

## Letter From Washington

by Samuel Francis

### The Drugged War



When President-elect George Bush announced a week before his inauguration that his new “drug czar” would be former Education Secretary William Bennett, the air began to seep out of the tires of his new presidency before it even got on the road.

Had Mr. Bennett ever participated in a drug arrest, had he ever worked for a law enforcement agency, had he ever conducted a criminal prosecution, had he ever held a top-level security clearance, had he ever dealt with a Third World government or with any of the thugs who habitually run such regimes, then his reincarnation under Mr. Bush as the coordinator of drug policy might be plausible. But the truth is, Bennett has performed none of these elementary functions of criminal justice, and when he appeared with the President-elect in January to share the limelight of his new job, his first stratagem in the war on drugs was to promise to quit smoking.

A week later Mr. Bush, during his inaugural address and in one of the displays of rhetorical passion in which he has learned to indulge, intoned that the scourge of drugs will stop. If his new czar manages to avoid contracting emphysema, that will be progress of a sort, but it will do nothing to sweep up the human garbage responsible for the multibillion-dollar traffic in poison that afflicts the United States. Unless it is swept up, the scourge will continue and eventually will consume the country entirely.

Americans and some of their leaders seem to understand this, and last year Congress mustered its nerve to pass a mammoth antidrug bill. But the new law, which created the post Mr. Bennett now holds, is the kind of measure

in which congressional con artists have come to specialize. The law establishes tough penalties for “recreational” use of illegal drugs and permits (but does not require) the death penalty for some murders committed by some drug pushers. Barely a hundred executions have taken place in the United States in the 12 years since the death penalty was restored, and since more than three times that many murders occurred in Washington alone last year and nearly 50 murders took place here in January, the carefully constricted use of the scaffold that the new law allows is probably just for show. Mainly what the law does is increase the amount of federal funds devoted to therapy and education rather than law enforcement. Currently, only about a quarter of federal spending on drug control is directed to education. Under the “omnibus drug bill,” that proportion will rise to 50 percent this year and 60 percent thereafter.

The emphasis on education as the preferred means of fighting drugs reflects the now platitudinous idea that, as Mr. Bush himself has said, “The answer to the problem of drugs lies more on solving the demand side of the equation than it does on the supply side, than it does on interdiction or sealing the borders or something of that nature. And so it is going to have to be a major educational effort, and the private sector and the schools are all going to have to be involved in this.” The corollary, of course, is that the government shouldn’t waste too much time in slamming down organized criminals, smugglers, pushers, and their private torpedoes, that the way to fight drugs is through all the arts of managerial manipulation in which American civilization has come to excel.

Another corollary is that you don’t appoint as drug czar someone who is serious about the use of force, including lethal force, against the satraps of the drug empire. Mr. Bennett, *The New Republic* revealed last year, once sent a memorandum over to the Justice De-

partment recommending that the US military “should do to the drug barons what our forces in the Persian Gulf did to Iran’s navy.” That sounds terrific—except that we didn’t do very much to Iran’s navy in the Persian Gulf. What we mainly did in the Gulf, in the aftermath of Iranian mine and missile attacks, was to take out a few oil platforms after carefully warning the seagoing mullahs aboard them to get out of the way. We sent a few of the Ayatollah’s boats to the bottom and dried off some of his jolly tars after they landed in the drink. If we follow an analogous course of action against the drug barons, the American taxpayer may wind up paying for their sons’ college educations.

Mr. Bennett, however, also has made noises about waging what he calls “all-out war on drugs—with more resources for police, more prosecutors, more convictions.” Whether his tenure as drug czar will be as ferocious as it sounds remains to be seen, but personally I’m growing tired of hearing about the various “wars”—against poverty, crime, energy shortages, AIDS, terrorism, illiteracy, and child abuse—that professional bureaucrats periodically declare on whatever crisis crept into the headlines last week.

The truth is that American political culture no longer permits the prosecution of any kind of war because the elites that prevail in politics, the economy, and the culture rule and think in terms of manipulation, deception, and sheer fraud rather than force. Whatever problems, threats, and challenges they perceive they define in such a way that only manipulation and not coercion can respond to them. Not only do they manipulate the problem itself, but through public relations and image-mongering, they string along the American public. Criminals are to be rehabilitated and not punished; foreign threats are to be negotiated away or bribed with foreign aid and not fought; and war is redefined as “defense” and delivered into the hands of techno-

crats-in-uniform whose clearest sight of a battlefield is a computer simulation.

