

Reply ID: tddp

Hey Calhoun...

Ah, there's nothing like a heavy dose of reality to catch your attention, and trust me when I say that we ran smack dab into it here earlier this month. There's been an uptick in violence and unrest - barely reported in the mainstream media - within the prison system, and in an attempt to suppress it, the Department of Corrections' tactical team - riot squad - has been traveling from prison to prison, and conducting institution-wide shakedowns. While their stated goal is to uncover dangerous weapons, they're more noted for damaging and/or destroying our personal property. They arrived here on April 9th, and for the next ten days, they wreaked havoc wherever they went. Imagine that everything you own in the world is contained in a 10' x 6' space, and someone enters that area and proceeds to toss everything you own in a big pile, and when one heaps a stack of books on top of a little 13" flat screen tv, yes, they break. For some reason, they found it necessary to disassemble my hearing aid - go figure that one out - and broke a friend's typewriter. Inexplicably, such accidents regularly occur to "jailhouse lawyers"... That being said, I'll move on, though if you'd have any questions about this situation, I'd be happy to respond to them.

I read with great interest your observations pertaining to the apparent tensions between political philosophy and practicality. It would appear to me that the relationship between the two would vary relative to the specific political system that was attempting to implement a particular concept. For example, President Obama may have some marvelous ideas for improving the economy, but without congress' acquiescence, he cannot incorporate them. On the other hand, in Great Britain, David Cameron can put in place most any economic policy, as long as he can survive a vote of no confidence. While we could debate as to which system works better, I'll bet you that President Obama would like to give the British system a go.

In one sense, I'd agree with your observation about happiness, though I do believe that, at least from my own perspective, I would make it somewhat more expansive. Looking back in retrospect over the decades I've been incarcerated, there are three things I sorely miss (1) I took college classes, part time, for 13 years, and in 1988 I earned a Bachelor of Science Degree from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. I didn't realize how much happiness that intellectual stimulation brought me, till it was gone. To this day, I still pine for that challenge of accomplishment; I never was the brightest crayon in the box, but I had a burning desire to learn, and eventually, I did. (2) For years, we had branch chapters of the United States Jaycees in here; they taught us leadership skills, and in coordination with the administration, we developed a variety of programs which served both the inside and outside communities. In the mid 90's, the prison system decided that it no longer wanted the input of prisoners, and our chapters were abolished. Horribly shortsighted. (3) In 1990, I was given a tiny kitten whose mother had just been killed; she wasn't even weaned, and as I'd never had a pet in my life before, I had quite a time getting milk into her. (I named her Mi Corazon.) Once I figured that out, I carried her everywhere I went, till she was big enough to walk along side me. For 7+ years that little grey cat went most everywhere I did, and she ate everything I ate in the dining room - except for the hot dogs, and when we saw that, I and my friends stopped eating them, too - and so I'd ask you, would she qualify as the "significant other" you spoke of? To this day, if I run into a serious bout of frustration, I'll close my eyes and recollect the feeling of her fur as my fingers ran through it, and the stormy waters will be calm again. Hmmm, I should have said "would" be calm, eh? As Mose Allison would say, My mind is on vacation, while my mouth is working overtime...

I have seen Eric Holder on television, arguing in favor of lowering drug sentences, and while this would not directly apply to any state, I do believe that the dialogue is a step in the

right directrion. To give you an idea of how poor the financial situation is here in Illinois, we are fed but two meals a day, and during the recent lockdown, my supper meal on April 9th was 4 1 oz. pkgs. peanut butter, 4 slices of bread, a handful of pop corn, lettuce, 2 cookies, 8 oz milk and 4 oz juice. Needless to say, I went to bed hungry that night... Who needs Jenny Craig when you have the Illinois Prison Diet!

When you spoke of Beauvoir, are you referring to Simone de? If so, I have next to nothing to enlighten me on her philosophy, except that women were relegated to second-class status, in comparison to men. Our "library" consists of essentially only those books which prisoners have donated after they've read what their friends have sent to them - it has no budget for book purchase - and good luck on finding any DuBois in there.

Would have had my latest article completed - further insight on obtaining information through the FOIA, and an update on some changes in Illinois' law - but most of my free time has been spent trying to help my friends get back their missing property - glasses, art material, etc. One does what one can do! Take care, and let me in on the latest from your little corner of the world.