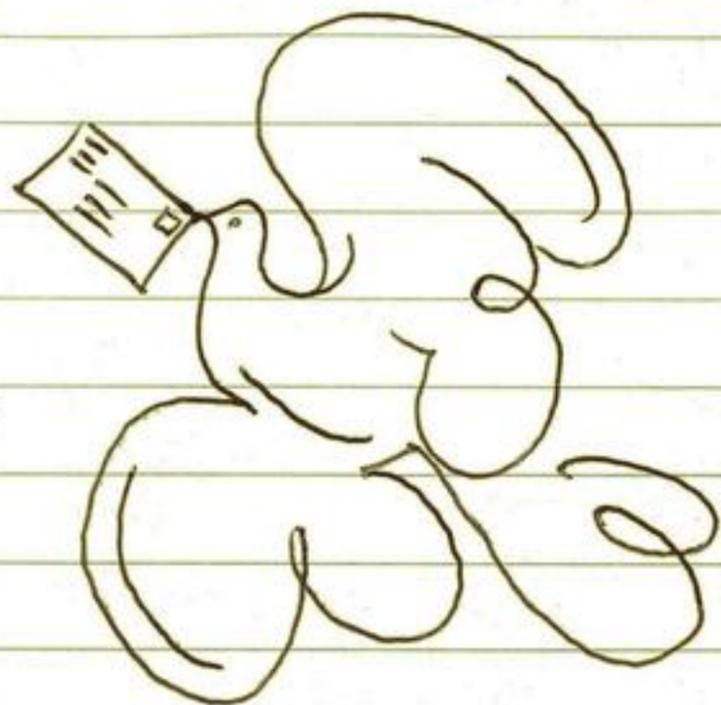


Reply to D: Addip

Hi Calhoun,

Your recent comments were just forwarded to me from my print facility, and you have provided me with much food for thought, and so, without further delay, it's time to eat.



The primary point that I sought to raise in "First Amendment Under Attack in Illinois' Prisons: The Price of Dissent" is the utter lack of accountability that prison administrators face from those who are legally responsible for oversight of the state's prison system. The fact that the Branch Program was ill-conceived was readily apparent those affected by it. What I did not realize at the time was how much food being brought by the prison was being diverted solely for employee consumption, but when I did accumulate the evidence, I was shocked and dismayed at their lack of interest in the misuse of state funds. What is the purpose of an oversight committee, when it refuses to exercise its authority. Then again, with the state some \$9 billion in debt, \$200,000 is just a drop in the bucket. Then again, no snowflake believes it is responsible for an avalanche.

Turning my focus to Belgium, it's a small country of 11,000,000 - smaller than Tokyo or Buenos Aires - located just north of France and west of Germany. Its three official languages are French, Flemish and German, and its best known for Brussels - the headquarters for the European Union, and also its diamond trading - and the Ardennes forest - the launching point of the Battle of the Bulge in WWII, where the Germans attempted to capture the port city of Antwerp. It's a heavily-taxed country - rates are between 25 and 50% - and that does not include the VAT, which goes up to 21%. That being said, those monies have been invested in a cradle to the gross social system, and it has first-rate public transportation. Like every country, it has its share of problems; they recently went 18 months without a government, and the refugee crisis is causing problems all over western Europe. Then again, when is the last time we had a functioning government in Washington?

Learning French - and apparently, learning that the word does indeed have an "n" in it - has been both frustrating and exhilarating - the former because of how slow my progress has been, and the latter, when I have those periodic breakthroughs. Let's just say that I have a lot to be humble about!

Now, to provide you with a clearer understanding

of the rationale behind my placement in segregation, I'm going to share with you an insider's perspective of how prisons actually operate - a peek behind the curtain.

While the given reason for my segregation was the possession of "dangerous written material", in reality, I was punished for investigating the disbursement of monies within the inmate benefit fund. This fund consists of the profits earned through the sale of items at our inmate commissary, and are required by law to be spent for our "special benefit", such as the purchase of basketballs and the rental of movies. However, due to the considerable amount of money in these funds - on average, around \$250,000 - I have seen wardens use it to fill in the gaps of their budget, and buy - literally - nuts and bolts (for their maintenance department) to bottled water for the warden's office.

As I looked into how these funds were being spent, I came across two questionable expenditures. The first was a \$41,000 contract for the one-year rental of washers and dryers for the housing units, and it totalled about 40 of each machine. Since we repaired them - with prisoner labor - I could not see the reasoning behind renting the machines, instead of buying them.

When I submitted a F.O.I.A. request to obtain a copy of the contract, I was told that "The Illinois Department of Corrections does maintain or possess records responsive to your request."

The second expenditure was a small one, \$250.00 to pay for the tilling of the prison garden, supposedly so "prisoners can grow food for them to eat", or so said the vote sheet approving this expenditure. When I sought the records that showed what was grown, what quantity was harvested, and when it was used, once again, I was told that no such records existed.

After my letters of query to the warden went unanswered, I sent letters to the Office of the Inspector General and the state's Auditor General, in which I laid out my concerns. Shortly thereafter, I found myself in segregation.

Now, there may be a logical explanation for the expenditures I've outlined here, but to date, I've yet to hear it.

And one last point - I've subsequently been issued a half-dozen or so 'zines similar to the one used to put me in segregation. I'll let you draw your own conclusions from that.

I had to smile - a rueful one - when you mentioned that I could pass time by engaging in "a mental game of chess", as of the six books I have, four are on chess, and the others are my Prisoners' Self-Help Litigation Manual and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. While there should be a library in segregation, there isn't.

I did like your suggestion of examining current topics from both a legal and moral perspective, and here, I recently read about an issue worthy of commenting on. In Michigan, the government just denied Tesla the right to sell cars directly to the public - because it would cut out the middle man; i.e.: car dealerships. This may have been perfectly legal, but was it moral? If Tesla could sell their car cheaper this way, perhaps Ford and GM might have to do the same, to remain competitive. Wouldn't that be a positive for every consumer? If this is a truly capitalist country, why should the government be involved in picking winners and losers?

The article on Thomas Aquinas, relating to property, was thought-provoking, and I couldn't help but draw a parallel between his ideas and those of St. Francis of Assisi. He believed that property caused envy, which in turn led to conflict, which

ultimately was destructive to space in the world.
 One has to ponder what he would have thought, if
 he could have known that within these years of
 his death, the church would build a huge complex
 in Paris, in his honor. As a Buddhist, my knees
 lodge here in rage, and I will thus leave
 my comments at that.

In closing, I will leave you with the thoughts
 of Thomas Jefferson: In matters of opinion, I fear
 with the tide. In matters of principle, stand like
 a rock.