

Australia Dossier by Robert Barwick

Media barons push drugs

Kerry Packer and Rupert Murdoch are driving the campaign to legalize heroin.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard is, at least at the moment, resisting intense pressure to allow a trial use of prescribed heroin to go ahead in Canberra, the nation's capital, along the lines of a much-publicized Swiss heroin experiment. The drug crisis, and the raging debate over legalizing heroin, is presently the single biggest political issue in the country. However, while Australia is wracked by a drug epidemic, which claims about 600 lives a year, the present debate was cooked up by the Packer/Murdoch media magnates, to force through heroin legalization.

In Parliament on Feb. 24, Federal Health Minister Dr. Michael Wooldridge complained, "The fact is, that nothing new has happened in the past three months other than a couple of tabloid newspapers have put this on their front page." Salvation Army Major Brian Watters, the chairman of the Prime Ministers National Drug Policy Committee, told *EIR* that the number of Australians who have used heroin, between 1.5 and 2%, has remained static for the last 15 years, while only 0.4 to 0.5% have used it in the past 12 months.

The tabloids Health Minister Wooldridge referred to, were the Kerry Packer-controlled Sydney *Sun Herald*, and the Rupert Murdoch-owned Melbourne *Herald Sun*. On Jan. 31, Packer's *Sun Herald* ran a front-page photo showing a teenage boy shooting up in a side alley with a government-supplied syringe. The outrage this photo prompted had two effects: In New South Wales (N.S.W.), which is facing a state election on March 27, the government immediately stopped its

needle exchange program, and a competition ensued with the state legislative opposition, over which party could pay lip-service to being toughest on drugs; on cue, the pro-dope lobby immediately resurrected the heroin trial idea, which had been shelved in 1997.

A few weeks later, Murdoch's *Herald Sun* escalated the campaign by running a front-page photo showing a young mother shooting up in a park in front of her baby. The media, notably Packer's Channel 9, began running drug-related crime stories alongside reports of the heroin trial debate. Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett, a Mont Pelerin Society stooge who was defeated in his efforts to decriminalize marijuana in 1996 by a mobilization of the Citizens Electoral Council, a national political party allied with Lyndon LaRouche's movement, immediately placed his considerable political weight behind the heroin trial, saying that any option should be looked at.

This issue has divided Australia's elected political leaders, most of whom, led by Prime Minister Howard, are standing firm against the trial, but who are coming under increased pressure from Kennett, Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister Kate Carnell, the media, and high-profile pro-drug decriminalization proponents such as N.S.W. Director of Public Prosecutions Nicolas Cowdery, who called for heroin dealers to be licensed and taxed. The pressure isn't all one way: 1960s Australian music icon Normie Rowe said of Kate Carnell and her proposed heroin trial, "She's a drug pusher."

In the March 9 *Bulletin* magazine, Packer scribe Laurie Oakes identified the real goal of the push for a heroin

trial: "The issue of decriminalization is the bottom line." To this end, the usual suspects have seized on the heroin trial debate to make their case. Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) head Bill Stronach, whose organization was responsible for Australia adopting the insidious "harm minimization" approach to drugs back in 1986, now demands shooting galleries and a heroin trial.

ADF policy comes directly from the financial establishment: Stronach is advised by ADF board member Dr. Ethan Nadelman, the head of global megaspeculator George Soros's Lindesmith Center, which was founded to promote dope legalization, while the ADF is funded by Australia's major banks and foundations, including the Reserve Bank and the Queen's Trust, whose patron Prince Charles caused an uproar in Britain in December, when he recommended that a patient in a clinic in Cheltenham try marijuana to ease her pain.

Another ADF patron is Dame Elisabeth Murdoch, the mother of media tycoon Rupert Murdoch. One welfare organization, Open Family, has threatened to set up its own illegal private shooting galleries, if the law isn't changed. Open Family is one more mouthpiece for the financial establishment: Its board boasts the director of ANZ Nominees (tied to ANZ Bank, one of the country's largest), and Jeanne Pratt, the wife of multibillionaire businessmen Richard Pratt, whose Pratt Foundation has financed the drive for legal dope.

Whilst resisting the push for a heroin trial, Prime Minister Howard has undermined his position by savagely cutting the budgets of the frontline organizations in the drug war, federal police and customs; the \$80 million Tough on Drugs initiative he announced in 1997 didn't come close to making up the losses.