

Fight indulgence, not drugs

Who are we fighting in the war on drugs?

Our aim, according to federal drug czar William Bennett, is to cut off the supply of drugs by combatting their production in Bolivia, Peru and Columbia; stopping and seizing shipments to the United States; and cutting off demand here with stiff penalties and anti-drug education.

But who is the enemy?

Is it the Colombian or Bolivian peasant who grows coca? Most of these poor farmers turned to coca as a major crop in the wake of a debt crisis brought on by large loans from international banks, including many in the United States. We have offered those peasants more loans if they will switch to such legitimate crops as peppers and macadamia nuts. Believe it or not, they're skeptical.

Is our enemy the addicted? We have regarded using drugs as a moral issue; yet those who treat drug addicts say they suffer from a disease, not weakness of character. Why blame the addicted and not their counterparts who contract cancer or heart disease from an "addiction" to unhealthy lifestyles?

Our most likely enemies are the drug lords who reap obscene profits from a product that kills and maims millions. Yet we prefer to ignore any similarities between them and the producers and promoters of tobacco, alcohol and weapons, or the "exporters" of hazardous wastes and chemicals to unsuspecting Third World countries. None of those enterprising groups need resort to violence; they

employ lobbyists to ensure that their death-dealing products remain legal.

Regardless of whom we fight in our drug war, the conflict appears unwinnable. Colombia's political and legal system has been decimated by assassinations — the latest victim being a presidential candidate gunned down on a plane last Thursday. Peru and Bolivia are mired in economic crises, yet our domestic agricultural industry fights any attempt to create new markets for such viable coca alternatives as citrus fruit or soybeans.

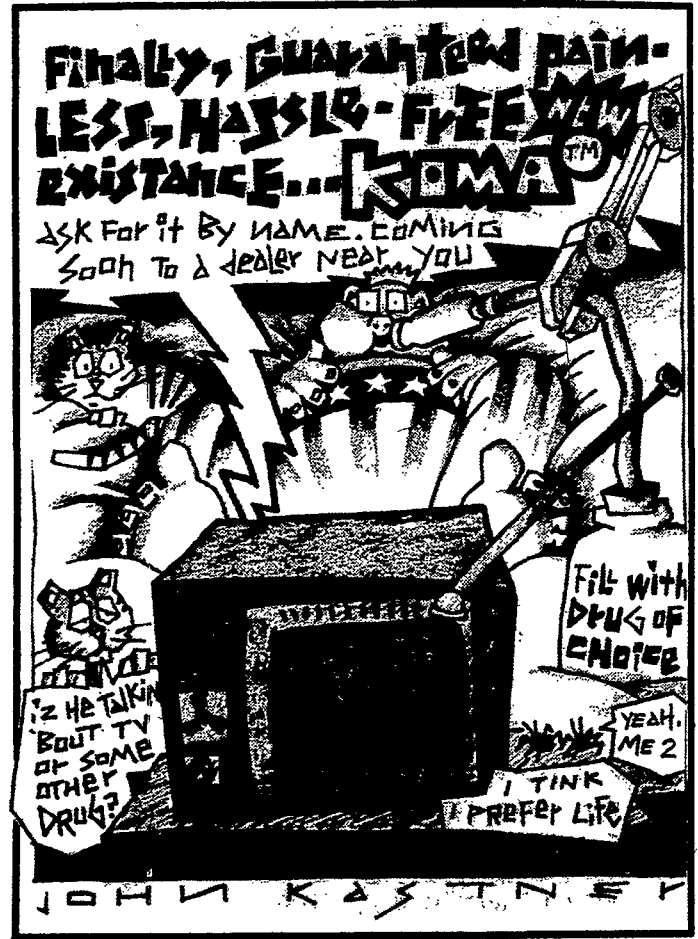
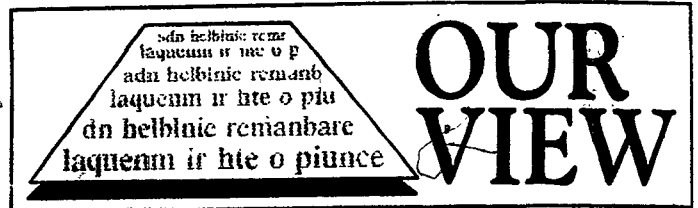
The United States, meanwhile, can't build prisons fast enough to house those swept up in our domestic street-level enforcement campaigns, and won't fund expanded drug-treatment programs to accommodate all the addicts who want help.

For the first time in years, people are seriously debating the merits of legalizing drug use.

That shouldn't be surprising. Most of our compulsions are already legal: alcohol, cigarettes, non-prescription drugs, overeating, promiscuity, gambling. All offer escape from the realization that our dreams of material and personal success are not enough to live for — the realization that, as cartoon character Pogo said, the enemy is us.

To wage a credible war against drug abuse, we must first battle our own appetites for indulgence. Before we tell others to "just say no," we must remember how to say no to ourselves.

— The Editors



School planners could learn from Northeast Quadrant

To the editor:

This has been a very frustrating time for many of us who have children in Catholic schools. It seems as if the dialogue related to the reorganization has not been very productive. Every time we ask for information, specific facts, we are accused of "bishop bashing" (Walter Ervin, CC: March 1) or we are told that "the reorganization is being guided by the Spirit" (Evelyn Kirst, CC: Jan. 18) or asked "how many of today's protestors were equally determined to be heard during the planning

process?" (editorial, CC: Jan. 25). Bishop Clark even seems to think that most of the people against school reorganization are part of a group that is trying to oust him (*Times-Union*, March 23). Some of these things are probably partly true. There are probably some people that question the reorganization who are bishop bashers and want to see Bishop Clark out. Probably some people have had knee-jerk reactions against any change. There are others who feel that they are also guided by the Spirit and the Spirit has instructed them to look

carefully at any plan that tampers with the education of their children.

