

Australia Dossier by Robert Barwick

Police chiefs are pushing dope

The brass have apparently adopted the "harm minimization" scam of the Queen's favorite dope-pusher, George Soros.

The campaign to decriminalize drugs, particularly cannabis (marijuana), has been given new impetus with the release of a report by the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (ABCI, presided over by the Police Commissioners of Australia's six states and two territories), which suggests "liberalizing" laws prohibiting marijuana use, in favor of redirecting police attention to "harder" drugs. The impetus for the ABCI's 1996-97 *Australian Illicit Drugs Report*, is the supposed impotence of police law enforcement. But, in the foreword, the ABCI reveals that the report is based on "harm minimization," a fraud popularized by megaspeculator George Soros's Drug Policy Foundation.

In the foreword, the ABCI Board of Control chairman, Victorian Police Commissioner Neil Comrie, writes: "Demonstrating the commitment of Australian law enforcement to the National Drug Strategy, the report approaches the subject of illicit drug abuse by taking a harm minimization stance." Defined in 1992, the National Drug Strategy is Australia's official stance on drugs, and is based on the harm minimization doctrine, which had been adopted in 1985 by the Department of Health.

The harm minimization approach has been resisted by the nation's law enforcement bodies. This was most evident in Victoria in 1996, when vigorous opposition to a proposal by Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett to decriminalize marijuana, promoted under the guise of harm minimization, came from the Victoria Police, especially the police union.

The ABCI report indicates that, of-

icially, police resistance to harm minimization is weakening. In an experiment under the supervision of Commissioner Comrie, the Victoria Police have been giving warnings to first-time marijuana offenders in the Melbourne suburb of Broadmeadows, rather than making arrests. Police in four states—Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania—have given officers the discretionary power not to charge drug overdose victims, on the basis that such instances are a "health," rather than a police, issue.

The excuse offered for partial decriminalization is that Australia is suffering record numbers of deaths from heroin overdoses, which skyrocketed from 70 in 1979 to more than 600 in 1996—in large degree because of savage cuts in law enforcement budgets. A mini overdose epidemic broke out in Sydney in January, when the average daily number of overdoses jumped from 13 per day to over 30, a jump attributed to an unusually pure batch of heroin hitting the streets. But incredibly, the police commissioners' have rejected the view that marijuana is a "gateway" drug—a so-called "soft" drug that leads to use of harder drugs like heroin and cocaine. Instead, the ABCI report claims that there is little crime associated with marijuana use, and that decriminalization "could result in a big reduction in the resources committed to controlling the drug."

In reality, harm minimization is still meeting fierce resistance from rank-and-file police officers, whose views are represented by the police unions. In an interview with the *New Citizen* on Oct. 17, 1997, Australian

Federal Police Association secretary Luke Cornelius lambasted the role of the banks, which stand to benefit greatly from decriminalization. "Financial institutions in Australia today cannot guarantee or be sure their money is untainted. It is a sure bet that every financial institution in Australia . . . is happily dealing in, and engaging in transactions which involve tainted money," he said. "Financial institutions, in turning a blind eye to this real problem of dealing with tainted money, are conspiring with organized crime in Australia to the extent that the very integrity of the economic fabric of this country is under threat."

As a 1996 *EIR-New Citizen* investigation proved, the main source of funds to promote harm minimization has been the major banks, through the Australian Drug Foundation. The ADF is funded by Australia's four major commercial banks: ANZ, National Australia Bank, Westpac, and Commonwealth Bank, as well as the central bank, the Reserve Bank of Australia.

In August 1997, the Police Federation of Australia and New Zealand stated in a resolution that drug trafficking is a criminal problem "not capable of being dealt with by any means other than law enforcement," and that "suggestions that law enforcement budgets can be reduced if drug laws are reformed are fanciful and dangerous."

Australia's police forces have also been under heavy attack, notably in New South Wales, where, under the guise of cleaning up "corruption," a British cop, Peter Ryan, was imported in 1996 to head up the force. Ryan dismantled the drug squad, and began calling for the legalization of dope. Similarly, the Western Australian police force, which has been strongly opposed to drug legalization, is under heavy attack for alleged corruption. The intelligence section of the Victorian force is also under attack.