

National News

Drug legalizers peddle needle exchange

The international drug lobby met in Washington, D.C. at the beginning of November, under the banner of the Drug Policy Foundation (DPF). One of the highlights of the event, attended by about 300 people from the United States and Europe, was the awarding of \$100,000 to finance the purchase of 1 million disposable hypodermic needles, to be handed out to intravenous drug users as an "AIDS prevention" tactic.

This year's conference was heavily preoccupied with the AIDS crisis, with one speaker from Liverpool, England touting the virtues of government-distributed heroin as an AIDS-prevention program, in a port city with a large drug addict population and a thriving prostitution business.

One conference organizer, Kevin Zeese of the old NORML pro-marijuana group, said that the Drug Policy Foundation is focusing its efforts against the Bush administration's so-called War on Drugs. Conference sponsors cited the failure of the War on Drugs as "proof" that no anti-drug strategy can ever succeed.

"Drug use is the classic victimless crime," DPF moneybags and Libertarian Richard Dennis told a press conference. By legalizing drug use and allowing "market forces" to manage the industry, its criminal aspect can be eradicated, according to Zeese. The effects of drug use must be considered from both the "positive" as well as "negative" effects of addiction—including even heroin addiction. "Heroin is an excellent way to relieve tension," he told an interviewer.

Thornburgh's aides are sinking fast

Friends of U.S. Attorney General Richard Thornburgh are getting deeper and deeper into trouble.

On Oct. 29, in a hearing concerning the case of Henry Barr, a key Thornburgh aide

for 20 years who was indicted by a grand jury in August for cocaine possession and false statements, the prosecutor blasted the attempt by the authorities to whitewash the cocaine addict. "Let a poor person commit a felony or a misdemeanor and he will, if caught, be prosecuted. But let Henry Barr and men like him break the law, and they think society should look the other way." Barr was the chief legal counsel to Thornburgh. He is charged with conspiracy "with others to obtain, possess, and use cocaine and to conceal his cocaine involvement from outside scrutiny."

Barr was indicted in connection with a cocaine ring operating out of private homes in the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania area. According to sources quoted by the *Washington Times*, the ring included state officials assigned to prosecute drug dealers and users. One official, Richard L. Guida, headed the criminal division in the Pennsylvania Attorney General's office, when Thornburgh was governor. Guida confessed to have distributed cocaine and is now awaiting sentencing.

Bush curbs rhetoric after ADL complaints

President Bush was embarrassed by his Nov. 1 tirade to the effect that crimes of Saddam Hussein have exceeded those of Adolf Hitler, after the Anti-Defamation League objected that he was intruding on their franchise, the Holocaust.

After a condemnation by the ADL, Bush qualified his statement, saying, "I didn't say the Holocaust; I mean, that is outrageous. But I think the brutalizing young kids in a square in Kuwait is outrageous, too. I was told that Hitler did not stake people out against potential military targets."

Bush later admitted that it would be ridiculous to compare anything Saddam Hussein has done with Hitler's Holocaust, and abruptly dropped all reference to Hitler from his speeches during the lead-up to the Nov. 6 elections.

William Pfaff asserted that Bush's likening of Saddam Hussein to Hitler is not only absurd, but self-defeating, in an *Inter-*

national Herald Tribune commentary on Nov. 1. Pfaff wrote that Hussein is no worse than any other Third World dictator, certainly no worse than Bush's new "ally" Hafez al-Assad of Syria. But beyond this, what Bush is really doing by making the parallel, is to insist on Saddam's "unconditional surrender. . . . If the allies will accept nothing less than Saddam Hussein's head on a platter, a great many Iraqis and Americans assuredly will die before delivery is obtained," he warned.

White House, Congress in row over secret funds

The Executive and Legislative branches of government are in a fight for control of "black box funds" for defense and intelligence.

In the FY1991 military spending bill passed by Congress in October, new restrictions were included that make the President accountable by law for spending the \$35 billion "black budget" according to congressional mandate.

In the past, Congress has attached classified "annexes" to military appropriations, which the Executive treated as wishes, rather than actual law. There are numerous examples of how the Pentagon and CIA have flouted secret appropriations guidelines.

President Bush, Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, and others told Congress they were not required to follow such restrictions, since they did not have the force of law. But, with the latest bill, it is stipulated that the restrictions "shall have the force and effect of law," which binds federal employees. It also means the Congress can monitor compliance through committees that oversee the Pentagon and the intelligence agencies.

