

Look at it the Wright Way



There's the right way and the wrong way, Pappy used to say, the easy way and the hard way, the positive way and the negative. It took me quite a few years to piece it all together, but eventually I came to realize that these three pairs of words are synonyms.

The connection between the first two pairs is easy to make: If you do something the wrong way, you'll have to do it over the right way, and that has to be harder than doing it the right way the first time through. Agreed? Connecting this positive/negative business into the scheme of things is the tricky part.

Back on the eve of the Roaring Twenties, enough citizens became convinced of the need for a total ban on the commercial production and sale of alcoholic beverages that the Volstead Act came into being. The common name for this Constitutional amendment, Prohibition, is enough to tell you that it was essentially a negative approach to what the dry forces perceived to be a national problem.

Because Prohibition had a negative premise as its base, it was doomed to have negative results. Alcohol consumption and alcohol abuse continued to rise, once the bootleggers and moonshiners were able to grasp this wonderful new opportunity handed to them. But now the hooch the public consumed was imported or made without the benefit of government inspection, regulation and taxation.

The Volstead Act not only failed to reduce alcoholism, as its supporters had hoped, it perpetrated several considerable ills. Alcoholics still found a way to poison their systems, but now the systems of people on the periphery of the problem were poisoned by the bathtub booze they drank. Even people who would not think of taking a drink—legal or illegal—found it hard to live lives unaffected by Prohibition; and many of them died in the bloody gang wars, as mobs fought for control of territories.

Today, nearly half a century after the 18th Amendment repealed Prohibition, we are still paying the price for the folly of the Volstead Act. For in its tumultuous wake, Prohibition left us a legacy: a bigger, more sophisticated and unbelievably wealthier underworld.

Bootleggers became businessmen, Mafia dons became demigods; and the millions made in the illegal trade of alcohol formed an economic base from which organized crime has expanded its operations to an incredible scope and diversity. In fact, the tentacles of organized crime have extended so far into our society that our only real hope for its disappearance is that it will eventually be assimilated by the legitimate business community.

With a disaster of such dimensions etched into our communal mind, it would seem that we would be loathe to commit the same mistake all over again; but apparently not. For today, faced with the same type of problem—drug abuse and addiction—we are attempting the same type of negative solution and getting the same type of negative results.

Fear, arrest, trial, punishment, imprisonment: these are the keywords to the approach our society is using in its futile attempt to solve the problem of drug abuse. Even though we might predict what the end result of such negativism will be, this approach would be forgivable if it were helping to solve the problem.

But the sad truth is that drug abuse and drug addiction continue to increase, despite The Law's 60-year war on illegal drugs. There are, in fact, many reasons to suspect that our misdirected approach is contributing to the problem.

Consider that the Drug Enforcement Administration has constantly recommended stricter and broader drug laws whenever such laws were being formulated. Now, if you're working for the DEA, are you going to propose a program that will eradicate drug abuse, and your job along with it? Probably not—unless you're due to retire soon.

To me, there's nothing more flaccid than an editorial that points up a problem but offers no solution. So, first, we must separate drug use from drug abuse in our individual and institutional mind. If we can do that, we can direct our energies and resources toward stopping the proliferation of dangerous drugs, such as heroin, and toward reducing drug addiction at all levels.

Next, we must eliminate or substantially revise our existing drug laws. It should not be a crime for a high-school student to smoke pot, for example; rather, it should be a crime for the school to fail to provide that student with accurate, reliable information on the physiological, psychological and social hazards involved with smoking pot.

The present system of making criminals out of drug users then punishing them for it has three major flaws. First, as touched upon earlier, it is not working. A study reported on by a national news magazine in 1979 estimated that as many as 55 million people in the United States used illegal drugs on a "regular or recurring basis." That's a lot of criminals.

The most common objection to liberalizing our drug laws runs something like this: "If you legalize drugs, we'll have a nation of drug addicts." The implication being that our present program of crime and punishment has somehow limited the availability of drugs. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In regard to a major cocaine bust last year in Miami, a Florida narcotics agent said, "We took 2,000 pounds of pure cocaine off the market in one afternoon, and it didn't raise the street price one nickel."

The truth is that, right now, any one of us with sufficient cash and a bus ticket to Kansas City could score enough of any kind of drug to put us in orbit somewhere beyond Saturn—or out of this existence altogether. But we're not planning any drug-buying trips into KC. We're planning on staying right here in Lawrence where we can worry about our kids' grades, punch time clocks and write editorials.

The second flaw in the laws is that they are too irregular and too susceptible to arbitrary enforcement and prosecution. Possession of an ounce of marijuana in Oregon, for example, is a misdemeanor punishable by a light fine. The same ounce can put a person behind bars for ten years in Texas.

A judge in Illinois recently dismissed a possession charge because he determined the substance involved, cocaine, was neither addictive nor dangerous. About the same time in Lawrence, a family man was sentenced to three years in prison for selling the same substance.

The third major flaw is the outrageous cost of the system. The immediate costs are obvious. Add up the budgets of the DEA and the narcotics bureaus of all other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, and you could fund every existing drug rehabilitation program several times over.

Imagine: A Proem

by Fredric Brown

IMAGINE GHOSTS, GODS AND DEVILS.

Imagine hells and heavens, cities floating in the sky and cities sunken in the sea.

Unicorns and centaurs. Witches, warlocks, jinns and banshees.

Angels and harpies. Charms and incantations. Elementals, familiars, demons.

