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Drug Facts

..... Drug Issue Information from Our Nation's Capital

May 1997

Medical marijuana poll. A recent national poll commissioned by FRC highlighted a pressing need for information among the voting public about medical marijuana. When asked whether they agree with the statement: "People who find that marijuana is effective for their medical condition should be able to use it legally," 74 percent agreed. However, when told that a synthetic version of marijuana's active ingredient, THC, is available, 55 percent (compared to 25 percent) of adults said that they would be less likely to support marijuana as medicine. And, when asked, "If you were to learn that a doctor would be able to prescribe marijuana use for almost any physical condition, including stress headaches and common colds, would you be more or less likely to support legalization of marijuana?", 69 percent of adults reported they would be less likely.

Furthermore, an oversampling of young people found that a majority of teens believed that allowing marijuana-as-medicine would encourage more recreational use. Teens, defined as those between the ages of 12-17, favored more FDA research on marijuana, and tended to have a more favorable view of marijuana-as-medicine as they got older. Overall, however, youth took a more cautious view of marijuana-as-medicine than baby boomers.

This survey was preceded by a February poll of Arizona voters, sponsored by Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA), which found, "85 percent of voters believe that Proposition 200 [which legalized otherwise illegal drugs for medical purposes] should be changed and of those voters who would change it, 71 percent would like the law repealed completely." (In fact, the Arizona state legislature recently passed a bill that would "freeze" the referendum by waiting until crude marijuana is approved by the Food and Drug Administration before allowing it to be used as a medicine.)

An overarching need, then, for anti-drug organizations, is to inform the public of the facts about the marijuana-as-medicine debate.

FRC will hold a press conference in early May to explain the poll results in greater detail.

Worldwide drug opposition. Worldwide opposition to drug legalization is high, according to a group of United States Information Agency surveys. Opposition among Latin American populations is especially high. In Mexico, 94 percent were opposed; in Panama, 92 percent; in Colombia, 89 percent, and, in Brazil, 90 percent opposed legalization. Jamaica was the most friendly of Latin American nations toward legalization, with 26 percent in favor (74 percent were opposed). European nations were slightly more inclined to legalization, but, in the nations with the *most* liberal attitudes toward it, 65 percent opposed the concept.

D.C. medical marijuana. The District of Columbia will hold a hearing on May 9 about an initiative to legalize marijuana for medicinal purposes. The initiative would allow those with "serious or chronic illnesses" [emphasis added] to use marijuana upon the "recommendation" of a doctor. Amounts of pot that could be legally possessed are only described as a "sufficient quantity ... to assure that [patients] can maintain their medical supply without any interruption. ..." (The initiative hearing had previously been scheduled for early April, but the sponsors withdrew it minutes before the meeting was to start for "technical changes.")

AIDS czar appointment. Sandra L. Thurman was named by President Clinton as the director of the Office of National AIDS Policy. Thurman was reported to be in favor of needle exchange programs (NEPs) for heroin addicts, basing her view on some



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