

BECKLEY FOUNDATION
GLOBAL DRUG POLICY SEMINAR 2005
HOUSE OF LORDS, PALACE OF WESTMINSTER, LONDON

THE BECKLEY/FORESIGHT SEMINAR
ON FUTURE POLICY CHALLENGES
TUESDAY 22 NOVEMBER

INTRODUCTION BY AMANDA, LADY NEIDPATH

Hello and welcome to our final day, and thank all you so much for coming to share your great expertise, on this very difficult, and vitally important subject. We've got a dazzling gathering of people here today, with great knowledge in the fields of psychoactive drugs, policy, ethics and associated areas, and I hope there will be plenty of opportunity for you all to join in. I am confident that at the end of the day we will leave here, with a great deal of food for thought.

I apologise that we are no longer in the august setting of the House of Lords, but from the Law Lords' eleventh hour decision, there is no appeal.

The aim of today is to review and, hopefully, add to the excellent report produced by the Foresight programme. This will lead us to consider how psychoactive substances can best be managed to minimise their harm, and to explore their potential benefit for the individual, the community and society.

Only by attaining a rational overview of these complex issues, can we hope that the right decisions for the future, will be taken.

Foresight has rightly recognised, both, that the 21st century will be the century of neuroscience, and that psychoactive substances, including cognitive enhancers and recreational drugs, are a fact of life, and need to be managed wisely.

Although, the current UN drug strategy is to reduce, and ideally to eliminate illicit drugs, the stark reality is that the global market has continued to expand, year by year.

It can be strongly argued, that there is an innate urge in human beings, to alter consciousness, so the best society can do, is learn how to manage the risks associated with this urge, while respecting the individual's freedom to make choices that do not harm others.

Yesterday, I quoted Lord Layard's remark, that "happiness should be the goal of policy", so it is with great pleasure that I pass you over to the man himself.