From my perspective there are several issues that are related to the reorganization. One of them is the issue of governance. Most people are not afraid of the idea of a quadrant board, they are afraid of an unresponsive quadrant board. One of the reasons that we chose a Catholic school is to get away from the huge school districts that are unresponsive to the individual needs of students.

Another important issue is whether the

changes are based on data and not what "seems" to be the right thing to do. For example, the Commission seems to be very strongly in favor of the formation of Junior High Schools. From what I have read so far, this seems to come from two sources: 1) that New York state certifies teachers K-6 and 7-12; 2) the Regents Action Plan needs to be implemented more fully. Do we have quantitative data that show that students graduating from our present K-8 or 4-8 structures are not as well-prepared as their public school peers? ...

Another related issue is the speed at which each quadrant is supposed to make its decisions. I think that thoughtful decisions need to be made. Since the Northeast has already been reorganized, why can't we take a long look at the good and the bad effects. Let's learn from the Northeast's mistakes and benefit from its triumphs. But let our look be data-based, qualitative and quantitative research. I think the Spirit would want it that way.

Nora B. Shannon
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Fairport

Human life should not be treated as a 'commodity'

To the editor:

I have just finished reading the front-page article titled "Almighty Dollar influences Abortion" in the April 4 issue of the *Courier* and there are a few statements I would like to comment on. The first is the "Alan Guttmacher Institute" is listed as an independent institute whereas I have read many times that it is the research arm of the Planned Parenthood Organization which organization is the largest provider of abortions in the U.S.A. if not the world. Next, Dr. Wilke, head of the national Right to Life organization has warned against the use of the expression "pro choice," which is used several times in the article, because once a woman is pregnant we all know she is going to have a baby! Her only choice is

how the baby will come out — in one piece alive or in many pieces dead. So the choice is continuance of life or the violence of death. Next, in a recent survey of 1,900 women in Ohio the following reasons for having an abortion were: not ready, 31 percent; financial, 21 percent, change in lifestyle, 15.6 percent; relationship, 12.3 percent; enough kids, 7.9 percent ...

So dollars and cents were not the main reason; there are many others. Besides we're dealing with a human life here which should not be treated like some commodity in the marketplace. Dollars and cents are a tremendous item to those performing the abortions, not the welfare of the patients, the woman and the baby, I don't believe ...

James P. Tracy Auburn

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Alan Guttmacher Institute has been independent for the past 11 years, according to Susan Tew, assistant director of communications, but was affiliated with Planned Parenthood for the first 10 years of its existence. Tew acknowledged that Planned Parenthood continues to supply 10 percent of the institute's general support, but she said that the federation does not exercise control over the institute's research findings.

Fetus' status is fact, not doctrine

To the editor:

I'm writing in reference to Rob Cullivan's article of March 1 "Pro-Lifers civil disobedience tactics questioned." Please note last sentence of article ... hailed as heroes those who see the fetus as a human being ... My question — what is the fetus of two human beings if not human?

It is a biological fact, not the doctrine of any church, that when the chromosomes of the human sperm and ovum fuse a new human being with a unique genetic makeup comes into existence. These chromosomes containing the nucleic acid DNA determine

the color of the eyes, hair, the skin, facial features, body type and certain qualities of personality and intelligence. A human being with vast potential now exists not a potential human being.

Albert Schweitzer once said "If a man loses reverence for any part of life he will lose reverence for all of life." The killing, by abortion of the tiniest and most helpless member of our human family clearly invites disrespect toward all human life.

Helen M. McGill
Elmira

Ms. McGill is president of Chemung County Right to Life.

Produce more priests like Father Mugavero

To the editor:

Your quote of Dr. Eric Schaff asking Bishop Clark to "rein in his priest" (CC: Feb. 8) reminds one of the request by England's Henry II to silence Thomas à Becket ("Will no one rid me of this meddling priest?") — the singular archbishop who dared to challenge the prevailing changes of his day by holding

them up to God's word. What is meddling in Father Mugavero's case is that he, too, insists on confronting us with the truth: It is God's baby whose life we take in abortion. If speaking this truth is what Father Mugavero is guilty of, then I pray that the Church will produce a thousand more like him.

David Valone Pittsford

Fr. Champlin failed to clarify misconceptions

To the editor:

In his letter to the *Catholic Courier* of March 29, Monsignor Joseph M. Champlin attempts to hide the fact that his booklet, "Together for Life," is in error regarding the Catholic Church's teaching on contraception. He does this by attempting to discredit me by accusations of misquote and by hiding behind an imprimatur. Rather, he should have spent the time clarifying what he thought our misconceptions were in reference to what he says in his booklet about contraception. He didn't, because he couldn't justify the fact that he is not teaching what the Church teaches of birth control. ...

Now, as to the charge of "setting herself up as the judge of a book's doctrinal content, thus undercuts the authority of a bishop. As a result, she causes a harmful

disunity in the Church." Bishops err and bishops can be misled. The bishop who granted the Imprimatur was no doubt influenced by the priest who gave the booklet its Nihil Obstat, Rev. John L. Reedy. Father Reedy is another well known dissenter from *Humanae Vitae*. Many are all too aware of how the Imprimatur has been seriously abused in recent times. Note, "Christ Among Us," "Sexual Morality" and our local example, "Parents Talk Love," all of which have had their Imprimatur removed.

The Magisterium teaches that contraception is a grave sin. "Together for Life" teaches contraception is an option. ... Who is creating disunity in the Church?

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