Here's a vision of our economy's future, and at the end of this rainbow there's a pot of pot.

The Economic Necessity of Marijuana

by GATEWOOD GALBRAITH

Marijuana has been cultivated and utilized by man for over four thousand years. In addition to being valued as an intoxicant, it has supplied hemp fiber for rope, clothes, and paper. Yet, a main reason for the present popularity of marijuana is that it presents an attractive alternative to alcohol, which has many destructive side effects not found in the marijuana plant. In fact, marijuana has proven to be the best therapy for glaucoma, this nation's second leading cause of blindness. It has also proved useful in the treatment of depression, anxiety, asthma, alcoholism, and sickness resulting from chemotherapy treatment for cancer. Marijuana has been illegal to grow and use for personal consumption in the United States for the past forty-one years. This came about for several reasons. In the 1930s, it became useful to make marijuana illegal to: 1) maintain control over the Blacks, the Mexicans, and the Chinese in the United States who were smoking marijuana because their ancestors had done so for centuries; 2) provide continued work for the many government agents whose employment would have ended when Prohibition did; 3) to prevent marijuana from competing with alcohol and patent medicines.

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The official reason for marijuana's illegality—that it presents an undue hazard to the health, safety, and welfare of the American public—has remained unproven. The government has spent tens of millions of dollars and thousands of man-hours researching marijuana trying to detect a valid reason for maintaining marijuana's illegality. They have categorically failed.

This official doctrine has become dogmatic, and it is catastrophic in the cost of its application. As of 1977, over 2.4 million citizens have been hauled before the criminal justice system at a conservatively estimated cost of $1,000 per arrest. The cost in terms of lost career opportunities, shattered family lives, and prison experiences is inestimable—as are the costs of our government's trampling of individual and collective constitutional guarantees. Tens of millions of citizens now view the government as illogical and destructive because of its reaction to this plant. Many of these persons are part of the marijuana black market, which, despite the government's spending of billions of dollars in its repression, has been growing by leaps and bounds.

There are more than 40 million marijuana smokers in the U.S. and Canada, and in 1977 they sent over 2.5 billion dollars to South America and Mexico for a plant that our farmers once grew by the thousands of acres. It makes no sense to con-

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tinue to preclude these farmers from supplying an already existent, multi-billion-dollar market for an agricultural product that is in great and increasing demand in every city in the United States. It is far more logical and productive to license one million of our farmers to grow $2,500 worth of marijuana each in order to supply a demand which is expected to double by 1985.

"The record trade deficit of 27 billion dollars reported for 1977 by the U.S. did not include the 2.5 billion dollars exported for pot."

Many of our farmers are in a serious financial squeeze and can sorely use this additional income. For example, less than one-half of Kentucky's farms gross more than $2,500 in commodities each year; the commercial cultivation of marijuana would revolutionize the rural economy of that state and many others.

An additional benefit to legalizing marijuana would be to make our government more effective in maintaining the dollar's value. The record trade deficit of $27 billion reported for 1977 by the U.S. did not include the $2.5 billion exported for pot. All official figures, then, are off by at least ten percent. That kind of accuracy leaves little wonder that the taxpayer and the dollar are both in trouble today.

What legislation should be passed concerning marijuana in America? Several factors dictate that some regulations be enacted to protect marijuana consumers from a laissez-faire marketplace. For example, standards for purity and quality must be formulated to protect against adulterated products and consumer fraud. In addition, no drug is completely safe when abused, and marijuana is no exception. If marijuana use were to become as widespread as that of tobacco, it, too, would qualify as a health hazard. This would be the natural result of giving the marijuana market over to "free enterprise," which is profit-oriented and which would encourage the pervasive consumption of pot. These considerations lead to the conclusion that governmental intervention into the commercial legal marijuana market is a necessity. A similar conclusion regarding alcohol was reached after the experience of the problems of Prohibition, which were strikingly parallel to those found in today's repression of marijuana.

