

Clinton's anti-drug strategy: some good ideas, but no plan

by Jeffrey Steinberg

One of the best things that can be said of the Clinton administration's anti-drug effort to date, is that the dope lobby is not particularly happy. After four years of George Bush's phony "war on drugs," the pro-dope crowd had hoped that Clinton would be swept up in the liberal backlash against the Bush policy failure, and would dismantle the entire anti-drug effort. At their annual convention in Washington, D.C. just weeks after the 1992 presidential elections, the Drug Policy Foundation cautiously predicted that Clinton would adopt a policy of "benign neglect" that would provide the foot in the door for eventual legalization.

But in contrast to that intoxicating forecast, President Clinton and his White House drug czar, Dr. Lee Brown, have consistently put their foot down against any consideration of legalization, decriminalization, "harm reduction," prohibition repeal, or any of the other fancy doublespeak terms devised by the pro-drug crowd in recent years.

Holding fast against decriminalization

Last December, writing in the Drug Policy Foundation's newsletter, the group's two top officers, Arnold Trebach and Kevin Zeese, complained bitterly about President Clinton and Brown's "gratuitous swipes at legalization." At the very outset of Brown's September 1993 interim report, he had warned of the danger of reduced public attention to the drug plague:

"The loss of public focus has allowed the voices of those who would promote legalization to ring more loudly and be heard more clearly. The declines thus far in the use of drugs are in part because they are illegal. Legalization is a formula for self-destruction. The administration is unequivocally opposed to any 'reform' that is certain to increase drug use."

After Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders mouthed off last year about the desirability of a serious study of the potential benefits of legalization of some illicit drugs, both Clinton and Brown were driven to restate the administration's position even more forcefully.

Then, later in 1993, when statistics on drug use by Americans were tallied, the administration was confronted with yet another unpleasant reality: Drug use among the nation's teenagers is on the rise once again—especially marijuana and

LSD use—while drug-related violence is skyrocketing.

On Feb. 1, 1994, President Clinton issued the annual National Drug Control Strategy, titled "Reclaiming Our Communities From Drugs and Violence." The 135-page report contained some horrifying new statistics about the continuing growth of drug use and availability in America, at the same time as burgeoning new markets for illegal narcotic drugs are opening up in eastern Europe and the territories of the former Soviet Union.

Drugs mean violence

Some of the report's findings are worth summarizing here:

- For the fifth year in a row, the murder rate in the United States has increased by over 5% to a total of 22,540 murders, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report. An estimated 53% of all murders in America were drug-related.

- Marijuana use by 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, which purportedly fell in 1992, reached an all-time high last year. According to the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future survey, 5.1% of 8th graders, 10.9% of 10th graders, and 15.5% of 12th graders surveyed had smoked marijuana at least once in the 30 days preceding the survey. While such precise statistics were not available for other drugs, the survey also confirmed a marked rise in the use of hallucinogenic drugs, especially LSD, by high school students. These statistics only reflect children actually attending school; the actual rates of drug use among teenagers is significantly higher.

- Emergency room cases involving cocaine and heroin use have also jumped in recent years. Although the 1993 statistics were not available at the time the White House report was issued, the 1992 statistics showed a nearly 20% increase in cocaine-related emergencies, with 119,843 cases reported. In 1991, there were 101,189 cases logged, while in 1990, the figure was officially only 80,355. (Severe cut-backs in hospital funding during 1990 raise serious questions about the accuracy of the figures for that year, according to Drug Enforcement Administration officials familiar with DEA's Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) statistics.)

In 1992, DAWN reported that drugs were linked to nearly 752,000 emergency room cases.

- The White House report, while claiming a leveling-off in production of heroin and cocaine, forecast a significant increase in production of both drugs in the next several years due to a bumper crop of young coca plants in Peru and other Ibero-American countries that are due to hit peak yields soon. Colombia is now producing enough opium to supply the entire U.S. heroin market, and the estimated 1992 cocaine yield of over 1,165 metric tons of pure cocaine was more than enough to supply the U.S. markets and still service a growing European and Central Asian "growth area."

