Opinion
News



A person holds cannabis buds. (Thought Catalog/Unsplash)



by Mary Ann McGivern

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If wishes were horses, beggars would ride. But oh, how I wish we would decriminalize drug possession and spend the money we save on law enforcement for addiction treatment. I was watching a news story on smugglers operating between Tijuana and San Diego — by ship, by truck and by tunnel. The Border Patrol described stopping a huge load of marijuana, and I asked myself, what's the point?

Remember the movie "Traffic"? All these resources were spent, to no avail. And the movie was made in 2000. Eighteen years later we are in the same place — even worse if we consider that marijuana is legal in some states while those prosecuted for possession of the stuff are still in prison and branded for life as felons.

Portugal decriminalized drug possession in 2001. Gradually attitudes there changed; more users chose treatment; demand for drugs went down; drug-related crime and disease went down. We could learn a lot from Portugal if we didn't think the country was beneath us.

Of course drug policy isn't the only social problem where the U.S. could learn from other nations. Michael Moore made a movie "Where to Invade Next" that is mostly about ideas that were generated in the U.S. but allowed to wither away while other nations seized upon them, from free universities to nourishing and delicious school lunch programs. Well, as for school lunches, France definitely has the edge.

A group I had dinner with last night were talking about violence in schools and the high rate of suspensions of black kids in St. Louis. I said all we had to do was throw money at the problem, the way we throw money at the Pentagon. Really, one of our members is a 3rd grade teacher with 30 students, mostly boys, and one autistic child. Think how much better he and his students would do if only the class size were 15 and the autistic child had a full-time aide.

We were all proponents of nonviolence and we were all white. Would we, I asked, be willing to pay for better schools by unilaterally shutting down our nuclear weapons program? What about you, dear reader? What tradeoffs would you make to achieve a saner society?

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