

# THE BLUE RIBBON REPORT RICHARD NIXON CHOSE TO BURY

After Richard Nixon flattened the Democrats as soft on crime in the '68 election, the President-elect faced a dilemma. There's not much the White House can do to impact crime. The thugs people are afraid of — burglars, robbers, rapists, murderers — are the business of state courts. Then somebody mentioned drugs.<sup>1\*</sup>

In a textbook example of fear manipulation, Nixon warned the country that a plague of unimaginable proportions was about to engulf the nation. "The problem has assumed the dimensions of a national emergency," he said.<sup>2</sup> To fight the pushers on their own terms, he would need emergency powers — preventive detention, unorthodox strike forces, more freedom to search, wire tap, and arrest.

For scientific support, he appointed former Republican Pennsylvania Governor Ray Shafer to head a National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse. He told Gov. Shafer to treat marijuana just like heroin despite the "obvious differences between marijuana and other drugs."<sup>3</sup> He was even more direct with



chief of staff Bob Haldeman. "I want a Goddamn strong statement about marijuana...that just tears the ass out of them."<sup>4</sup>

But after months of testimony from academics, medical experts, lawmen and health professionals, the facts overwhelmed the myths. The report was devastating: "Marijuana use, in and of itself, is neither causative of, nor directly associated with crime..."<sup>5</sup> It found no basis for the gateway theory. Alcohol, it said, was probably a greater danger, and the report concluded that personal use of marijuana should no longer be a crime.<sup>6</sup>

The President hit the roof. He complained to Haldeman, "...every one of the bastards that are out for legalizing marijuana is Jewish."<sup>7</sup> In the face of the shooting war in Vietnam the Shafer Commission was quickly forgotten but the consequences of that cover-up are with us still. Since the 1972 release of that official report recommending legalization, we have arrested more than 14 million Americans<sup>8</sup> at a cost of over \$100 billion<sup>9</sup> and the use of marijuana is undiminished.<sup>10</sup>

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\* Visit <http://www.cspd.org/publicservice/nixon06notes.htm> for citations, including full text of the Shafer Report