

Reagan, on LaRouche model, expands war on drugs

by Nicholas F. Benton

Four months after 1988 presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche set off shock waves by calling NBC reporter Mark Nykanen a drug pusher on national TV, White House press briefings in the first week of August turned into a free-for-all of acerbic exchanges between the pro-drug media and the Reagan administration's determination to wage the war on drugs. President Reagan followed up his Aug. 4 announcement of a sweeping, six-point program for a war on drugs with two moves later in the same week that send a message that he is very serious.

The anti-drug program Reagan is now going with, is the program LaRouche and *EIR* have been advocating since LaRouche and his associates helped defeat Jimmy Carter over the drug issue in 1980. It includes military cooperation with our foreign allies to eradicate drugs at the source, and the beginnings of a battle against the hedonistic counterculture which the media have created.

Two days after his nationally televised speech, Reagan said at the National Conference on Alcohol and Drug Abuse that he plans to call in 15 to 20 U.S. ambassadors from their overseas posts to brief them, and commission them to start cooperation in the war on drugs with the countries where they serve. "Together," Reagan said, "all countries must send the message: No drug networks will remain alive. We mean to have a drug-free country, and the world should know we mean business."

The next day, at the White House, it was announced that the President, Vice-President George Bush, and 76 other members of the senior White House staff had volunteered to take a drug test on Aug. 11. This was described as "setting an example and leading the way toward President Reagan's goal of a drug-free workplace."

The big national news media reacted with outrage. The

Washington Post and *New York Times* buried the President's Aug. 4 speech deep in their inside sections; White House press correspondents hit the ceiling when they were told of the plans by top White House officials to set a national example by taking the drug tests. Completely out of step with the American population (71% of which feel, according to recent polls, that the drug epidemic is the nation's most serious problem), White House reporters were hopping up and down about "threats of violating individual rights" implied by such volunteer testing.

In announcing his six-point program, the President cited the success of mandatory testing in the U.S. military, where drug use declined from chronic use by 27% of personnel in 1981 to under 9% in 1985. He said the stress in the use of testing is not on punishment, but on treatment, to "free the society, and the individual, from drugs." Rehabilitation in the military, according to an administration official, has allowed over 60,000 men who tested positive for drugs to remain, while only 16,900 had to be discharged.

Mobilizing against the drug culture

While confirming that law enforcement and international drug eradication efforts that began when he came into office in 1981 will be expanded, Reagan said that his new offensive is aimed at catalyzing activism among Americans in a popular effort aimed at rooting out drug use on the "demand" as well as the "supply" side.

The former Hollywood actor blamed Hollywood in particular. Replying to a question from *EIR* following his Aug. 4 announcement, Reagan attacked the tendency to insert scenes into movies that "make drugs look kind of attractive and funny, not dangerous and sad." He also blasted the texts of rock songs. In the future, he said, "I would hope that we

will hear public expressions of support for those in the entertainment world who use their enormous influence, especially on the young, to oppose drugs.”

Whereas the President said the focus of his efforts are aimed at rehabilitation, not punishment, for drug users, his attitude is not the same for drug pushers. In an interview with *Newsweek*, the President said, “They deserve the death penalty.” While he stopped short of advocating this himself, his adviser on drug abuse, Dr. Carlton Turner, went further during a press briefing Aug. 5 to the Foreign Press Association. Turner confirmed that “there are movements under way by state legislators that are asking for the death penalty,” and called it the “Malaysia amendment” (alluding to the execution of drug traffickers by the Malaysian government, a policy *EIR* has editorially endorsed).

Reps. Robert Michel (R-Ill.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) circulated a letter in Congress targeting the major TV networks. Over 300 Congressmen signed it. It said, “We believe that many fewer younger Americans would turn to drugs if they fully understood the facts. . . . Cooperation by the networks is critical to heightening public awareness.”

On Aug. 7, a federal appeals court in New York in the jurisdiction of U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani unanimously upheld a precedent-setting ruling allowing the seizure of \$3 million in alleged drug proceeds held in the New York accounts of a bank based in a foreign nation (the Inter-American Bank of Panama). Giuliani said, “By ruling that the government can seize money in a foreign bank’s accounts . . . the court has dealt a severe blow to sophisticated drug traffickers.”

Further legal backup for rooting out drug money laundering will come from Congress soon. A bill outlawing money laundering for the first time was attached by a unanimous vote as an amendment to Senate legislation increasing the national debt ceiling.

William Weld under scrutiny

As the President’s anti-drug initiative swept the nation like a tidal wave, even many liberal Democrats who not many years ago were working to legalize marijuana have been back-pedaling to get into the “war on drugs” mainstream. Even Hodding Carter, State Department spokesman in the drug-riddled Jimmy Carter administration, put himself on record, charging that if Reagan “were really serious” about his anti-drug campaign, he would not allow institutions like the Bank of Boston—caught red-handed in massive violations of laws requiring the reporting of large cash transactions—to “get away with a slap on the wrist.”

Carter struck the “Achilles heel” in the President’s efforts—the fact that the “slap on the wrist” given Bank of Boston was administered by Boston U.S. Attorney William Weld. Weld has now been nominated by the White House to become the head of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department. Reagan would be well advised to withdraw the

nomination of the contaminated Weld to avoid a major political embarrassment as well as a very bad appointment. Carter’s remark should be taken as a signal that some Democrats, eager to show up the President with their own anti-drug agenda, plan an ambush during the Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on Weld. Others, of course, will remain quiet in hopes the nomination of the dope-lobby agent Weld will slip through.

Reagan’s six-point program is comprehensive and characterized by broad, sweeping strokes that the President said will be filled in with specific mandates in the coming months. It includes:

1) *A Drug-Free Workplace.* The announcement of the volunteer drug tests for the President and the entire White House senior staff was aimed at setting an example for how to achieve this. “All federal employees deserve a drug-free environment, and their efforts should set an example for state and local governments and the private sector to follow,” the White House said. “It is particularly important that workers in sensitive occupations are clear-minded and free from the effects of illegal drugs,” Reagan stressed.

2) *Drug-Free Schools.* The President said he wants “drug-free schools, from grade schools through universities,” and that he would be “seeking a commitment from local and state government to require schools within their jurisdiction to be drug-free.” Implicit in his remarks is his power to make federal grants to state and local governments contingent upon compliance with these programs.

3) *Public Protection from Health Dangers of Drugs.* The President called for developing improved methods for drug testing (the current urinalysis test costs \$15 to \$25, takes 10 days to produce results, and does not detect use of most drugs more than one or two days before the test, unless that use is chronic). Moreover, effective rehabilitation methods for chronic drug users have not yet been developed.

4) *International Cooperation.* President Reagan explicitly called drug abuse “a threat to our national security,” and asserted that continuing efforts will be made to “join efforts” with other countries to attack trafficking “at the source.” He also called for a crackdown on money laundering.

5) *Strengthening Law Enforcement.* We must give “prompt and severe punishment to drug peddlers, the big guys and the little guys,” he said, stating that a beefed-up effort along the U.S.-Mexican border is being developed.

6) *Public Awareness.* The President placed the major burden for the war on drugs on the shoulders of every citizen. He called for “taking a stand in every city, town, and village in this country and making certain drug users fully understand their fellow citizens will no longer tolerate drug use. In the next few weeks, we will be preparing for an action campaign, based on many of the points I’ve made here today,” Reagan said Aug. 4. They will be launched, he said, “when the kids start returning to school in the fall. So this is chapter one, more to come.”