In an Oct. 18 letter, Terrence O'Donnell, general counsel of the Defense Department, complained that Congress was enacting "secret law without debate, comment and consultation." An administration spokesman said that it could not comment on the annex, since it was not allowed to see it.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) said that

"fundamental constitutional and institutional questions" were at stake—in particular, whether there is equal weight to Executive and Legislative under a system of checks and balances "in relation to the highly classified agencies, budgets and programs that have grown in the last several decades."

Walsh scores Bush for lack of rule of law

The Bush administration shows "a lack of concern for applying rule of law to officials of the intelligence community," Iran-Contra independent counsel Lawrence Walsh has stated. Bush has shown an "overprotective attitude toward classified information," he said.

The new charges against the administration were motivated by the latest decision by Attorney General Richard Thornburgh to block the use of classified information in the case of Joseph Fernandez, a former CIA station chief in Costa Rica accused of having illegally armed the Contras. Thornburgh had already vetoed the disclosure of classified material concerning Fernandez, forcing Walsh to drop the case. Now, again, "after thorough reconsideration," he imposed another veto.

The decision has created the "suspicion that he's protecting his boss, the President," according to a commentary in the Oct. 30 *New York Times*.

'Green' legislators threaten researchers

Senator Nicholas Petris from Oakland and Assemblyman Robert Campbell from Richmond, both Democrats, wrote to the University of California president on Aug. 9 urging him "to reconsider the research project that is now planned for publication this fall," and threatened the university that its grants might be cut if it published a study of the economic consequences of the "Big Green" referendum for state agriculture before the Nov. 6 election, according to the Oct. 31 *San Francisco Chronicle*.

A university vice president then sent a memo to the faculty stating that "it is imperative that you comply with university policy" that the university remain neutral on political matters. One of the researchers involved told the paper that because of the memo and oral comments from administrators, he felt that "there was a gag order placed on me."

The final paragraph of the legislators' letter to the university president said: "It is evident that we are entering a period of austerity in which various institutions will be asked to eliminate programs. In the absence of any agreement by proponents and opponents [of Proposition 128] regarding research design, we urge you not to risk the university's standing by publishing research involving such highly charged political issues."

The *Chronicle* reported that the researchers reached a "compromise" with the university administration and published a "carefully worded" paper that "does not mention Proposition 128 but implies that a pesticide ban could have serious consequences for the state's agriculture industry."

FDIC bails out drug bank over objections

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. (FDIC) bailed out the uninsured depositors of the highly suspect Bahama Islands branch of the recently failed and seized National Bank of Washington, according to Martin Mayer, author of *The Greatest Ever Bank Robbery*, in a Nov. 1 *Wall Street Journal* commentary.

The decision to pay out \$37 million was made directly by FDIC chairman William Seidman, over the objections of the FDIC staff, Riggs Bank (which took over NBW), and the Independent Bankers' Association of America. As Mayer notes, "One does not need much imagination to guess the likely identity of depositors in a Bahamian branch of a marginal, poorly run American bank."

Another article in the *Wall Street Journal* on the same day, on the problems of U.S. banks, admitted that "'Hot' money from institutions at home and abroad remains a major source of funds for banks."

● **SOUTHERN** California's environmental gestapo, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, has announced restrictions on allegedly smog-forming products that are used in spray can aerosol paints. Although not a direct ban, the regulations effectively mean that over 90% of aerosol paints now available to the public will be eliminated by 1996.

● **CASPAR WEINBERGER**, the former defense secretary, criticized the Bush administration's courtship of Mikhail Gorbachov and offered an alternative policy of strengthening U.S. relations with "emerging democratic forces" in the U.S.S.R. Weinberger was speaking at an awards dinner at the Center for Security Policy on Nov. 1.

● **JACK KEMP**, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, may be preparing to jump ship from the Bush administration. Asked on Cable News Network's Evans and Novak show if he would resign from the cabinet to accept a draft as senator if Pete Wilson became governor of California, Kemp said, "Yes." The major reason for his resignation, he added, would be Bush's budget compromise.

● **MORE THAN ONE-THIRD** of U.S. soldiers injured in the Dec. 20 invasion of Panama were hit by friendly fire or were victims of accidents, *Newsweek* magazine reported in its Nov. 5 issue, based on "a confidential Pentagon report."

● **BLACK AMERICANS** see government practices with regard to drugs, AIDS, and police investigation as designed to target blacks, according to a poll reported in the Oct. 29 *New York Times*. Some 32% of the blacks polled said "the government deliberately singles out and investigates black elected officials in order to discredit them in a way it doesn't do with white officials," and another 45% said it might be true.