Of course, governance-by-manipulation serves the interests of those who are expert in it. In the case of the "drug war," professional therapists, teachers, public-spirited entertainers, youth counselors, social scientists, and the army of PR technicians who jerk the images and symbols of mass "education" will accumulate small fortunes by battening onto the provisions of the new drug law and digging into the ample funds it places in their hands. Their ideas, knowledge, and opinions will provide the strategies by which the "war" is to be fought, and no doubt Mr. Bennett will have them in the front lines. How their onslaught will be received by the real czars of the global narcotics trade—the Colombian, Jamaican, Asian, and homegrown gangsters who murder whole families for fun and command wealth and weapons that some nations would envy—may easily be foreseen.

In reality, there is no foe in the war against drugs that could not be well met by a county sheriff armed with a wad of Red Man, a couple of .12-gauges, a local posse, and a few yards of strong rope. But the Supreme Court, the ACLU, the Justice Department, the Congress, and the witch doctors of the therapeutic-managerial state have long since taken care of that kind of response. Now we have to depend on the wit, wisdom, and collected memoranda of Mr. Bennett. I hope he's successful in giving up cigarettes.

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## Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

### Talkin' Freedom Blues

I was sitting here listening to the University of North Carolina's student radio station play "Hotrod to Hell," a cut from Elvis Hitler's new album *Disgraceland* (you think I could make that up?), and somehow the time seemed right for another round-up of

Southern news that they've probably been keeping from you.

Speaking of the higher learning, for example, I'll bet you didn't see the note in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* about the faculty-staff directory at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville that lists under "Education, College of" an entry for the "Readin Center."

The lower learning made the news, too. The Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* reported that Mississippi ranks second only to Arkansas in public-school paddlings. In a recent year nearly fifty thousand Mississippi students—one in eight—heard the tune of the hickory stick. For what it's worth, the Magnolia State also had the lowest percentage of "seriously emotionally disturbed" children in its schools. Spare the rod and—? No, surely not.

In other news from Southern education, back here in the *soi-disant* Southern Part of Heaven one of our students recently reported the theft of his license plate. Not his car, his license plate—a vanity number that read "POONTANG." Some innocent in the state motor vehicle department must have let that one by, or maybe it's protected by the First Amendment. But the First Amendment cuts both ways when it comes to license plates. I read that ACLU types in Maryland have objected to plates with messages like "GOD IS." At last report, the state was going to recall plates with religious messages. You figure it out.

Not long ago, on US 15-501 between Chapel Hill and Durham (what used to be called the Jefferson Davis Highway—and whatever happened to the signs?) I saw an evil-looking young man with a black goatee driving a car with license number "MB 666." If we're going to interfere with religious messages, let's start with that one, OK?

This religion business does keep coming up when people talk about the South. In the November issue of *Channels*, a trade magazine for broadcasters, a writer of the television program *Designing Women* talked about an episode in which one of the Southern women of the title wants to become a Baptist preacher but is turned down because she's a female. The writer, a Southerner herself, said that even though the show was critical of Baptist traditionalism, it drew "nega-

tive comments within the industry" because "some people assumed that we were trying to do a Jerry Falwell thing!"

Poor Jerry. Another cheap shot. But the woman has a point. Apparently treating evangelical Protestantism *at all* is viewed with suspicion. Certainly it is unusual. "You would have thought we'd done a show about the leprechauns or something," the writer said. "No one has ever in the history of prime time television done a sitcom about Baptists. . . ."

By the way, when the National Organization for Women recently published a book called *The State-by-State Guide to Women's Legal Rights*, ranking the states according to how well they comply with the liberal view of what women need, the three "best" were Washington, Massachusetts, and New York. Of the five "worst" only Nevada is outside Dixie; the other four are Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, and Georgia—setting for *Designing Women* and Charlene's thwarted vocation.

Ah, Georgia. Did you notice how many of the news stories filed from the Democratic Convention last summer mentioned the number of "table dancing" establishments in Atlanta? It's surprising how many reporters found time to check out this traditional Atlanta art form. Andy Young's municipal government anticipated exactly the sort of stories that were written, but attempts to close these places failed. It's that ol' debbil First Amendment again. (Freedom of expression? Of worship?) Yankees have always said that Southern men put women on pedestals, but I don't think this is what they meant.

Incidentally, I don't know why people haven't done sitcoms about Baptists. Lord knows they can be *funny*. Listen to the Reverend Joseph Chambers, for example. According to the *Charlotte Observer*, he told a meeting on AIDS that "Prayer always works. Condoms work only 80 percent of the time."

Pardon my free-associating, but that reminds me of a recent *New York Times* story about a new champagne. Are you ready for Marquis de Sade Private Reserve Grand Cru, vintage 1981, about \$45 the bottle F.O.B. Paris? Its marketing director says: "I don't think it will be a huge success in the Bible Belt." But, he adds, "it will