
Inter-American Dialogue

Dope lobby pushes legalization debate

by Gretchen Small

On Feb. 16, wire services carried the report that the government of Brazil has initiated a national debate on whether marijuana should be legalized. According to the spokesman for President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Sergio Amaral, "The President believes that the most important thing, is that the idea be broadly debated in society and Congress, so that public opinion can form its own opinion on this matter, which is complex . . . and so that he himself can form his opinion."

This announcement is a first: A President of one of the world's more important secondary powers, has issued an *official* call, as government policy, for drug legalization to be debated, bestowing legitimacy upon the dope mafia's drive for legalization globally.

Earlier, on Feb. 8, Brazil's First Lady Ruth Cardoso, a rabid New Age sociologist, chose a *television program for young adolescents*, as the forum from which to launch the legalization campaign. Surrounded by dozens of youth, she declared that she is "in favor of decriminalization, but not legalization." Her protestations aside, the only difference between "decriminalization" and "legalization," is semantic, a word-game to help break down resistance to legalizing the drug trade and associated sub-culture.

Statements from the Brazilian Workers Party followed, reminding people that they had already presented a bill to Congress to legalize consumption of certain drugs. The press revealed that the government, too, had already drawn up its own legalization bill, but was waiting for the right moment to introduce it.

President Cardoso is being disingenuous when he says he wants to "form his opinion" about legalization. He has been an executive committee member of the Inter-American Dialogue since its founding in 1982. The Dialogue is one of the leading institutions promoting drug legalization within the Americas.

A collection of prominent bankers, businessmen, politicians, and diplomats from North and South America, the Dialogue was formed by the likes of David Rockefeller, McGeorge Bundy, and British intelligence Canadian hand Ivan Head, in the wake of the 1982 Malvinas War, to ensure that U.S. policy toward Ibero-America followed British dictates.

EIR has gone head-to-head against the Dialogue, since the latter's publication, in April 1986, of a manifesto calling for drug legalization to be debated in the Western Hemisphere.

In late 1985, U.S. legalization advocates told *EIR* that the drug lobby would not be able to advance its agenda, until the taboos against public discussion of such immorality were first broken down. Less than six months later, the Dialogue threw its considerable clout behind the legalization drive.

Opium war revisited

The principal argument put forward in the April 1986 *Report of the Inter-American Dialogue*, echoed British imperial defense of their nineteenth-century Opium Wars: The drug trade is needed for countries to pay their debts. "Waging a war on drugs costs money. More important, it will inevitably result in the loss of . . . foreign exchange that the drug trade provides [which] amounts are substantial for strapped economies carrying large burdens of external debt," they cynically wrote.

The Dialogue repeated the standard mafia line, that the trade is too big to beat. "The war against narcotics in the hemisphere will be long and difficult. . . . The problem will persist for some time to come, and we had best prepare for a long battle," they wrote. Thus, "readiness to explore fresh approaches, including some not now on the political agenda, [are needed]. . . . Because narcotics is a formidable problem, the widest range of alternative approaches must be examined, including selective legalization."

The *Report* acknowledged that legalization would increase drug consumption; by their estimates, drug users would likely more than double in the United States alone.

Since then, the Dialogue has taken the lead in repackaging the mafia's legalization campaign for pragmatic politicians. Releasing the Dialogue's report *The Americas in 1988: A Time for Choices* in April 1988, Elliot Richardson urged that cost-benefit analysis, not morality, dictate drug policy. "If the cost of trying to stop drugs outweighs the benefits at some point, it no longer becomes realistic to continue trying," he said. *A Time for Choices* hammered that "no 'war on drugs' will produce major victories soon," and that "the fight against cocaine can threaten democratic governments as seriously as the trafficking itself." Rather than fight, nations must learn to "cope with narcotics," the report said.

The Dialogue rejoiced when, in June 1993, Dialogue member and millionaire mining baron Gonzalo Sánchez de Losada was elected President of Bolivia, and immediately pushed the legalization agenda. The President-elect told Spain's *Tiempo* magazine after his election: "Prohibition has never achieved anything. . . . It is terrible to say it, but taxes should be placed upon the drug trade." Once in office, however, he bowed to political pressure, and put the legalization issue on the back burner. Brazilian President Cardoso's call has now put the legalization debate center front.