangers without prohibition; in fact, we’ve concluded that they can be addressed more effectively when alcohol is legal.

The costs of trying to substitute government control for self-control are even more pronounced today than they were during the heyday of Al Capone. Aside from the direct government spending it entails (totaling some \$40 billion per year in the U.S.), drug prohibition leads to black-market violence, increased property crime, police corruption, and heightened health hazards. It undermines privacy, property rights, religious freedom, freedom of speech, individual responsibility, and respect for the law. It strains our relations with countries that supply the intoxicants Americans demand. It causes unnecessary suffering by blocking access to effective medicines. It produces egregious injustices, such as asset forfeiture without proof of wrongdoing and draconian sentences for nonviolent drug offenders—not to mention the more routine injustices of making 1.7 million drug arrests a year (almost half of them involving marijuana) and keeping a half-million Americans behind bars for catering to politically incorrect recreational tastes.

The most plausible way out of this mess is a path that Congress has blocked with help from the Supreme Court: policy experimentation at the state level. If Congress respected the Constitution, it would step back and allow the states to try different policies regarding drugs produced, sold, and consumed within their borders. The results could help allay fears about life without prohibition and enable Americans to reclaim their minds and bodies from the pharmacological dictators eagerly eyeing their veins.

L E G A L I Z A T I O N



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