

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

On the Backs of Prisoners' Families:
Further Erosion of Hobbies In Prison

December 15, 2014

Back in 1998, the Wisconsin DOC promulgated rules regarding personal property prisoners were allowed to have. Included in that rule was the innocuous DOC 309.20(3)(b)2:

"Permissible methods by which personal property may be acquired by an inmate, which include either of the following: . . . Purchase from approved retail outlets."

Little did anyone suspect at that time that this provision would be interpreted to cause such devastation to hobbies in prison and place another terrible burden on prisoners' families. Effective Dec. 1, 2014, there is only one approved vendor for all art supplies (except for plastic model making which also has only one approved vendor). When the notice regarding the approved vendor was issued it stated in part that the "new process . . . will provide more competitively priced items . . ."

I wrote to Cathy Jess, Administrator of the Division of Adult Institutions, and pointed out that it would most likely cause a drastic increase in prices in the same manner that the switch to "approved" vendors for other personal property for prisoners caused price increases (there are two vendors for that property - both of which charge far beyond what others pay for similar goods).

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

December 14, 2014

Attention! Attention! Attention!

My latest poetry book, How Big Your God Is, is now available for free download from:

PrisonsFoundation.org

This is the third poetry book I have posted on this website. It contains Christian and spiritual poems.

The cover looks like the following page of this entry.

Some time in 2015 I plan on posting a book of drawings on the same website - probably in the upcoming summer.

I hope you like my poems. Feedback to this blog is welcome.

**We are pleased to announce a
new book by Harlan Richards**

**You can read or download this new Harlan
Richards book and other outstanding books
by imprisoned authors free at
www.PrisonsFoundation.org**

I asked the prison staff to resend my order and tell Triarco that it was ok to fill my order because it was sent before the new restriction. As of the writing of this blog, they have refused to do so. Here's why it matters:

I ordered 25 colored pencils for 98¢ each. In the new catalog, they are \$2.00 each. I ordered a set of 4 graphite pencils for \$2.95. In the new catalog, they are \$2.00 each. I ordered a set of 10 fine point pens for \$2.95. In the new catalog, a comparable set of 8 pens costs \$13.75. Virtually every product in the "approved" vendor catalog is twice as much (or more) than the retail price prisoners previously paid. Many of the catalog numbers in the new catalog are the same as the numbers from the catalogs of the regular vendors prisoners used to order from. In other words, it appears that the "approved" vendor is a business set up for the express purpose of exploiting prisoners. The vendor buys items at retail price from the regular catalogs and reships them to prisoners at twice the price. A sweet deal if you can get it.

I have spoken out in the past about the miserably low wages prisoners receive and how the DOC prohibits any legitimate means for prisoners to earn extra money. It is a matter of keeping prisoners broke and dependent on the DOC's paltry prison wages. An enslaved population is easier to control if it doesn't have any money. Many prisoners do not earn enough money to buy basic hygiene supplies. So who will be paying the exorbitant prices for hobby supplies? Prisoners' families. If a prisoner does not have any family to help out, he or she will not be doing any hobbies. Costs for materials were already so high that very few prisoners could afford to participate in the hobby program. This new system will make a bad situation worse. This is opportunistic exploitation at its worst. Further, I believe it is a felony.

Sec. 133.01, Wis. Stats., states in pertinent part:

"It is the intent of the legislature that this chapter be interpreted in a manner which gives the most liberal construction to achieve the aim of competition. It is the intent of the legislature to make competition the fundamental economic policy of this state and, to that end, state regulatory agencies shall regard the public interest as requiring the preservation and promotion of the maximum level of competition in any regulated industry consistent with the other public interest goals established by the legislature."

Sec. 133.03(2), Wis. Stats., states in pertinent part:

"Every person who monopolizes, or attempts to monopolize, or combines or conspires with any other person or persons to monopolize any part of trade or commerce is guilty of a Class H felony. . ."

DAI Administrator Cathy Jess and Captain Jyl Brunner and the owner of the faux vendor that has the DOC contract, are committing a class H felony. The prisoners and their families are the victims. Under sec. 133.17, Wis. Stats., the Dane County District Attorney and the Wisconsin Attorney General have the authority to investigate and prosecute those who violate the provision of chapter 133, Wis. Stats. I intend to contact both of them and ask them to put a stop to this unconscionable exploitation.

Also, the DOC has added a 5% surtax to all purchases by prisoners which I also believe is illegal. The DOC has no authority to levy an additional sales tax on prisoners and their families just because that are allowing prisoners to obtain personal property. I will be seeking to stop this illegal activity as well.

I ask all who read this blog to help me expose what I believe is the ongoing criminal activity of the DOC. Contact the Wisconsin Attorney General's Office and the Dane County District Attorney - ask them to investigate and prosecute them for their actions.

Administrator (608) 266-1671
Division of Criminal Investigation
Department of Justice
P.O. Box 7857
Madison, WI 53707

doj.state.wi.us

Ismael Ozanne ismael.ozanne@da.wi.gov
Dane County District Attorney
Courthouse, Room 3000
215 S. Hamilton St.
Madison, WI 53703

(608) 266-4211

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE