

Narcotics Policy

Will Reagan start a war on drugs?

by Nora Hamerman

The Nov. 4, 1980 election proved that the antidrug forces are indeed the majority in the United States. The rejection of Jimmy Carter brings to an end four years in which cocaine scandals surrounded the White House and the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML), the lobby for drug legalization, literally dictated the drug abuse policies of the Executive.

The drug issue played a far larger role in this election than the liberal media would acknowledge. During the primary period, Ronald Reagan distinguished himself from his Republican opponents through a tough stand for drug law enforcement, and was the only one among those candidates active up to the summer political convention, other than Democrat Lyndon LaRouche, who actually answered in detail the National Anti-Drug Coalition's questionnaire to the candidates on their drug abuse policy.

Voters perceived the sharp contrast between the Reagan campaign's concern and the arrogance of the Carter campaign, which finally, after months of repeated requests, sent our Washington office a copy of the President's 1979 Drug Abuse Policy paper, stating that it contained Carter's full position. But Carter had filled every available top drug policy post with NORML advisory board members, except for Peter Bensinger, who was retained as head of the Drug Enforcement Administration from the Ford administration. Moreover, we have since learned that NORML drafted the 1977 Carter speech on drugs that became the centerpiece of the 1979 document he gave us!

A mandate against marijuana

The National Anti-Drug Coalition intends to hold the incoming administration fully to the policies Reagan's answers to our questionnaire outlined. The first of these is an unequivocal stand against "decriminalization" and legalization of marijuana. In addition, the pot lobby's oft-cited allegations that marijuana is just the new generation's "preferred mind-altering recreational chemical"—comparable to alcohol or tobacco—is rejected by Reagan on sound medical grounds.

We see the election results as a resounding mandate

not only to stop all federal moves toward decriminalization, but to begin reversing the "decrim" laws that have undermined drug law enforcement in eleven states, including New York and California. Jacob Javits, a top NORML adviser who introduced decriminalization bills into every session of the Senate, was voted out of office. Sen. Ted Kennedy, author of a criminal code reform bill containing "de facto" federal decriminalization measures, will no longer head the Senate Judiciary Committee. These are signals of an impending overall change in the drug enforcement climate on Capitol Hill, along with the change in the White House, that must be reflected at the state level.

The economic issues

Antidrug forces see the political battle against drugs as just beginning, however. The drug lobby has shifted its main emphasis over the past months away from "decriminalization" legislation toward creating de facto legality for pot and other psychoactive drugs on *economic grounds*, based on the notions of "economic freedom."

The Reagan camp is vulnerable to such appeals because of Milton Friedman, whom President-elect Reagan is said to admire. Friedman advocates full legalization not only of marijuana, but of heroin, on the British model, on the grounds that government does not have the "right" to prevent the free choice of individuals, including children, to destroy themselves. (Friedman's avowals on this subject were most recently made during a televised interview on the April 16, 1980 Phil Donahue Show.)

Friedman's favorite example of economic freedom is the British colony of Hong Kong, the world's capital for heroin trafficking and headquarters of some of the biggest British banks traditionally involved in the opium trade. A key aspect of the way the drug issue will confront the Reagan presidency is in foreign policy. Will President Reagan follow in Carter's footsteps and support the International Monetary Fund and London and New York big banks in their overt efforts to force Third World countries to turn to drug cultivation, under the pretext of earning currency exchange for debt repayment? Or will he make antidrug enforcement a cornerstone of a new U.S. foreign policy including a crackdown on the financial networks that reap "free enterprise" profits from dope?

This is already coming to a head with the new administration of Prime Minister Edward Seaga in Jamaica. By instructing his country's banks to accept U.S. dollars without questioning their origin, Seaga has effectively legalized his country's vast marijuana crop for export. How the Reagan team responds to this will be a telling signal of whether the tide will turn against the international dope cartel.