

DID CONNECTICUT CREATE A PRIVATE MONOPOLY IN ORDER TO BOOST PROFITS FROM THE MISERY OF ITS PRISONERS? Opinion by Richard Stevenson

The Department of Administrative services has now required that anyone bidding on the Department of Correction Commissary Contract (RFP# 11PSX0154) be able to supply 95% of any of the 5 product categories (Gen. Merchandise, Electronics & Accessories, Entertainment, Clothing & Footwear, and Bakery Fresh). This requirement alone eliminates most of the competition.

Then there is the method used to score the proposals. The following information is scored in relative importance:

1. BUSINESS PLAN: length of time in business; ability to provide service; customer base; catalog selection; et al
2. PRICE SCHEDULE: Pricing structure; order/size options pertaining to correctional facilities; cultural product line experience; prompt payment/volume incentives, etc.
3. APPLICABLE CONTENT: strategy for servicing specifications/product lines; stock capability/product draw; ability to meet specifications, requirements, terms & conditions; growth potential (product lines, variety), etc;
4. REFERENCES: letters of references (at least 3) for similar accounts; client lists (at least 3); letter of credit & insurance requirements (from similar accounts);
5. ADDED VALUE: ability to obtain other product lines on demand; enhanced specifications; Connecticut Small Business/Minority Business utilization/incorporation (note: CT has not awarded any portion of the DOC Commissary Contract to ANY local vendor in the past 10 years).

The above criteria made it impossible for any of the bidders to win the award but Keefe Supply Company. The Centric Group is doing business as Keefe Supply Company. The parent corporation is Enterprise Car Sales.

In my opinion, you will find the reason Keefe won the DOC Commissary Contract in its RESPONSE TO RFP# 11PSX0154, page 50:

"Keefe Group will offer a 2% rebate for all purchases over \$925,000 a month from Keefe."

"If Keefe is awarded all categories will pay a 3% rebate on all sales over \$925,000 a month."

The commissary's total sales last year was \$15,435,000. Needless to say, Keefe was awarded the entire contract. I encourage you to visit the web site the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services or the Department of Correction to see some of the ridiculous prices prisoners have to pay for various items.

Here are a few examples:

13" Skyworth LCD TV w/out speaker \$204.50

Ampd AM/FM CD Player \$54.60

Sony Clear AM/FM CD Player \$67.60

Nintendo DS Lite (no wi fi) \$180.70

\$84.50 for the following DS Games: ETRIAN ODYSSEY, MARIO 64, MARIO HOOPS 3 ON 3, MARIO KART, MARIO PARTY, NEW SUPER MARIO BROS., POKEMON CONQUEST, POKEMON WHITE VERSION, RADIANT HISTORIA, THE CROODS PREHISTORIC PARTY

\$42.25 for the following DS Games: ASSASSIN'S CREED II, CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS, CASTLEVANIA DAWN OF SORROW, CASTLEVANIA PORTRAIT OF RUIN, DEAL OR NO DEAL, GARDENING MAMA, GUITAR HERO ON TOUR MODERN HITS, KINGDOM OF HEARTS 358/2 DAYS, KINGDOM OF HEARTS RE-CODED, KUNG FU PANDA 2, LEGO BATMAN, LEGO HARRY POTTER YEARS 1-4, MADAGASCAR 2, MADAGASCAR 3, MEGAMAN ZERO COLLECTION, NEW CARNIVAL GAMES, PACMAN WORLD #SHREK'S CARNIVAL CRAZE, SONIC CLASSIC COLLECTION, SPIDERMAN EDGE OF TIME, STAR WARS FORCED UNLEASHED 2, TOM AND JERRY 2, X-MEN DESTINY, ET AL.

Gray Sweatpants 2X \$15.60

" Sweatshirt 2X 11.70

Boxers 4pk 2X \$16.31

Tee Shirt single pack 2X \$5.66

Uno Cards \$8.04

Vaseline Lip Therapy .35 oz. \$1.54

" Skin Care Lotion 10oz. \$4.16

Noxema 2oz. \$1.76

Headphone Extension 6' \$4.05

Ramen Noodle Soup \$.32
 Grape Jelly 20oz. \$3.05
 Peanut Butter 18oz. \$2.97
 Marshmallow Fluff 7oz. \$1.58
 Columbian Coffee 3.oz \$3.09
 Sugar 12oz. \$1.29

Well, I guess by now you get the picture. The way it works is that the state tacks on 30% above what they are charged for each item. So the more Keefe charges them the higher the profit for both. In addition, the state instituted a mechanism that would allow Keefe to increase their prices every year should their costs go up. However, there is no mechanism to decrease costs to prisoners should manufacturers decrease the costs of their products to Keefe.

One would think that costs would decrease due to the bidding process but the state assisted Keefe in making sure that doesn't happen by eliminating all the competition. In scoring the bids the "BUSINESS PLAN" would get more weight than the "PRICE SCHEDULE". In other words, length of time in business gets more weight than lower prices. Keefe knows this. So as a result they submit pricing higher than their everyone else and prisoners end up paying more.

Keep in mind that most prisoners in this state earn only \$.75/day if they are blessed enough to even get a job. Approximately 2/3 of the general prison population in this state have no way to earn money. YES, THEY CUT BACK ON OUR JOBS TOO. Most of us come from families living below the poverty line and must rely on their help.

In this state we have a saying...Connecticut does everything jackass-backwards. They cut back our jobs and pay to save money and yet expect the recidivism rate to go down. This seems to be the only state that actually wants its prisoners to sit back in their cells with nothing to do all day. They keep us locked in our cells about 21 hours/day. As a result most of us acquire chronic health issues associated with such inactivity (how much does that cost the state?). Then there are the issues of being locked in a cell the size of your bathroom with someone else for so long without a break. As such, there are more fight codes due to aggravation and theft along with the resulting injuries to both staff and prisoners. Prisoners are then penalized by being denied parole. So the state ends up spending much more than it intended on saving by cutting out jobs for the prisoners. Add to that the costs of C/O going out on workers' compensation.

I was transferred to this facility from Garner C.I. in Newtown because I refused to tolerate racist comments and jokes by an employee I worked for. I dared to put my complaint in writing and encouraged others to do the same. In an attempt to silence and then punish me, I lost my job, pay and the ability to earn good time. I've now been idle for nearly a year. Though I worked in the kitchen at Garner I somehow don't meet the criteria to work in the kitchen here. So in my complaint to the Commission On Human Rights And Opportunities I made sure to let them know that the retaliation continues. See what I mean? Jackass backwards! After nearly 21 years they still don't get it. I won't shut up!!!

My point is that you can't reduce recidivism by ripping off the very people that you are supposed to rehabilitate. This is what the State of Connecticut and others are doing.

I hope this post is informative. If you really want to know what prison life is truly like in this state hit me up here or write me at:

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Until next time...

Rich.