

Miller, of the University of California, San Francisco, new math had grown beyond Beberman's or Begle's control. Parents and poorly trained teachers balked; publishers confused matters with textbooks that were hodge-podges of old math and new. Critics denounced new math as elitist, indecipherable, and impractical. And finally it turned out that new-math students scored no higher on standardized

tests than those schooled in old math. By the mid-1970s, new math was dead.

If the space race hadn't pushed new math along so quickly, Miller writes, it might have been a success. Instead, "its most lasting impact might be that of a cautionary tale." Today's curriculum reformers, he concludes, would do well to work "from the teachers up, not from the universities down."

## Drug Bust

"The Economics of Legalizing Drugs" by Richard J. Dennis, in *The Atlantic* (Nov. 1990), 745 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116, and "Imagining Drug Legalization" by James B. Jacobs, in *The Public Interest* (Fall 1990), 1112 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

While drug legalization advocates are quick to criticize the high cost of the federal drug war and its failure to control drug use and drug-related crime, says Jacobs, a law professor at New York University, they can't decide how exactly they would legalize drugs if given the chance.

Dennis, of the Drug Policy Foundation, counters with a concrete legalization plan: Make all currently illegal drugs legal, with the exception of crack cocaine and other drugs that make the user violent. Marijuana, powder cocaine, heroin, and other drugs would be sold to adults in government-licensed stores, just as liquor is now. The resulting drop in drug prices, Dennis says, would take the enormous profit out of drug dealing, deflating a \$100 billion market and curtailing drug-gang violence by at least 80 percent. Drug-related crime would also tumble as users quit stealing to support their habits. Prisons and the courts would be freed up for serious criminals; police departments could direct their attention, and the \$10 billion annually they spend fighting drugs, to other problems.

But Jacobs dismisses such hopeful scenarios. A black market will form around any drug—such as crack—that remains illegal, he says. Indeed, drug dealers might even stay in business, competing with legal suppliers by cutting prices and boosting potency. And what about prescription drugs? Could heroin, cocaine, and speed be sold over the counter while Valium,

sleeping pills, and antibiotics remain available only on a doctor's prescription? Wouldn't *all* regulation of food and drugs eventually have to be abandoned?

He adds that if drugs were legal and cheap, users might want to use more, and thus might steal as much money as they did before. Moreover, he says, just as alcohol use shot up after the repeal of Prohibition, the number of drug users would jump. And there are already 10 million monthly cocaine users and 1.5 million hardcore addicts in the United States. If Washington slapped heavy taxes on legalized drugs, prices would rise and users would have the same incentive to engage in crime as before.

Dennis concedes that the number of drug addicts would increase after legalization, but he says only by 250,000. He points to one opinion poll in which only one percent of the respondents said that they would try cocaine if it were legal. Even if black-market corruption continued around the sale of crack, there would still be an immediate drop in drug crime. And the \$10 billion in new tax revenue that he projects would more than make up for the "social costs" of new addicts.

Jacobs believes that legalization is too big a gamble. If we lose, he says, "it will be too late to go back to the *status quo ante*." Dennis, however, says that he is willing to run that risk to preserve the individual's right to be wrong.

## The Ivory Battleground

A Survey of Recent Articles

The American university has become an ideological battlefield. While conservative critics lament assaults on the traditional canon and the "politicization" of the university, critics on the Left demand new courses designed to emphasize the historical achievements of women and minorities. Students, they complain, still overwhelmingly study the work of "white, European men."

Writing in the *Atlantic* (Sept. 1990), Caleb Nelson, of the *Public Interest*, cites the 1979 debut of Harvard's new core curriculum as a turning point in this debate. It was met with wild enthusiasm. "Not since 1945 had the academic world dared to devise a new formula for developing 'the educated man,'" declared the *Washington Post*. A former education editor of the *New York Times* hailed it recently as "the most exciting collection of academic offerings in all of American higher education." The Harvard core started a revolution, as other universities began copying it. Yet, writes Nelson, "the history of the core is a study in what's wrong with American universities."

The new program's focus on "shared relationships common to all people" represented a sharp departure from the goals of Harvard's influential 1945 "Redbook": "to create responsible democratic citizens, well versed in the heritage of the West and endowed with 'the common knowledge and the common values on which a free society depends.'" The idea of "general education" was abandoned, and courses in esoteric subjects, more congenial to professors' research interests, proliferated. Thus, the course "Epic and Novel" was replaced by "The Imagery of the Modern Metropolis: Pictorial and Literary Representations of New York and Berlin from 1880 to 1940"; "Principles of Physical Science" gave way to "Plants and Biological Principles in Human Affairs."

Harvard downplayed the teaching of Western culture, under the (laughable) assumption that many students had already

learned "the facts" in high school. The hard sciences were neglected. Considered more important were courses aimed at inculcating an "appreciation" of other cultures. As a result, Nelson says, such influential authors as Virgil, Milton, and Dostoevsky are absent from the core's literature courses. "The philosophy behind the core," Nelson concludes, "is that educated people are not those who have read many books and have learned many facts but rather those who could analyze facts if they should ever happen to encounter any."

But higher education's decline began a century ago, not in 1979, asserts Thomas Fleming, the editor of *Chronicles* (Sept. 1990). He says that the classical curriculum of ancient Greece—literature, the arts, mathematics, and public speaking, as well as contemporary "social mechanics"—remained largely intact for centuries. Even our American forebears, he writes, "saw themselves in the mirror of antiquity; it was not by some historical accident that Jefferson and Adams and Madison turned constantly to ancient examples in their deliberations on the best form of government."

By the early 20th century, however, educational reformers in American universities abandoned Latin and ancient Greek to make room for new general courses in the humanities and sciences. In the following decades, Fleming laments, "what had been a coherent curriculum, refined by experience and precedent, turned into a grab bag of electives, whose only shape was determined by a loose set of core requirements." Now, he says, New Left activists have entrenched themselves in university women's and ethnic studies departments, where they practice "critical theory" and clamor for "diversity" and "inclusion" of minorities. But Fleming doubts that they genuinely seek an appreciation of non-Western cultures. "That would require a serious study of difficult foreign languages, anthropology, and religion."

## Encouraging Homelessness

"What Really Causes Family Homelessness?" by Randall K. Filer, in *NY* (Autumn 1990), 42 E. 71 St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

To many New Yorkers, daily encounters with homeless people sleeping in door-

ways, roaming Central Park, or panhandling suggest a problem of crisis propor-