

Immigration's Drug Dealer Fix

Bob Johnson

Heroin is legal, and E.T. was an alien. We're talking about human beings here.

Jesse Jackson on the often-used term "illegal alien"

One Friday morning in November 1984, a group of more than 20 Beach Flats residents was standing on the corner passing the time before the arrival of Franciscan priest Peter Carota with his van filled with food for the poor. As the crowd passed the final few minutes in the autumn chill before Carota showed up—the food was scheduled to arrive at 9am—two lime green vans from the Salinas Border Patrol station turned the corner. The border patrol vans were too easily recognized by the crowd, most of them Mexican born, and a moment of silent apprehension took over the streets. The next 60 minutes witnessed a frenzy of law enforcement that is still remembered by those among the terrorized residents who have not been able to escape the Beach Flats over the last five years.

The vans sped through the narrow streets of the neighborhood in hot pursuit of people in this country illegally. The frenzy of the chase created an atmosphere of fear and chaos that trapped everyone on the streets and a few people who mistakenly thought they were in the security of their homes. One woman in her late 50s

fell to the pavement and escaped the scene by crawling to her home. Two men who were in the country legally spent frightening minutes in the back of the van, which was speeding through the streets, before the border patrol agents recognized their mistake and released them. A man who claimed to have a green card was taken home by the agents, who proceeded to arrest the four women sleeping in the living room when they could not produce residency papers.

It is disturbing in the light of the history of Border Patrol activity in our community—another sweep of the Beach Flats came later in November 1984—that there is a plan to use the power of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in the campaign to rid the Beach Flats of heroin dealing. If this plan is implemented, when local narcotics officers apprehend suspected drug dealers in the Santa Cruz slum their first move will be to find out if the suspects can prove legal residency. If not, the border patrol will be called in and the suspects will be unceremoniously carted off to the detention center in Salinas, from which they will take the long ride to El Centro, then the much shorter ride across the border.

This plan has already been approved by the chief of police of the City of Santa Cruz and the district attorney of the County of Santa Cruz and, I would guess, others in the upper echelons

of local narcotics law enforcement. But hold off on beating your liberal breastbone to protest the reactionary fuzz. This plan has also been approved by others in our community who have earned positions of some respect and authority as representatives of pro-



This guy is not a narc
gressivism. I could name a few names here but I won't—it would have the value of shocking people but I'll leave that to the guys in the lime green vans.

I'm not just making this stuff up. Most of it comes from the reporter's good friend—those people who just love letting on where the bad boys hid the scum in the corner. But some of it is unpublicized public information. Not long ago a duly elected official of the City of Santa Cruz said during a public meeting that was crawling with reporters from numerous newspapers, radio and television sta-

tions: "In Santa Cruz the INS is being asked to help with drug dealers who are illegal aliens." Don't ask me why these public words never reached your ears.

(The guy in the picture is not a narc. His name is William Carter. He is the chief patrol agent for the Livermore sector of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which means he supervises the border patrol everywhere from Oxnard to Sacramento, including the Beach Flats. And he is not, I repeat he is not, a narc.)

The fact that use of the border patrol to bust suspected dealers has been devised, considered and approved at the highest levels of a progressive community with a history of criticizing immigration service excesses testifies to the depth of the drug dealing problem in the Beach Flats. Parents are tired of having to always fear that their children will be in the company of thugs and addicts when they go out to play. And they are equally burned out on having to worry that their paltry worldly possessions will be stolen from their slum apartments by junkies hurting for a fix.

This plan to sic the border patrol on suspected narcotics violators also suggests that local law enforcement is having some trouble enforcing the law. There is a body of thought that

suggests the way to deal with criminals is to collect evidence of their criminal behavior, arrest them, present the evidence to a jury, convince the jury to convict them, then punish them. The people protecting us are apparently unable to do this with felonious heroin dealers, or they would have no reason to risk the political flak of calling in the immigration agents for help.

There is already a longstanding cozy relationship between local law enforcement and the border patrol that makes it easier for each of them to rack up stats. In the last six months for which I've got records, more than three-fourths of all the people picked up by the border patrol in Santa Cruz County—97 out of 132—were apprehended at the county jail or at juvenile hall. (This info came to me from William Carter, who is not a narc but knows about things like this.) It's a natural for the border patrol to mosey on by the local calaboose and find prey among the suspects who look like they sneaked their way into this country from Canada.

