

Congressional hearings showcase Schmoke's drug legalization drive

by Patricia Salisbury

Hearings of the House Select Committee on Narcotics showcased the arguments for a policy of drug legalization in the United States Sept. 29, when the leading public proponent of legalization in the United States, Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke, led an onslaught by the drug lobby. The hearings were the latest incident in a carefully orchestrated campaign by the dope lobby, overseen by the "citizens above suspicion" who coordinate this multibillion-dollar a year business, through international banks and other "legitimate institutions."

It is not accidental that the hearings were held at the same time that Congress was debating "get tough" legislation dealing with the drug problem. The organizers of the drug lobby drive cynically dismiss this debate as so much election-year window-dressing, designed to placate the electorate and give congressional candidates on the stump something popular to talk about. The pro-legalization forces are counting on the continued economic depression and pervasive cultural pessimism to create conditions under which the once unthinkable, the legalization of drugs, becomes possible.

War for drugs

The drug lobbyists have a carefully worked-out agenda to propagandize for drug legalization, which surfaced publicly with an international conference held in England one year ago, sponsored by the new leading front organization for drug legalization in the United States, the Drug Policy Foundation.

Following this meeting, Baltimore's Mayor Schmoke took the point in the United States, with a call for a "debate" on a new drug policy made at the meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in April. This led to the just concluded congressional hearings, and an unprecedented media blitz, including a special "Town Meeting" on drugs on ABC's "Nightline" television show, and the broadcast of the hearings on Maryland's public television network. The barrage will continue with a second international conference sponsored by the Drug Policy Foundation, scheduled for Washington, D.C. Oct. 20-21. Mayor Schmoke will keynote this convention, which will bring together proponents of drug legalization from throughout the world.

Testifying on the first day of the two-day congressional hearings, Schmoke laid out in detail the demands of the drug lobbyists, which amount to a complete revision of policies

concerning drugs. "There is an alternative to a drug policy based primarily on law enforcement," Schmoke stated, "and it is an alternative that has worked before. The repeal of alcohol Prohibition helped rather than hurt this country, and a measured and carefully implemented program of drug decriminalization would do the same. . . . Decriminalization is a means to a much desired end: getting the criminal justice system out of the business of trying to control the health problem of drug abuse and putting that responsibility where it belongs—in the hands of our public health system."

Among the steps toward this doped-up society, Schmoke called for immediate legalization of marijuana, and provision of heroin, cocaine, and methadone on demand to addicts, under the pretext of various drug maintenance programs. The first recommendation of his program reads, "Expand the role of the public health system in the treatment and prevention of drug abuse. United States drug policies and practices should be revised to ensure that no narcotics addict need get his or her drug from the 'black market.' Methadone maintenance should be expanded so that, under medical auspices, every narcotics addict who applies for treatment can receive it. Other forms of narcotics maintenance should be made available, along with methadone maintenance, under medical auspices. . . . End the requirement that persons be addicted for at least one year before being eligible to enter a methadone treatment program."

Schmoke's program also called for the provision of "clean needles" to drug users, on the pretext of preventing the spread of AIDS.

Call for a commission on decriminalization

But these are just the demands for immediate implementation. Schmoke also called for creation of a national commission to consider what further, more radical steps toward drug legalization should be taken, over the longer term. The commission, in Schmoke's words, is "to study the potential impact of decriminalization with particular emphasis on developing substance control policies based upon the relative potential for harm which a drug possesses." What is meant by "relative potential harm"? Look at the numerous proclamations of the drug lobby, to the effect that tobacco and alcohol are more harmful than illegal narcotic drugs. Along these lines, Schmoke's proposals include a ban on *all* advertising of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. Lester Grin-

spoon of the Harvard Medical School went so far as to issue a call before the committee for a "harmfulness tax," beginning with taxation of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.

More important, however, than any particular finding by the commission, is the fact that this body is intended by the drug lobby to represent a voice above the constituency forces who oppose legalization, which have kept most elected officials—including many testifying at the committee hearings—opposing surrender in the War on Drugs, at least at public forums. The commission, according to Schmoke, should be "responsible for determining if there would be a national standard for decriminalization, and what role the states would play."

At the hearings, Schmoke was flanked by proponents of drug legalization from such outfits as the National Organization for the Legalization of Marijuana (NORML) and the Drug Policy Foundation. This last institution elaborated Schmoke's proposal for a "public health" approach to drug addiction, with the recommendation that Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, currently busy losing the war against AIDS, is the man for the job. Koop, who endeared himself to the drug lobby a short time back by pronouncing smoking cigarettes as dangerous as using heroin, should, according to Arnold Trebach, the spokesman for the foundation, "be reappointed by the next President, and Congress should give him the funds and the mandate to turn America's best minds to the task of helping rather than destroying the addicts among us."

Call for surrender

A common theme of speakers was that the War on Drugs cannot be won, and that therefore it should not be fought at all. While pretending concern for those addicted to drugs, they are indifferent to the fact that drug legalization will only increase the number of addicts. Schmoke testified: "Providing legal access to currently illicit substances carries with it the chance, although by no means the certainty, that the number of people using and abusing drugs will increase. But addiction, for all of its attendant medical, social, and moral problems, is but one evil associated with drugs.

"Since the Harrison Narcotics Act was first passed," Schmoke claimed, "the United States has made herculean efforts to try to get around the reality that drug prohibition increases crime without doing away with addiction. Nevertheless, that reality remains as true today as ever. We have spent nearly 75 years and untold billions of dollars trying to square the circle, and inevitably we have failed." The Drug Policy Foundation's Arnold Trebach sounded the same theme: "For the past 70 years, the United States has been involved in an increasingly violent war on drugs. Despite the most aggressive drug-war campaign in history, so much cocaine has been imported since 1981 that the price has dropped to one-third its former level."

The key to the drug lobbyists' success, counted on by

Schmoke and his cohorts, is that the Reagan administration's so-called War on Drugs has been crippled by incompetent economic policies which have furthered the economic collapse upon which the drug culture preys, and by an unwillingness to fight the international financial institutions and "citizens above suspicion" who wield the drug culture as a weapon of cultural warfare.

While the congressional committee heard testimony from many opponents of drug legalization, with important arguments and data advanced by these speakers, including rep-

Legal marijuana; heroin, cocaine, and methadone on demand to addicts; free needles to heroin mainliners. Sound like a junkie's paradise? Yes, but it's also the legislative program of Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke, and a battalion of drug-legalizers that has descended upon Washington. Will there be anything left of the minds of America's youth by the time they are done?

representatives of the National District Attorneys' Association, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Drug Information Center of Families in Action, New York Mayor Ed Koch, Rep. Benjamin A. Gilman (R-N.Y.), and Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.), none of this testimony addressed these most fundamental problems with the War on Drugs.

Campaign against Schmoke

Instead, opposition to the drug legalizers was launched outside the committee hearings, where members of the National Democratic Policy Committee held a rally opposing the Schmoke policy. The rally was also covered by three area television stations. Many members of Congress and passers-by were supportive of the opposition to the travesty inside. Tourists stopped to take pictures of a large banner that read, "Drug Legalization Is Genocide," and signs reading, "What Has Kurt Been Schmoking?" "Congress: Don't Let Schmoke Get in Your Eyes," and "Hey, Kurt: Legal Rape Next?" Organizers of the rally indicated that their campaign will continue until Schmoke is driven from office.