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The Perfect Paradox: Arthur Hancock Op/Ed

There is a country song, “What Part of No Don’t You Understand.” Some of us have come to identify with this song in our efforts over the last thirty years to win the war against drugs and thugs. Aside from creating awareness, we have failed miserably so far. This issue has once again seized the headlines and this time the consequences are far from over. We all have eyes and ears and seeing and hearing is believing. You cannot sweep this one under the rug no matter how vigorously you sweep, and the ramifications will be severe, as they should be.

I have believed and still believe that federal assistance to our industry is the only way to save it. This is NOT federal intervention or federal regulation but rather federal assistance. Have you ever seen 38 individuals, in this case states and racing jurisdictions, agree on anything, let alone trying to get together all the fiefdoms in this industry, each with its own King Arthur and the Knights of his Round Table? The cold hard truth is that these fiefdoms and these racing jurisdictions will be hard pressed to agree on much of anything other than following their own agenda and business as usual. Their modus operandi is, ‘say nothing and do nothing.’

Sadly, most of the so called leaders of this industry were born on third base and think they hit a triple. Maybe it’s just that racing is their hobby and they really don’t feel the need or desire to clean up an industry that all the rest of us depend upon for a living.

Not long ago, in response to my criticism of TOBA for not standing firm on the drug issue, a prestigious leader of the Jockey Club told me, “We don’t appreciate you shooting your own troops.” Well, Sir, even nature calls for the elimination of those who are unwilling or unfit to stand and fight for the continuation and survival of their own species. Concerning the horse industry, the deserters, cowards, and those unwilling to go to war and fight for what is right should be the ones held accountable, for they are the very ones whose silent disregard has brought us to this sad and disgraceful state of affairs.

As it stands now, every fiefdom and every state is doing nothing to ensure our survival except to mutter platitudes, hold meetings, and perpetuate the status quo. This drug and integrity issue is a deadly and serious threat to our very survival as an industry and as a sport. By their pathetic complacency and failure to act, the organizations who are supposed to be representing us are, in essence, working against us and the vital interests of horse racing.