
Conference report

Dope lobby gloats over Bush's phony war on drugs

by Our Special Correspondent

It was a telling indictment of the Bush administration's phony war on drugs, that one week before William Bennett's resignation as drug czar, the participants at this year's Drug Policy Foundation conference, the annual gathering of the dope lobby, were told of his imminent departure, and even provided with a profile of his likely successor. Inside the Washington Beltway, there is no question that the dope lobby is winning the war.

But Washington, D.C. and its immediate environs do not usually reflect the attitudes of the American people, and the drug issue is no exception. One leading dope lobbyist, Harvard-trained psychiatrist and New Age guru Andrew Weil, confided to the audience on Nov. 3, at the closing plenary session of the four-day Drug Policy Foundation fête at Washington's posh Mayflower Hotel, that two election day votes would provide a litmus test of the American people's attitudes about drugs. One was the reelection race of North Carolina's U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms (R), whom the dope lobby (like the porn lobby and the homosexual lobby) named as Public Enemy Number One up on Capitol Hill. The other was a referendum on the ballot in the state of Alaska calling for the recriminalization of marijuana. "Alaska is America's last frontier, the place that people go to escape all authority and just do their own thing. If we lose in Alaska as the result of an urban voter mobilization, then the last frontier will have been lost," Weil said.

Jesse Helms won his reelection bid, and the Alaska recriminalization referendum, Proposition 2, passed by a sizeable majority. Alaska previously had the nation's most liberal marijuana laws.

'Legalize all drugs!'

It is a sign of the times that George Bush's Washington, D.C. is moving in an opposite direction to that of the majority of Americans. The hypocrisy of the Bush administration's war on drugs is the biggest thing that the dope legalizers have going. Ironically, while the majority of Americans know that

there is no real war on drugs being pursued by the administration, speaker after speaker at the DPF event stood up to denounce the Bush efforts as if they were serious and to hold them up as "proof" that no war on drugs can be successfully waged. The only alternative, they argued, was the legalization of all drugs.

American Civil Liberties Union executive director Ira Glasser, long an advocate of legalization, delivered the political marching orders to the dope lobbyists at the closing plenary session. After joking about the fact that legalization has become a "right-wing" issue with the endorsements of George Shultz, William F. Buckley, and Milton Friedman, Glasser called for an all-out propaganda drive to "get beyond the negatives" of merely attacking Bush's flawed and failed drug war, and to begin winning over legislators, police, and the man on the street to the idea of "drug reform"—the dope lobby's buzz word for legalization.

Glasser's call was seconded by Andrew Weil, who told the crowd that the Bush administration's police-state brutality against the urban poor could trigger a civil war. Weil said he would welcome such a crisis, "because changes in lifestyle only occur when people are scared. A social catastrophe is needed to force the present policies of the drug warriors to be abandoned."

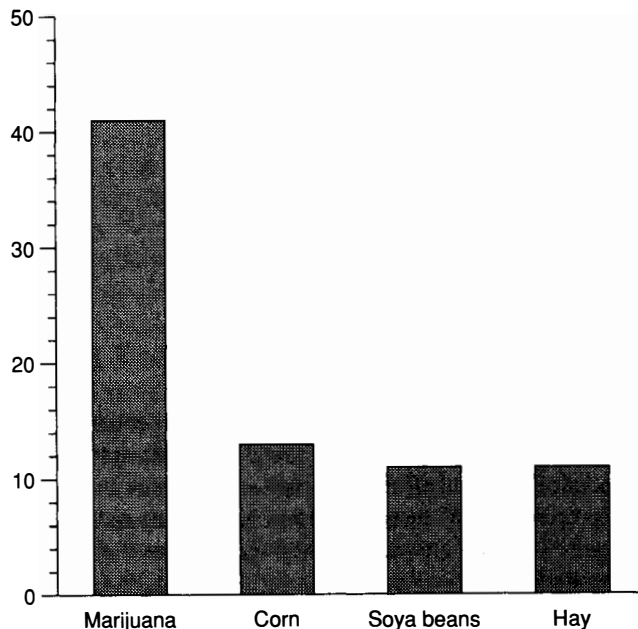
As in past years, the Drug Policy Foundation's conference placed a great deal of emphasis on marijuana, which has now emerged as the undisputed number-one cash crop in the United States (see **Figure 1**). Dr. Lester Grinspoon, one of the "Harvard mafia" which has run the American dope lobby since its inception, delivered a speech claiming that marijuana is the new wonder drug. Underscoring the dope lobby's close affinity to the right-to-die movement, Grinspoon urged that marijuana "therapy" be administered to incurable cancer patients and people suffering from other fatal diseases.