Networking with the immigration service helps the police too, by making it far easier to rid the community of Mexicans among those we must presume to be innocent until law enforcement gets better at proving them guilty. Once in the hands of the border patrol the suspects remain there until they can come up with bond, which figures to range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 for people not even accused of committing a crime. This bond must be posted in cash because a bail bondsman will not be accepted by the immigration service. For those who wish to appeal the bond there is a hearing chambers conveniently located 500 miles from home and a few hundred yards from Mexico, in El Centro.

Do you have proof of legal residency in this country? No, a driver's license won't do. Welcome to El Centro. Be prepared to stay here for a while unless you've got \$5,000 to \$10,000 lying around. This could easily happen to you if you look like you just hit town from Canada.

The border patrol has already apparently stepped up its surveillance activities in Santa Cruz in recent weeks. Not long ago a pair of agents showed up at the transit center and, witnesses say, began questioning would-be passengers who were guilty of looking like they had Mexican ancestry. And in a separate incident in the Beach Flats last month, Carter has been asked to investigate allegations that border patrol agents handcuffed a Hispanic man and then beat him.

The recent increased local presence of immigration agents is probably not related to the drug enforcement plan—my info is that this scheme has not yet been put into practice—but instead reflects a general increase in border patrol activity throughout California. According to that fellow who is not a narc, the border patrol apprehended 2,100 suspects in central California last month alone, a 160 percent increase over apprehensions in

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WASHINGTON

MARK ALAN STAMATY

THE ABORTION ISSUE WAS DEEPLY TROUBLING TO CONGRESSMAN BOB FOREHEAD.

I THOUGHT I HAD THIS ONE FIGURED OUT!

ALL I'M SAYING IS GIVE YOURSELF SOME SLACK.

BUT THE COURT IS UNDOING "ROE".

YEH, BUT THAT WAKES UP THE PRO-CHOICERS.

I THOUGHT WE WROTE THEM OFF!

ONLY THE LOUD ONES. THE REST OF THEM FELL FOR YOUR STRONG ATTACKS ON MUSHY LIBERALS. YOUR STAND ON ABORTION WAS MERELY A DECORATION ON YOUR ARMOR.

BUT NOW IT'S A HOT ISSUE. IF YOU RUN FOR GOVERNOR YOU'LL NEED A LOT OF PRO-CHOICERS.

SHOULD I FLIP-FLOP?

NO WAY! KEEP FEEDING THE PRO-LIFERS, BUT OPEN THE DOOR. SOMETHING LIKE: YOU DEEPLY BELIEVE ABORTION IS WRONG, BUT, AS GOVERNOR, YOU'D UPHOLD THE WILL OF THE LEGISLATURE.

BUT WHAT IF I LOSE THE PRO-LIFERS WITHOUT CONVINCING THE PRO-CHOICERS?

I'M NOT SAYING IT'S EASY. YOU'LL HAVE TO DO AN EXPERT FUZZ JOB, KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON SURVEY DATA.

IT WAS A LOT MORE FUN WHEN I COULD JUST GO AROUND INFLAMING EMOTIONS.

WHY DON'T YOU GO OUT AND RAIL SOME MORE AGAINST FLAG-BURNERS? THAT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER.

GOOD IDEA!

IMMIGRATION

(from page 6)

June 1988.

One development that is related to the drug enforcement scheme is that some landlords in the Beach Flats have decided that brown tenants need to come up with first, last and a green card. Reports of this discriminatory, and possibly illegal, practice began filtering out not long after the chief of police and the district attorney assembled the landlords to threaten them with abatement if they harbored drug dealers as tenants. The landlords are awfully safe from abatement as the obscure law cited by the district attorney is considerably more difficult to enforce than, say, the apparently unenforceable statutes against dealing heroin or burgling homes. But because the district attorney also mentioned to the landlords that the border patrol will be involved in the fight against drugs, it has become more difficult for brown people to find homes.

Calling in the border patrol won't protect the Beach Flats from drug peddlers; it implies that legal residents can push drugs and burgle with little reason to fear prosecution. And the entire plan invites discrimination against Hispanics at a time when California has recently greeted, under the new immigration law, 1.5 million new legal residents who were born in Mexico. Which is why law enforcement must resist the quick fix and when asked if that guy in the photo is a narc: just say no. ●