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.

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. 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." 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."

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..." 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.

The President hit the roof. He complained to Haldeman, "...every one of the bastards that are out for legalizing marijuana is Jewish."

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 at a cost of over $100 billion and the use of marijuana is undiminished.

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