

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

November 16, 2011 Wisconsin Cuts More
Funding to Higher Education;
Leaves Prison Budgets Unscathed

I read in the newspaper the other day that Wisconsin's University system must accept another \$66 million in funding cuts on top of the \$250 million it already had to give up. I don't know if they scaled back offerings or increased tuition. Either way, the students are the ones to suffer.

It would seem to me that Gov. Walker could more easily have trimmed \$66 million from the corrections budget by letting out some of the thousands of old guys who have been warehoused for decades and who no longer pose a risk to anyone. Stanley prison, one of the most austere medium security prisons in the state, should be shut down and razed to the ground. Tens of millions of dollars could be saved by dropping the total Wisconsin prison population by 1,500 prisoners thus eliminating the need for this warehouse. From what I've seen, Stanley is where the DOC sends prisoners when it has nowhere else to send them. There are guys here who were sent back from minimum security, guys back on revocation, guys waiting for an opening in a treatment program somewhere else and guys being warehoused waiting for the parole commission to decide that have suffered enough and may now go home.

A few days later, I read in the newspaper that 50% of U.S. workers made \$26,364 or less last year while the number of people earning \$1 million or more grew by 18%. If you are a business-growing "job-creating" Republican you can be assured of an easy path to wealth and affluence. You can live in your McMansion, send your kids to private school and afford to take vacations all over the world. Meanwhile, the rest of us will be trying to make ends meet on \$25-30 thousand per year, worrying about our kids getting sick because we can't afford health insurance and spending stay-cations in a cramped apartment because banks won't sell us one of the abandoned houses they repossessed.

We need to start taxing the rich and subsidizing the working poor in this country. For too long, millionaires have been forcing us into an every-worsening standard of living. No longer does the next generation have a chance of living better than their parents. We got this way through a policy of squandering tax dollars on warehousing prisoners and subsidizing the rich when we could have been making infrastructure improvements to increase productivity.

Unless it changes soon, we will be the generation that experiences the decline and fall of the U.S. We are becoming nothing more than a third world country, ruled by a wealthy oligarchy for the benefit of its elites.