

Letters

Academy Marijuana Report

John Walsh's fine article (News and Comment, 16 July, p. 228) on the reaction of the president of the National Academy of Sciences and the director of the National Institute of Drug Abuse to the report on marijuana policy of the Committee on Substance Abuse and Habitual Behavior does not sufficiently emphasize the importance of the report itself.

The significance can be quite simply stated. This committee, with overlapping membership on the Institute of Medicine committee that produced the recent comprehensive report on the health dangers of marijuana and with full access to this report, nonetheless concurred in the earlier recommendation of the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse and several other groups that marijuana use and possession of small amounts of the drug should be decriminalized. Until this report, it was widely argued that more recent medical findings had somehow made these earlier reports obsolete. In addition, the Academy commission went a step further than the previous groups and recommended that serious thought be given to the replacement of our present prohibition of marijuana supply with some kind of a regulated system of legal marijuana sale.

The committee was a distinguished one, with several members from the Institute of Medicine and from the Academy itself. It included pharmacologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, a geneticist, and an epidemiologist. There were only three social scientists: Howard Becker, a sociologist; Thomas Schelling, an economist; and myself, a lawyer. Finally, the committee unanimously signed off on the report, despite the fact that Academy president Press and various government officials found it so objectionable.

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John Walsh's article on the National Academy of Science' report on marijuana policy is well balanced and informative. It errs only in implying that the final version did not satisfy all members of the

committee. While it was not easy to achieve consensus on the report, and a number of drafts were required before the ultimate document was considered to be suitable, in fact everyone on the committee signed off on the version that has been published.

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Multiple Submission

In response to the letter "Duplicate publication" from Mark W. J. Ferguson (18 June, p. 1274), we would like to point out an issue he does not mention. He apologizes for inadvertently publishing the same data twice, after submitting essentially the same manuscript to two journals with the intention of withdrawing one after the other was accepted.

As scientists who serve as reviewers for journals, we would like to point out that submission of a manuscript begins a review process involving hours of work on the part of reviewers, editors, and office staff and significant overhead costs. Multiple submission of papers is an abuse of this system, and a paper should be submitted to a second publication only if it has already been rejected by the first. In addition, careful consideration of the comments associated with the rejection may considerably strengthen the second submission, or make it unnecessary.

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Missing Computers

The sad *Science* story (News and Comment, 25 June, p. 1392) about the chess-champion computer languishing at Kennedy Airport while the decisive tournament was being played in Moscow

presents a very much one-sided view of the role of U.S. Customs: If they are doing a very good job of bottling up computers within the United States, we should grant them equal efficiency at keeping them out.

In 1977, I crossed over from France to attend the University of South Carolina Conference on Fourier Spectroscopy. A week before, I had shipped by airfreight to Columbia my pet laboratory-built computer, hard-wired for Fourier spectra, fondly believing it would prove a key attraction at the scientific instrument exhibit, plus a fat envelope of what I hoped were suitable documents. It simply vanished; frantic phone calls to everybody concerned produced no results until the evening of the last day, when the crate was finally located—guess where—in a customs shed at Kennedy Airport. Just like Kenneth Thomson, I managed to get it back in no more than a few weeks; I was luckier than he was and I did not even have to pay a fine.

What made the whole affair all the more galling was that, barely a year before, the same device had been exhibited almost under the Kremlin walls at a Franco-Soviet optical meeting, with no trouble at all either way.

To be quite fair, let us grant that, whenever one tries to wander around with a suitcase full of printed stuff, the U.S. border is still, by far, the more permeable of the two.

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Audit at the University of California

The News and Comment article "Audit may cost UC millions" by Colin Norman (16 Apr., p. 279) states that some University of California (UC) faculty members have "outright refused" to submit Personnel Activity Reports (PAR's) on how they spend their professional time. This may lead the reader to believe that failure to complete PAR's is a serious problem at UC when, in fact, quite the opposite is true. As of November 1981, when the audit by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) began, 98 percent of the 220,000 PAR's issued for the year ended 30 June 1981 had been completed and collected.

The article also states: "At UC San Francisco alone, federal auditors have questioned about \$1 million worth of expenses associated with government-