Easy to imagine, all of those things: mankind has been imagining them for thousands of years.

Imagine spaceships and the future.

Easy to imagine; the future is really coming and there'll be spaceships in it.

Is there then anything that's **hard** to imagine? Of course there is.

Imagine a piece of matter and yourself inside it, yourself aware, thinking and therefore knowing you exist, able to move that piece of matter that you're in, to make it sleep or wake, make love or walk uphill.

Imagine a universe—infinite or not, as you wish to picture it—with a billion, billion, billion suns in it.

Imagine a blob of mud whirling madly around one of those suns.

Imagine yourself standing on that blob of mud, whirling with it, whirling through time and space to an unknown destination.

Imagine!

THIS IS LEADERSHIP?

We're so glad Barkley Clark was re-elected to the City Commission—he says the most curious things. In the final candidates' forum, broadcast over Channel 6 and KANU-FM, Barkley said his role as a leader in stopping the Haskell Loop was "well documented."

Opposition to the proposed East Lawrence thoroughfare first surfaced on October 14, 1974, in the form of a petition signed by 34 East Lawrence residents, mostly homeowners. The Loop would decimate their neighborhood, the petition said, and they didn't want it.

More than nine months later, Barkley wrote in the Journal-World: "... the Haskell Loop is only one element in an over-all effort by the city to improve East and North Lawrence. The city staff has already spent a great deal of time and overhead expense in working on the Haskell Loop project. There comes a point at which the city staff get demoralized, and city government gets paralyzed, when decisions once made are reversed..."

LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS LETTERS

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TACKY, TACKY

To the editor:

I was shocked by the behavior of Commissioner Tom Gleason at the recent Oread cleanup. I'm usually not one to pass judgment on people's inner character, but it seems to me that by showing up at the cleanup clad in dirty blue jeans and an Oread t-shirt, this man who was recently elected to a two year term gave us a pretty good indication from his outward appearances of what kind of attitude he has about being a city commissioner. I was embarrassed not only for Mr. Gleason, but for the whole city for his apparent lack of respect for the public trust which he holds.

It's not as if the cleanup was just an Oread thing. People were there from other neighborhoods too, watching a Lawrence city commissioner throwing trash and old mattresses into a big truck! It was disgusting. It is tragic that the situation in Lawrence has gotten so far out of hand that this kind of thing could happen. Who will want to do business here anymore?

But this is even more tragic for Mr. Gleason himself. If he does not find his way onto the right path, I fear he could end up as a drug addict, a child molester, or worse. I know he is enough of a politician to realize that his term ends in two years, so maybe we can hope to see Mr. Gleason act with more dignity from now on.

Sincerely,
Owsley C. Bronfierron
1144 Louisiana

ROBERTS RETORTS

To the editor:

I want to express my indignation over the articles that appeared in local publication casting aspersions on my write-in candidacy for city commissioner, and on my very existence!

I would like to assure the voters that my candidacy was just as legitimate as the issues raised by the Journal-World and the three other losers. And I maintain that I am just as substantial as the fears the Building Trades Council, the labor unions and the other losers tried to promote.

My congratulations to the three winners—I'm certain they'll do almost as good a job as I could have.

Martin L. Roberts

Two days later, July 30, 1975, he called the Loop "... an obvious planning tool..."

When the Kansas Department of Transportation allocated \$1 million for the Haskell Loop in September 1975, Clark said he was "delighted" because the money "will insure early completion of the loop project." All this nearly a year after the petition opposing the Loop was presented to the City Commission.

Sparked by a spurious environmental impact statement that glorified the Haskell Loop and castigated its opponents, the controversy continued for another fourteen months. In the meantime, the reunited East Lawrence Improvement Association, the Far East Lawrence Improvement Association, the Douglas County Planning Commission for ECKAN, and the League of Women Voters all issued strong statements in opposition to the Loop.

Finally, on December 17, 1976, Mayor Clark told the City Commission, "In light of the failure of the state highway department to assure a connection at the (east) end of the Loop, and the deviousness that the Loop has caused in the neighborhood associations... it might be better to table the Loop for the time being." Even in presenting the motion to the commission the next week, Clark confessed he still thought "the original plan was a good one."

There's no doubt that Barkley had a hand in putting an end to the death throes of the Haskell Loop; but if he can convince the public that he led the opposition, don't be surprised if he soon begins to tell how he led a ticket of neighborhood candidates to a sweep in the last city election.



If all this seems somewhat like ancient history, consider Clark's comment just before the installation of the new city commissioners regarding the 1980 change in the method of choosing the mayor: "If Marci Francisco is elected mayor, it will prove that the change was not aimed at her."

Now there's a pretty piece of convoluted logic. Everyone, Clark included, knows that the past City Commission decided to choose the mayor in a "real election" among the commissioners for one reason and one reason only: to keep Marci Francisco from serving her rightful term as mayor due her under the old system by virtue of her second-place finish in the 1979 city election.

Denials and disclaimers—past and forthcoming—nonwithstanding, if Nancy Shontz and Tom Gleason had not been elected to the commission on April 7, Clark and his cronies would still be playing a game of mayoral keep-away from Francisco. The election of Marci as mayor on April 13 proved only one thing: that the voters of Lawrence had become disgusted with the high-handed decisions and power politics of the past commission.

We are happy that Barkley was re-elected, because he is a capable commissioner. But we'll be even happier when he can carry out his public trust without making public statements that contradict common knowledge and common sense.



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