

White House announces 1995 anti-drug plan

by Joyce Fredman

Dr. Lee Brown, director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), on Feb. 7 announced President Clinton's 1995 National Drug Control Strategy. He also detailed the administration's budget request for Fiscal Year 1996, a record \$14.6 billion. In the course of these announcements, and in subsequent testimony before two congressional committees, Dr. Brown fought against the propaganda of the Conservative Revolution crowd, to the effect that currently no "War on Drugs" exists.

Such a self-serving myth is a smokescreen to cover the failures of the Bush administration in this arena, as well as the fact that the philosophy of the Conservative Revolution advocates *supports* the push for drug legalization. Two of their biggest heroes, William Buckley and Milton Friedman, are on the record loud and clear for decriminalization. Dr. Brown has argued against such a dangerous path, and has reiterated time and again the President's unequivocal stand against legalization.

Furthermore, unlike the Bush administration, the Clinton administration has fulfilled the congressional mandate to present an accurate picture of the magnitude of the drug problem, and the fact that it is growing. The Clinton administration has also done more to prosecute drug-money-laundering cases than any recent administration, making this a policy issue as well.

Brown makes his case

In a recent commentary in the *Washington Times*, Brown noted the hypocrisy of the "law and order" buffs: "The reality is that the previous administration declared victory in the war on drugs and left the real drug problem for us to address. Much of the media seem to have declared a loss and given up even acknowledging the problem. And currently Congress's approach is to debate a House rescission package that terminates programs that fight drugs, including Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Drug Courts. This is the same House that passed a new crime bill that takes away the 100,000 new police the President is putting on our streets. These cops, working with the community, and not political rhetoric, will close open-air drug markets."

On March 6 and March 9, Brown took his case directly to the Congress. He testified before the Subcommittee on the Treasury, Postal Service, and General Government (chaired by Richard Shelby of Alabama) and a subcommittee of the

House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight (chaired by Bill Zeff of New Hampshire). Both times he had a less than favorable reception, yet he held his ground and argued for support for a comprehensive budget:

"Because it is ONDCP's mission to establish policies, objectives, and priorities for the federal counternarcotics program across 50 federal agencies, I would like to describe the highlights of the President's 1995 National Drug Control Strategy released a few weeks ago. . . .

"The overarching goal of the Strategy is to reduce illicit drug use and its consequences. The President is requesting a record \$14.6 billion in FY1996 to implement our National Drug Control Strategy, an increase of \$1.3 billion over the 1995 appropriation. . . .

"But just last week, the House Appropriations Subcommittee voted to rescind the entire \$482 million appropriated for the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program for the current fiscal year. The Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities program has been the cornerstone of the nation's school-based drug prevention efforts. Over 90% of all school districts in the United States receive this funding. I am outraged that the House Appropriations Committee is attempting to fund a tax break for the wealthiest of Americans by gutting drug education in our schools. At a time when surveys indicate that more young people are beginning to use drugs, and much of the criticism from the Congress on the President's strategy has been that it does not place enough emphasis on preventing drug use among youth, it is ironic that Congress wants to dismantle the very programs that directly address the problem."

Politically orchestrated hearings

When Brown testified before Zeff's committee, the chairman had also lined up former First Lady Nancy Reagan; William Bennett, Bush administration ONDCP director; former Drug Enforcement Administration Director Judge Robert Bonner; and John Walters, senior Bush administration anti-drug official. This stacking of the deck did not escape Brown's attention.

"I am extremely disappointed in the way you have structured this hearing," Brown said. "You have placed me on the third panel to testify following the appointees of the last administration. This is contrary to established precedent in the House for scheduling of administration witnesses, regardless of which party sits in the White House. . . . But now I am deeply saddened by the subcommittee's attempt to politicize this issue. This is a gross breach of protocol. But I am here at this politically orchestrated hearing because, as someone who has spent a lifetime in law enforcement, I have seen first-hand what drugs can do to our children, our families, and entire neighborhoods. As a result, I am determined not to play politics with the future of Americans. That is the reason I am here. If the Congress chooses to play politics on the drug issue, so be it."