

Canada opens war for legal dope trade

by Gretchen Small

The government of Canada, whose sovereign is the Queen of England, launched a drive this summer, to organize an anti-U.S. bloc of nations in the Americas, united around a program to legalize consumption and trafficking of narcotics. Canada proposes, in fact, that governments get out of the business of stopping drugs, and into that of assuring that addicts and other users get “the highest quality product possible”!

The opening shot of this campaign was fired with the publication, in both English and French, of a tract called *Hemispheric Addiction: Canada and Drug Trafficking in the Americas*, by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL), a Canadian government dependency. FOCAL mailed 5,000 copies out to any Canadians dealing with hemispheric matters, and to inter-American organizations. Canada’s Embassy in Mexico secured publicity for the legalization report in a major daily, *Reforma*.

Hemispheric Addiction reads like a piece of gutter legalization trash: There are only two options, “prohibition, using repression,” or legalization. Since it is “undeniable” that the war on drugs has failed, does not affect consumption seriously, and leads to violence, and since anti-drug legislation “causes more harm to the individual and society than the drugs themselves,” the time has come for “the legalization of the drug trade.” But “isolated legalization” will not suffice. FOCAL argues that “the government will have to control, for example, the quality of the products in circulation. . . . The beneficial effect of a coherent legalization program is to transform the drug problem from a moral issue, to a strictly medical question. The individual would be left to manage his own consumption, by supplying him with the highest quality product possible.”

The FOCAL report defends the drug cartels’ killer armies, too, as long as they are “political.” There is a difference, they claim, between narco-terrorists (“armed groups . . . using violence to preserve their share of the market”), and narco-guerrillas (“first and foremost motivated by political convictions . . . they want to overthrow the system in place; their aspiration generally is to redistribute the state revenues more equitably”). FOCAL cites Colombia’s M-19 and Peru’s bloody Shining Path as examples of narco-guerrillas, who sometimes “protect” the population from traffickers and law enforcement.

The report could have been lifted from a speech by the Cali Cartel-controlled President of Colombia, Ernesto Samper Pizano. To hear them tell it, the nations of the Ameri-

cas would all have already adopted this hemispheric dope program, were it not for the United States’ insistence on imposing “its norms” on others. They maintain that only pressure from Washington has “forced” Canada to participate in the war on drugs.

FOCAL is clear about one thing: Without getting the United States to capitulate to legalization, their dope program cannot advance. FOCAL proposes that Canada make itself the “interlocutor” between the U.S. and those Ibero-American countries that have adopted the dope program, and tell the U.S. it must “compromise.”

Straight from the Privy

FOCAL is not the private outfit it claims to be. It was set up in 1990 by the Brian Mulroney government, when Canada entered the Organization of American States (OAS) as a full member. Its assigned mission is to insinuate the British Crown into the center of hemispheric policymaking, selling Canada to the naive as an “anti-imperialist” friend of Ibero-America. A key person here is Richard Gorham, Mulroney’s roving ambassador to Latin America and permanent observer at the OAS, who is FOCAL’s secretary.

Funded almost exclusively by the Canadian government, FOCAL operates as an extension of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT). When the DFAIT requested it in 1995, for example, FOCAL organized dozens of “student interns” to “conduct special market studies on the mining equipment, telecommunications, and oil and gas sectors in Brazil, Chile, and Colombia.”

The director of FOCAL’s Governance and Security Project, Hal Klepak, who co-authored the drug study, also works in DFAIT, and teaches at the Royal Military College of Canada. The lead author of the study, Denis Berthiaume, formerly served in the Policy and Communication division of the Defense Ministry. The senior member of FOCAL’s Board of Directors is Mitchell Sharp, an adviser to Prime Minister Jean Chretien. Sharp has been a member of the Queen’s Privy Council since 1963, serving as its president in 1974-76.

FOCAL is part of the Queen’s policy structure that runs the government of Canada, and its global anti-nation-state operations. FOCAL was set up under the North-South Institute, which paid FOCAL’s salaries, rent, and administration. The president of the North-South Institute, Maureen O’Neil, was appointed president of FOCAL in 1995. The North-South Institute sits at the heart of the Canadian Crown establishment: Its Board of Directors is dominated by Privy Council members and leaders of Canada’s major dope banks and corporations (the Bank of Montreal, Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Royal Bank of Canada, Bank of Nova Scotia, Hollinger Corp., and Weston Food, among others).

Research for this article was also provided by Raynald Rouleau, a writer for Nouvelle Solidarité. Quotes from the report were translated from the French edition.