

Watergate Legacy?

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Mondanaro Accuses Governor Of Coverup

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Dr. Josette Mondanaro, a state health official who was ordered fired by Gov. Brown — purportedly because she wrote an allegedly obscene letter on state stationery — Friday accused the governor of covering up abuses in his administration in an effort to attract conservative voters.

"Watergate has taught us many things," the former director of the state Health Department's substance abuse division told a meeting of the California Narcotic Officers Association, "but what Watergate has taught the Brown administration is how to cover up better . . . how to dazzle the public with rhetoric."

Dr. Mondanaro, a physician who is a nationally recognized authority on drug abuse, was sought out for the health department's top drug treatment position in 1976 by state Health Director Dr. Jerome Lackner, who opposed her Oct. 25 firing. Also known to have opposed her dismissal was chief state health administrator Ray Procnier, who as her immediate superior consistently gave her outstanding job performance ratings.

She was ordered fired by Brown the day before her probationary period expired. The governor's office insists the only reason for her dismissal was an allegedly obscene personal letter — written four months earlier on state Health Department stationery and later removed from her files and publicized — to a New York psychiatrist who had requested her views on a psychology journal article about child pornography.

Dr. Mondanaro, who is a pediatrician, angrily condemned the article as soft on the use of children in pornography.

She is appealing her dismissal, and a hearing is scheduled Jan. 23 before a state Personnel Board hearing officer.

Dr. Mondanaro, who is a lesbian, believes the Brown administration used her letter as an excuse to fire her, that she was actually dismissed for the political good of the governor. She believes Brown and his top aides see her as a liability in his upcoming re-election campaign and in his aspirations to the presidency.

"He knows that his prime contenders (in the re-election campaign) are (state Attorney General) Evelle Younger and (Los Angeles Police Chief) Ed Davis," she told the narcotics officers meeting in Sacramento



DR. JOSETTE MONDANARO
. . . accuses governor

Friday. "He would like to present a conservative image . . . that he is as interested in law and order as they are. He has proven to the people of California that he is interested in only one thing — re-election, and election to the presidency."

Dr. Mondanaro has received wide support from drug treatment professionals for her work. Officials of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, which annually funnels some \$16 million in federal money through the state for local drug programs, have praised her tenure as head of the substance abuse division — as has the Association of County Drug Program Coordinators.

In Friday's speech, she also criticized Doug Cunningham, Brown's choice to succeed her as head of the division, saying he lacks direct drug treatment experience. Cunningham also continues to head the state Office of Criminal Justice Planning, a position he held at the time Brown appointed him to the substance abuse division.

As three unopened bottles of liquor (prizes in a narcotics officer association raffle conducted later in the meeting) sat in front of the speaker's podium, Dr. Mondanaro defended the concept of treatment to help drug and alcohol addicts — a concept which she says is given short shrift by the Brown administration.

Because some drug programs fail, she said all programs should not be condemned. "When a surgeon takes out an appendix, he isn't criticized

because someone else gets appendicitis," she said. "We are in the business of treating people after they have fallen off the deep end . . ."

"This society is not interested in the treatment of drug abuse. This society makes too much money off drug abuse — \$20 per person per year in over-the-counter drugs, \$1.1 billion on advertising over-the-counter drugs, \$1 billion on advertising prescription drugs to 180,000 physicians to get out that pad and start writing, writing, writing . . ."

"Some of the biggest pushers in this state are physicians."

She said professionals in drug treatment and enforcement will have a significant impact on drug use when Americans decide to spend more money on treatment and less on consuming and advertising mood-altering concoctions.

"There is a pervasive attitude in this society that we're not supposed to feel pain," she said. "Pain is telling us something, but as long as we take pills to change our mood, we won't try to change our world. I urge people to be angry and to feel pain. There's a lot to be angry about, to feel pain about. We have all the reasons to change society, but not to change our moods. There is some pain we have to live with . . ."

"When society stops pushing drugs, our jobs will be easier."

She said more money is spent on tranquilizers and sedatives in America than on antibiotics, while comparably tiny sums are spent for programs to treat the results of drug abuse.

"My mother calls that shoving shit against the tide," she said. "I hope nobody fires her."