How big is the U.S. dope market?

Notably missing from the Drug Control Strategy report were any statistics on the domestic marijuana crop. As of two years ago, the United States was producing an estimated \$50 billion worth of illegal marijuana, predominantly in state and federal forests.

One of the most puzzling statistics presented in the White House study came from a private contractor, Abt Associates, Inc., which said that Americans spent \$48.6 billion on illegal drugs in 1991 (more current statistics were not included). With \$50 billion a year in domestic marijuana cultivation alone, the Abt Associates figure is ludicrous.

According to a study conducted by *EIR* in November 1990 (see *EIR* feature, Nov. 9, 1990, pp. 28-41), which was based on more reliable DEA drug production statistics, the 1989 figure was \$558 billion in global illegal drugs sales, with approximately half of those sales occurring in the United States. Factoring in an average annual growth rate of 18% (as documented in the *EIR* study), the actual 1991 U.S. figure would have been in the ballpark of \$389 billion.

Some serious thinking

During the four years of the Bush presidency, the annual National Drug Control Strategy reports were filled with hypocritical propaganda and slogans, and made no attempt to fulfill the congressional mandate contained in the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988: to spell out a strategy for combatting the spread of illegal drugs and set short-term goals by which to measure progress.

The 1994 report represents at least a serious effort to take up that congressional challenge. The report spelled out a number of new initiatives, and pointed to a number of serious holes in the existing anti-drug effort. Whether the ideas presented are viable or not, remains to be seen. The fact that the report contained a number of new initiatives is significant in itself.

Among the points highlighted:

- The Secretary of the Treasury and the Attorney General are mandated to develop an interagency plan for integrating the anti-drug efforts of a half-dozen federal agencies. In the past, the DEA, the FBI, the U.S. Customs Service, the CIA,

the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service have more often than not worked at cross-purposes. The plan is to be released during the first half of 1994.

- Over the next five years, 100,000 new police officers will be hired, trained, and assigned to street patrols. This represents a 16% increase.

- New laws are moving through Congress that will toughen the federal government's efforts to catch and prosecute drug money launderers. So far, however, these efforts appear to be focused on streamlining reporting procedures by banks and other financial institutions to enable such units as the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) and the DEA's Multi-Agency Financial Investigations Center (MAFIC) to hone in on crucial data. No all-out effort was proposed to close all the gaping holes in the country's banking laws, or to place top priority on the money-laundering choke-point in the Dope, Inc. global infrastructure.

- International interdiction efforts will be focused on shutting down cocaine production and processing. The White House plan will downgrade in-transit interdiction, and will dramatically escalate cooperation with and pressure on Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Brazil to shut down the drugs at the source. All of these countries are either production centers for coca, manufacturing centers for the base chemicals needed to produce the pure cocaine, or mafia centers where the money laundering is coordinated.

This shift in supply reduction strategy is controversial, and could be dangerously abused by those inside the Clinton administration who are associated with the Inter-American Dialogue and are committed to the dismantling of the armed forces and sovereignty of Ibero-American nations and in favor of United Nations-dominated regional government structures. The Inter-American Dialogue is also on record favoring legalization of drugs.

The total anti-drug budget for fiscal year 1995 is \$13.2 billion, a 9% increase over the previous year and the largest drug war budget in history. Nevertheless, even with the number of innovations and an apparently serious approach to the drug plague, the Clinton administration plan does not hold a candle to the Hemispheric War on Drugs proposal put forward by Lyndon LaRouche at an anti-drug conference in Mexico City on March 9, 1985. LaRouche's plan called for an all-out effort drawing upon the full technological resources of the United States, including our satellite reconnaissance systems, and for a wartime alliance with all the other sovereign states of the hemisphere. The 15-point LaRouche plan placed special emphasis on the role of the major international financial institutions in laundering the Dope, Inc. profits, and proposed a no-holds-barred crack-down on the money trail. LaRouche also stressed the added benefit that such a war would have in improving hemispheric relations on many other matters.