



Edward Seaga's pro-industry posture

by Cynthia Rush

When Jamaican Prime Minister Edward Seaga arrived in Washington in late January as the first head of state to officially meet with President Reagan, he was greeted with great fanfare, then met with top administration officials and congressmen, as well as leading businessmen. While public statements remained low-keyed on both sides, there was no mistaking the message that the new administration wished to communicate to observers: Jamaica would be a new and close U.S. ally in the Caribbean, vital for countering Cuban and Soviet activity in the region. As such, it would also be worthy of American assistance and investment.

Some press sources reported that President Reagan and Mr. Seaga discussed the problem of Jamaica's huge illicit marijuana trade, but if any substantive action was agreed upon in this area it was not reported publicly.

Otherwise, Seaga's discussions with the President resulted in the formation of a high-level commission of Jamaican and American businessmen to formulate investment plans for the island.

As the National Antidrug Coalition publicly warned last week, Edward Seaga is not the modest conservative that the media make him out to be.

When Seaga visited the United States last November, millions of Americans witnessed his statements on CBS's *Face The Nation* that marijuana had become the "life-line" of Jamaica's economy and that he saw no "moral" question involved in using marijuana—only an *unproven* medical one. "The industry is here to stay," he told the *Washington Post* during that visit. "It is just not possible for it to be wiped out. . . . We have to make up our minds how best to deal with it."

Seaga's means of dealing with the drug trade has been to order Jamaica's central bank to accept dollars earned "from the export of a certain illegal export item"—no questions asked.

In his anthropological studies at Harvard University, he specialized in "spiritualist cults" and faith healing, and is known to have personally overseen the creation of the bestial Rastafarian cult, which claims marijuana as its sacrament, from his position as minister of culture in the early 1960s. Thus Seaga's assertion in a Jan. 29 press conference that he opposes drug legalization and will govern as prodevelopment conservative is a deliberate lie. But under scrutiny of the National Antidrug Coalition, which had alerted many of President Reagan's advisers and constituencies to the truth about Seaga, it was a lie he felt compelled to tell.

National security adviser Richard Allen is promoting this unfortunate alliance. Allen is one of the original authors of a proposal to create a "Hong Kong West" in the Caribbean—a Milton Friedman-style "free-enterprise zone" in which cheap labor, inferior technology, and unregulated banking and financial activity combine to create drug havens throughout the region. Allen also argues that the United States must ally with Jamaica against Cuban and Soviet influences.

The presence at a White House luncheon for Seaga of banker David Rockefeller, John C. Duncan of the Council of the Americas, strategists from Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, and Peter B. Johnson of the Caribbean-Central American Action Group, suggests that the "Hong Kong west" conception prevailed in the discussions. The Caribbean Action Group is a firm backer of just such "free enterprise," light-industry zones modeled on the wretched "industry" now existing in Puerto Rico.

As for investment opportunities, Seaga suggested that American businessmen would do well to put their money into Jamaica's tourist industry, a notorious asset of the international narcotics traffic to which the Jamaican economy is inextricably linked. He called for the floating of bonds to develop the island's tourist industry and offered tax breaks to American businessmen who hold their conventions there. American officials in turn expressed their willingness to open up the "China market"—another international drug haven—for sale of Jamaican sugar.

A Jamaican introduces her child to marijuana.