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THE WHITE HOUSE  
OFFICE OF THE FIRST LADY'S PRESS SECRETARY

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MRS. REAGAN'S REMARKS  
ADVERTISING COUNCIL LUNCHEON

The State Department  
April 23, 1982

Thank you. When I was last with you, I was on the program with Smokey the Bear. Today, I'm on with Assistant Secretary Fischer and Director Burt. Both, in their own areas, are in the business of putting out fires. Anyway, I want to thank all of you involved with the Ad Council for the work you are doing and say how happy I am to be here. It's not often I have the chance to address people with such great influence on our popular culture, so I hope you don't mind if I do a little lobbying.

I have become more and more involved in the problem of drug abuse among our young people. And I'm grateful the Ad Council is a firm ally in our battle against the drug threat. So many of my emotions get tangled in this issue: hurt and fear, when I see what drugs have done to some of our kids; hope, when I visit prevention programs where elementary school children are learning the dangers of drugs; and anger, when I think how some in the entertainment business have glamorized drugs to our young people.

When I am out talking to kids, more and more often they ask me why there are movies or TV shows that glamorize drugs, and I'm afraid I don't have an answer. However, the fact must be faced that all too often, those in entertainment or advertising present the idea, perhaps unconsciously, that drugs are acceptable. Well, drugs are not acceptable; drugs injure individuals and shatter families.

We've all seen the TV shows where the punchline is about getting high or getting good stuff. To those writers and comedians, let me say -- it's not funny any more. Children are being destroyed and lives are being ruined, and that's not something to laugh about. An occasional TV special on drug abuse cannot counter the constant stream of messages in regular programming saying drugs are okay; drugs are cool -- though I must say I'm encouraged by what seems to be more attention being paid lately to the problem.

And I wonder if anyone stops to think what perceptions kids are picking up from some of the stories, especially the stories about the therapeutic effects of a chemical found in pot. I was at a drug conference in Atlanta a few weeks ago and I heard a speaker tell of a fifth grader who said if you smoke pot you won't get cancer or have to wear glasses. Now, how do you suppose a fifth grader gets ideas like these?

Mrs. Reagan's Remarks  
Advertising Council Luncheon  
April 23, 1982  
Page Two

The message is everywhere. The kids mentioned several times a movie about three working women in which there's a scene where the women get hilariously high on pot. It may seem like a harmless comedy, but doesn't it say something deeper? And in many dramas, the lead no sooner enters the room than he or she is at the bar pouring a drink. There is example after example on TV and in our movies.

The lyrics of quite a few modern songs shout at kids to get high and get stoned. And the drug paraphernalia shops cater to kids as surely as candy stores once did. Our culture in a myriad of ways is reinforcing the notion of drug acceptability.

I've come here today to ask for your help. The role of the Ad Council has always been to communicate -- and you have done it so well. Today I'm asking you to communicate with your colleagues who make the decisions on what America's children see and hear. Let them know the subtle damage that's being inflicted on our young people. Let them know there are millions of parents looking to them for responsibility and balance as to how drugs are represented. And let them know the terrible, terrible cost of drug abuse. So thank you for letting me be part of this luncheon and thank you again for your aid in the battle against drug abuse.

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