Whereas in the past, the dope lobby was quite open about its commitment to legalize all dangerous "recreational"

FIGURE 1

Marijuana is America's top cash crop

(1988 value in billions \$)



Source: NORML *Bulletin*, Fall 1990

drugs, this year the Drug Policy Foundation gurus were far more careful about laying their agenda out, even before an audience of several hundred hardcore supporters. But in private discussions, DPF figures like Kevin Zeese (see box), Dr. Arnold Trebach, Richard Dennis, and Dr. Ethan Nadelman candidly called for the repeal of all drug laws, arguing that, in "pragmatic terms," the drug war is more dangerous than drugs.

Instead of peddling "true confessions" about their intentions, the dope lobbyists focused this year's event on "AIDS prevention." At an opening press conference on Halloween morning, DPF president Arnold Trebach announced that the 1990 Richard Dennis Drugpeace Award of \$100,000 would go to the purchase of 1 million disposable hypodermic needles, which would be illegally distributed from coast to coast to heroin addicts. One of the two recipients of the money, Jon Parker of the Boston-based National AIDS Brigade, told reporters that he had been a heroin addict for years, had served time in state and federal prisons, but that he had turned his life around and was now attending Yale Medical School. "Anyone can lick drugs. Drugs don't kill. But AIDS kills. . . . To deprive heroin addicts of clean needles is murder," he said.

In addition to footing the bill for the Drugpeace prize and an estimated \$200,000 in annual DPF operating expenses, dope lobby piggybank Richard Dennis this year began pour-

ing money into a slick propaganda campaign utilizing public TV. In many parts of the country, the Drug Policy Foundation is airing a weekly hour-long interview show called "America's Drug Forum." Two afternoons of the DPF convention were devoted to filming segments of the show, complete with audience participation.

As Glasser, Zeese, Trebach, Weil, and others repeated throughout the conference, the dope lobby intends to ride into power on the wake of George Bush's deliberately futile anti-drug efforts. The mass dissemination of glossy documents (the conference proceedings were published and available for sale by the opening session of the event) and the use of the Public Broadcasting System half-hour specials are aimed at saturating the population with "drug reform" success stories, as drug-related crime skyrockets, driving the public into despair and demoralization.

'Let the government push dope'

In contrast to the Bush "drug war," attendees at the DPF event were presented with a second dose of dope lobby fine-tuned propaganda: the "success" of drug reform and legalization in Western Europe, particularly in England and the Netherlands. Although a dozen European dope lobbyists attended the conference, no one seemed to take note of the fact that drugs are now pouring into the European markets at an alarming rate, causing a massive increase in addiction and violence.

The slickest of the advocates of the "European model" was Dr. J.A. Marks, a psychiatrist who runs a string of drug "clinics" in the Mersey Region of England near Liverpool. In a paper circulated among all the conference attendees, Marks advocated a policy he calls "Pick Your Poison":

"In the Mersey Region, drugs are prescribed on an indefinite basis to drug users, because there is not then the necessity to commit acquisitive crime to buy drugs, there is no need to sell drugs to others to finance one's own use, there is no need to risk one's (and others') health, and possibly life, with adulterated drugs, and it is likely to promote re-attendance at the clinic for considered appropriate clinical action. An important side-effect is the removal from criminals of a lucrative source of revenue. Provision of a state-controlled (through responsible drug dependency clinics) supply of drugs rapidly brings into contact with the authorities a large majority of the most serious drug problems that other services, *simply because they do not supply drugs, never see*" (emphasis in original).

