

Rep. Railsback discusses House antidrug plans

Thomas Railsback, a Republican from Moline, Illinois, will become the ranking Republican on the House Select Committee on Narcotics when it is reconstituted within a month. The committee, under the chairmanship of former Rep. Lester Wolff (D-N.Y.), played an important role in the fight against drugs, but its mandate expired at the beginning of January. Its re-establishment has been hotly contested. As Representative Railsback indicated in this exclusive interview with EIR's Barbara Dreyfuss, it will probably survive and play a very active part in trying to end the drug crisis.

EIR: I understand that the Select Committee on Narcotics will be reconstituted. How soon do you expect it to be finalized?

Railsback: I think on the 18th of this month, there is a likelihood that we will go before the House Rules Committee to get a rule to take it to the floor of the House. That means in the next month it will be reconstituted. You can't say with absolute certainty because in the past there has been some antipathy to But the prospects are good that it will be reconstituted.

EIR: Who will head the committee?

Railsback: Probably Leo Zeferetti of New York. And I will be the ranking Republican.

EIR: Senator Biden at recent confirmation hearings talked about the money flows from the narcotics trafficking. Will you be looking into this?

Railsback: I would think that will be one of the areas relating to illicit drugs we will pursue. There was a financial task force of our committee that was investigating the financing of drug trafficking. One thing I know they were very much concerned about was the involvement of some of the banks in Florida and Central America and I think in Panama in particular. We know the drug traffickers are involved with large sums of money and oftentimes it's cash. They have to deposit it, and sometimes it's possible to trace the large deposits.

EIR: What else will you be doing in the committee?

Railsback: We're going to be involved in everything from trafficking itself to questions of how you combat production of drugs, which gets you into the use of paraquat to destroy crops. It gets you into the activities

of various federal agencies of the government. We will get into the problem of licit drugs as well as drug abuse. There have been misuses, excessive prescription of licit drugs especially for women. We will get involved in the issue of rehabilitation and treatment.

But the single most important role we can play is to monitor and supervise the activities of various federal agencies that have primary responsibility for the problem—that's the DEA, NIDA, Customs, and the Coast Guard.

EIR: The budget of the DEA was severely cut last year, the Paris office was closed. Will you look into this?

Railsback: Absolutely. One major function we are concerned about is the cuts, not only in DEA but also the State Department. Mathea Falco's division was cut too.

EIR: One of the problems in fighting the drug trafficking has been the lack of coordination among agencies. Do you favor some coordinating mechanism such as a Director of Intelligence for Drug Trafficking?

Railsback: Some of us favor reconstituting or strengthening the White House effort in drug abuse by having a high-level person in the White House be involved in drug abuse. But I'm not sure, that's premature. Some of us have written to the new President and his wife. Apparently Nancy Reagan wants to be involved in the drug problem. We discussed in the letter the magnitude of the problem and how important it is for the federal government to be involved in combating drugs.

EIR: Do you favor the Percy Amendment prohibiting foreign aid funds for the use of paraquat to stop marijuana trafficking?

Railsback: It has to be reviewed. It's very controversial. Chairman Wolff felt strongly about it, he disagreed with the Percy amendment.

EIR: Would you favor a treaty with France, Germany, Mexico, India, and the U.S. to impose economic sanctions on countries that allow drugs to be grown or produced?

Railsback: I strongly see the need, and favor making the drug fight an international one, and I even favor strengthening Interpol. Countries like Germany are having an increasing drug problem with their borders.

EIR: The Prime Minister of Jamaica, Edward Seaga, has called for legalizing marijuana.

Railsback: I hope he doesn't. I don't know if this was discussed when he met with President Reagan.

EIR: Would you favor withholding aid from them?

Railsback: I think it's something that we ought to explore. And I'm aware of his statement on marijuana.