By utilizing extant alcohol and tobacco marketing techniques, a systematic and logical solution to the problems of marijuana may be devised. The Kentucky Marijuana Feasibility Study, Inc. has constructed a model plan which consists of immediately legalizing the personal cultivation and use of marijuana by individuals and households. Essentially, this protects the right to privacy and the pursuit of individual lifestyles by limiting governmental intrusions to those situations where there exists a rational and provable reason for them. An individual's experience with growing his own marijuana does not present those reasons. On the same principle, we urge that every arrest record related to marijuana be erased immediately. The government has made a mistake, and it is a crime to continue to punish those persons caught up in the tragedy.

This supply of "home-grown" marijuana would not prevent the growth of a huge commercial market for marijuana. Rather than grow their own, millions of consumers would prefer to purchase clean and graded ounces of marijuana from a reliable source. Our plan calls for state governments to license farmers to grow poundage allotments of marijuana for sale to that state. One-hundred-pound limits would be imposed to insure that the economic gains are spread about. Similarly, we would prohibit the aggregation of licensed allotments held by absentee landlords.

Farmers would sell their marijuana to the state

Entrepreneurial Spirit

"In rural Cedartown, Ga., one of the pioneers in the Georgia [marijuana] trade, back in 1975, managed to land a DC-4 on a rutted strip only a thousand feet long and dotted with tree stumps. The strip had been carved out by clandestine bulldozers the night before, and the only landing aid was a string of 100-watt bulbs through the trees.

"The local police arrived too late to get the plane's cargo, but a rented van was taken later, thundering out of the woods trailing honeysuckle. Three men were discovered inside, grinning sheepishly as they sat on two tons of marijuana."

—*The New York Times*
June 16, 1978

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through a warehouse, with prices depending on the potency and appearance of the crop. Seeds and stems would be removed by the farmer prior to marketing and sold to private enterprise. A pound of top quality bud-leaf would then bring the grower approximately one hundred dollars, with lower prices for lower grades.

"When you prevent me from doing anything I want to do, that is persecution; but when I prevent you from doing anything you want to do, that is law, order and morals."

—George Bernard Shaw

The state would package the leaf in ounces and sell them at a profit to licensed retail dealers. Sixteen top quality ounces would wholesale to these dealers for $175, the state thereby grossing about $75 and netting about $70. Every state in the Union would be called upon to handle about one million pounds by 1985, and profits would range from 30 to 50 million dollars for each state. All of these funds would then be earmarked for health and medical research.

The legalization of marijuana can easily serve to reduce unemployment and to furnish a new income tax base. To accomplish this, dealers licensed to retail marijuana to the public should be those persons not now engaged in another ongoing business. We would like to see these licenses given to persons who presently are black-market street retailers. Their livelihoods should not be disrupted—simply licensed and taxed.

As a result of such actions, the public would have access to a clean and graded product at a fair price. An ounce of excellent marijuana, with seeds and stems removed, should retail for about $15, or about one-third its price now. Moreover, our plan would stop a huge and unnecessary dollar drain and drastically increase the dollar flow through our rural economy, while simultaneously recognizing and protecting constitutional freedoms and personal liberties. Let us adopt it immediately. □

THE AGE OF ANXIETY

"It is a gloomy moment in the history of our country. Not in the lifetime of most men has there been so much grave and deep apprehension; never has the future seemed so incalculable as at this time. The domestic economic situation is in chaos. Our dollar is weak throughout the world. Prices are so high as to be utterly impossible. The political cauldron seethes and bubbles with uncertainty. Russia hangs, as usual, like a cloud, dark and silent, upon the horizon. It is a solemn moment. Of our troubles no man can see the end."

—*Harpers Magazine,* October 10, 1847

CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS

"As a matter of historic interest, nearly fifty congressmen from the Watergate era are ex-convicts, convicts under indictment, or lying low. . . . As I see it, now is an opportune moment to adopt a constitutional amendment requiring any candidate for elective office to report to the federal prison nearest his home within twenty-four hours of filing his candidacy."

—R.E. Tyrrell
The American Spectator
May 1978

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