Marks claimed that by turning the government into authorized dope pushers, crime could be curbed, the spread of AIDS among intravenous drug users could be checked, and the rate of increase of drug abuse could be slowed. Railing against the Reagan administration for having pressured the British government to abandon its "free dope for the junkies" policy, Marks cynically noted that there is "no cure" for drug addiction. This "pragmatism" was only equaled by DPF

moneybags Richard Dennis, who described drug addiction as “the classic victimless crime.”

The not-so-subtle racism of these “drug reformers,” who advocate dope pacification of the urban slums so long as the crime rate can be brought under control, was implicitly recognized by one plenary speaker, who lamented the fact that among the 200-300 attendees at the conference, there were scarcely any black or other minority participants. In fact, the only speaker who could be mustered to represent Ibero-America was a representative of Amnesty International who spoke with a clipped British accent.

The majority of the European participants were politicians associated with the Radical Party, the Italian-based Benthamite grouping that has now expanded its activities into Eastern Europe under the name Transnational Radical Party, or the Euro-Group for Social Deviancy, a collection of radical criminologists linked to some of Europe’s most ruthless terrorist underground groups.

One Radical Party speaker at the DPF event, John Bok, is an official of the Czechoslovakian Interior Ministry. He told a closing session on “An International Assessment of the Drug War” about a conference he attended in Moscow earlier this year, co-sponsored by the Drug Policy Foundation and the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic. Bok claimed that the Russian Republic President, Boris Yelstin, had personally taken an interest in the dope lobby’s proposal to legalize drugs as a way of cracking down on black marketeers and mafiosi who run a lucrative parallel economy by peddling drugs and other contraband.

The LaRouche alternative

If George Bush’s phony war on drugs is to be prevented from causing a backlash that would allow the dope legalizers to implement their agenda, a real anti-drug effort must be launched soon. To date, the best model for such a war was designed by jailed American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, and presented at an anti-drug conference in Mexico City in March 1985.

LaRouche called for a cooperative effort on the part of all the governments of the Western Hemisphere to eradicate the narcotics flow at the point of production, in transit, and on the streets of America; to launch an ambitious drug education and public health program; and to finance much of the effort by a crackdown on the drug monies that flow through the major international banks every day of the year. With illegal drug revenues soaring towards the trillion-dollar-a-year mark, bank account seizures could easily provide the funds for a serious anti-drug effort, free from the kinds of police-state tactics that have been the hallmark of the Bush efforts.

For his trouble, LaRouche was framed up and thrown in jail. The consequence is the kind of dog and pony show that played out between the Mayflower Hotel ballroom and 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Nov. 1-4.

A sample of the drug lobby’s lies

Kevin Zeese, the vice president and general counsel to the Drug Policy Foundation, made the following comments to a reporter attending the Drug Policy Foundation’s Fourth Annual International Conference on Drug Policy Reform at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C.

Does marijuana provide a benefit to people? We have a very stressful society and there are many ways to relieve stress: jogging, TV, meditating, drinking wine with dinner, drinking a martini before dinner—and smoking marijuana is another example of a way of relieving stress. It may be a positive. . . .

Yes, usually drugs are negative, but they can also be positive. Take the case of New York, where people have been written off by the rest of their society. The city has been undercut economically through high unemployment, high inflation, and very little money. There is a lot of suffering. Heroin use is a way of escaping it. I don’t advocate heroin use as an escape method, but you have to understand it. When you make people suffer, they’re going to want to escape. We’ve been wrecking our urban inner-cities, and now we’re beginning to pay the price. . . .

Crack is the most recent example of a “worst drug ever.” Last year, *Newsweek* ran a cover story on crack, the new horror. Now, a year later, they published a full-page story that crack is just like every other drug. The addiction rate is lower than nicotine. There is nowhere near the immediate addiction. Violence related to crack, it turns out, is more related to the crack trade than to crack intoxication. The “crack baby” issue: New research shows that it is not a long-lasting problem. It can be dealt with by proper health care after the birth. So, even a drug like crack—which is not a good drug—there is a lot of exaggeration. Crack does not cause violence in most people. It is not immediately addicting, and crack babies is a problem being solved by a health strategy. . . .

The drug war is more harmful than the drugs are. That’s pretty much what the balance comes down to. Is the drug war more dangerous to our society than the drugs are? Can we deal with the problem of drugs in a way less costly to our society—not just costly in economic terms, but in human terms as well?