

## The Grass Roots

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It should come as no surprise that a new United Nations report describes worldwide drug abuse as pervasive and unprecedented. Drugs—the over-the-border kind—have had a deleterious effect on American society, which does not exist in a vacuum. For example, the report found “continued expansion of illicit production and trafficking, notably of cocaine” in Latin America and the Caribbean. The governors of the Gulf Coast states already knew that, and they want to utilize the U.S. military to control the “continued expansion” emanating from these sources.

Drug-trafficking is a growth industry that no amount of government effort seems able to control. The task forces, special law-enforcement projects, public-awareness programs, etc., created to fight the drug war are effective in the same way that a good dose of pesticide is effective in South Florida: It keeps the cockroaches out of the kitchen for a few weeks, but then they return in full force.

No weapon can succeed against drug-trafficking unless it takes aim at the reason for this illicit trade: Americans' increasing demand for drugs. The U.N. report finds that heroin abuse in the United States is neither increasing nor decreasing but that the use of cocaine continues to climb disturbingly. More than 20 million Americans use marijuana one or more a month. Twenty **million** users! Is it any wonder that drug traffickers are willing to run the gauntlet of law-enforcement agencies to keep their American customers happy and high?

If this country is ever going to win the so-called drug war, it will have to change its accepting attitude about using drugs to “party.” The abuse of alcohol as a vehicle to retreat into a temporary state of euphoria is undergoing serious examination by many Americans these days. That may be an encouraging sign that the merits of other “party” drugs, specifically the controlled substances whose use creates the human miseries of addiction, increased crime, and untold costs in law-enforcement, someday will be reevaluated and rejected by a majority of those 20 million lawbreakers. Curbing the demand is the only permanent solution to the drug war, whose costs to society are already beyond measure.

### *Village Advertiser Commentary*

Were taxes paid on transactions in illegal drug traffic, the budget could be balanced, military spending could meet the goals set by Defense Secretary Weinberger, and the United States could continue to fund its social programs.

If twenty million Americans are marijuana users, how many are cocaine and heroin users? And how many more Americans use alcohol and tobacco? Think of the thousands of ways the amount of money being spent for drugs could be put to good purpose!