

# The New York Times

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1989

## Letters

### Eliminate All Bills

To the Editor:

I wish to improve on Donald T. Regan's idea of a one-time exchange of old bills for new bills so that cash-hoarding drug dealers may be identified ("The Color of Money Can Stop Drugs," Op-Ed, Sept. 18).

All cash — that is, green currency — should be eliminated. We can convert to an economy in which only checks and credit cards are used. The elimination of cash would hamper drug dealers, who generally use cash in their transactions. Prosecution of traffickers would be facilitated by police analysis of the financial records of suspects to determine the flow of their funds. Al Capone was convicted by the auditing of his records. Nothing else worked in fighting the powerful black marketeer of alcohol during Prohibition; nothing else will work in policing our illegal drug market.

Crimes such as loan sharking and kidnapping, requiring cash, would be more difficult. Auditing in criminal prosecutions could cover tax evaders, arms traders and all black markets.

We would face inconveniences in a checking and credit card economy. It seems absurd to write a check for bubblegum or to use a card at a hot dog stand, but coins could still be used.

Elimination of paper cash may be inflationary. The expense of credit would be added to the price of all transactions. This could be offset by advances in the efficiency of charge card use, for instance, machines through which cards are quickly passed. Retailers and 24-hour bank tellers use this equipment already.

A checking and charge card economy will not be drug free, of course. Sophisticated dealers will still conduct transactions using phony corporations, wire transfers and precious metals. Nevertheless, most dealers would have a tougher time and most law enforcement agencies would have an easier time: trails are left by checks and charge slips, but not with cash. Moreover, more drug profits could be taxed. **PAUL RAMPPELL**  
Palm Beach, Fla., Sept. 21, 1989

