

Drug legalizers hope for anti-Clinton 'revolution'

by Our Special Correspondent

In 1992, the Drug Policy Foundation held a conference in Washington and looked to the incoming Clinton administration with hope that "benign neglect" would characterize national anti-drug policies, and even anticipated that veteran Carter administration decriminalizers from among their ranks would be appointed to policy positions.

Two years later, that picture has not materialized. Despite the fact that Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders has shamelessly endorsed the drug legalization perspective of William Buckley, Milton Friedman, and other libertarian Republican Party activists, the President has repeatedly stated his objection to legalization, and emphasized that enforcement of drug-prohibition laws is essential to bringing drug addicts into treatment programs. Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Dr. Lee Brown has articulated this policy in no uncertain terms (see *EIR*, Nov. 18, p. 75). The reality for participants at the Nov. 16-19, 1994 conference of the Drug Policy Foundation is that widespread popular rejection of drug legalization is well understood on Capitol Hill, and there is no support materializing from the Clinton administration for any policy which smacks of decriminalization.

Prospects for this cause worldwide are not much better than they were eight years ago when the foundation was organized. The only thing keeping the effort alive and credible is a \$3 million grant from George Soros, the king of the derivatives market. Soros is the best-known of a group of speculators who finance the spread of the "free market" economic and political theories which support drug legalization as a "rational" policy. But even though the Republican Congress is leavened with ideologues who endorse the views of Friedman, Ludwig von Mises, Friedrich von Hayek, and the like, none have been cited as potential champions of legalization.

The theme of the conference, "The Crucial Next Stage:

Health Care and Human Rights," reflected this political reality. As with environmentalism, animal rights, and other quack movements, the unelected bureaucrats of the international foundations are the only safe haven for policies too extremist for legitimate national governments. Even in this arena, plenary speakers concluded that it is ancillary health and legal issues, and not drug legalization, which will receive attention at a policy level (see accompanying article).

Population just says no

David C. Condliffe, executive director of the Drug Policy Foundation, chaired a panel which reviewed the Clinton administration record on drug policy. He began by reminding the audience that President Clinton's view of drug prohibition is strongly conditioned by his family experience, and is not likely to change. (The President's brother was addicted to cocaine, and recovered through treatment administered after he was arrested and prosecuted.) Condliffe exhorted the participants to recruit "five new members each" and otherwise redouble efforts to create the appearance that there is a constituency for this idea.

The problem that decriminalization advocates face is that most Americans have a view of drugs quite similar to the President's—they have lived through a virtual "decriminalization" (in the sense that any 12-year-old can buy drugs at school), and experience has shown them that drugs are dangerous.

Massachusetts Democrat Barney Frank—an openly homosexual politician who is a leading spokesman for the legalization movement—stressed that "very large numbers of the public do not subscribe to our views." He pointed out that high-profile endorsements from the likes of Milton Friedman, and money from Soros only goes so far in influencing

a congressman who has to be reelected in two years by voters who oppose decriminalization.

No international consensus

Underlying resistance to drug legalization is an international reality, a series of pro-legalization speakers admitted:

- Germany: Lorenz Bollinger, professor of criminal law from Bremen, described the uproar over a recent ruling of the German Supreme Court, which mandated that prosecutors in each German state follow a uniform policy with regard to prosecutions for marijuana possession. The ruling was widely perceived as a step toward decriminalization, Bollinger said, but the legal reality is that it only contributed to a “modest” shift in public sentiment toward usage, without an actual change in the law itself. Bollinger will be hosting a seminar on the subject at Bremen University in May.

- The Netherlands: Freek Polak of the Amsterdam Municipal Mental Health Service, Drugs Division, emphasized that despite the notoriety of the Dutch “coffee shops” which serve legal hashish and marijuana, there has been no change in the law since the original decriminalization in 1976. He stated that the population fears any further reduction in prohibition, and therefore the government has not even initiated a study of the Swiss program of legal heroin distribution, which, he complained, imposes many restrictions on the addict and prescribes increased police powers to control trafficking—therefore it is not a step toward legalization as the DPF defines it.

- Colombia: Carlos Cavelier, a graduate of the Kennedy Center for Government at Harvard and a former aide to Colombia’s justice minister, presented a surprisingly glum perception of legalization there, despite the advanced stage of the project to use Colombia as the precedent-setting case to reestablish global legal trade. The new law which allows possession for “personal use” sanctions a practice to which the population is “superstitiously hostile,” he claimed.

- Australia: Michael Moore and Ron Owens of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation presented the only significant report of widespread government review of current drug laws. But the various state and national bodies involved are moving quickly toward the plateau (or ceiling) described in other countries: The de facto legal possession of small amounts of marijuana is to be conditionally accepted, under law-enforcement supervision. It is far from the policy desired by the utopian “lotus eaters” and academics in the legalization movement.

Conservative Revolution, last hope for dope

The drug legalizers’ one glimmer of hope is the insurgency being led by a number of high-profile followers of Ludwig von Mises and the “Austrian School” of economists among Republican members of the new Congress.

Prominently featured in the conference bookstore was a 1991 treatise on *The Economics of Prohibition* by Mark

Thornton. Thornton thanks the Ludwig von Mises Institute for sponsoring his “von Hayekian analysis of the costs of prohibition.” His conclusion is that the price of prohibiting drugs is far greater than the benefits society derives from the productive powers of a sober population.

The full implications of Thornton’s thinking require longer elaboration, but his premise is summed up by his assertion that drugs, gambling, and prostitution are as old as history, “and men and women are risk-taking, fun-loving creatures. *Most human beings live for leisure, not for labor. Labor is merely a means to an end.*”

More than a yuppie credo, this is a hedonistic assault on the Judeo-Christian ethics of modern civilization. While no legislators will openly support legalization *today*, that may not be true if the population will accept this hedonistic approach to other areas of social policy which are in need of reform (welfare is the hot topic these days).

For example, Pete Wilson, who rode the eugenics-inspired Proposition 187 to reelection in California, is also a big supporter of the “three kids and you’re out” welfare policy in force in New Jersey and other states. If you believe that man lives for pleasure and not for labor, you will agree with Wilson, and his co-thinkers, that each child born to a woman receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) payments is merely the by-product of licentiousness, and should be punished, along with the alleged malefactor. In New Jersey, which funds Medicaid abortions, this punishment can be a death sentence for the fetus. Oh! You never intended that to happen did you? Well, unless you view each and every individual the way Abraham Lincoln did—as a productive laborer, a miner in God’s great mine—then you will have to accept responsibility for *all the consequences* of the policies being advocated by Wilson, Gingrich, and the rest.

Milton Friedman, speaking on C-SPAN Nov. 19, reviewed von Hayek’s treatise *The Road to Serfdom* and explained how this book underlies his support for drug legalization—all drugs. William Buckley and his acolyte Richard Cowan invoke the same philosophy in their ongoing reorganization of National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, the leading pot legalization organization, now funded by Chicago speculator Richard Dennis, who previously bankrolled the DPF.

When incoming House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.) calls for a “true Hayekian agenda” by 1996, is he simply too cowardly to also support drug decriminalization like Friedman and Buckley? When Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) praises von Hayek (as he did in the summer 1994 issue of the Heritage Foundation’s *Policy Review*), does he also secretly endorse drug legalization? Or is he merely an empty demagogue, just shopping for bargains in the philosophical “black market”? This is where real political lines are drawn. If you don’t understand where a policy idea comes from, you won’t know where it will take you—and now is a dangerous time to be as ignorant as your congressman.