

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

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North Korea In Wisconsin

Everybody knows that Kim Jun Un is not rational and that North Korea is essentially one large prison colony. The elites and the military enjoy good food, good living conditions and a certain amount of freedom. Everyone else works like a dog, is barely fed and has a life of privation and suffering.

The regime is based on an hereditary dictatorship where each generation is inculcated into the delusional paranoid mindset of its original leader. Potential family rivals for leadership are murdered, dissent is a capital crime and no one is safe. Americans look at North Korea and see how bizarre and irrational their system is. We wonder how an entire country can be caught up in such a surreal system. It doesn't make any sense.

I think the biggest problem is the lack of dissent. There is massive group-think occurring with the elites of North Korea. They all faithfully follow the party line because to do otherwise is to face imprisonment or execution. No one dares to speak out to proclaim the "the emperor has no clothes." the system continues to perpetuate itself, one irrational decision after another.

I see a parallel in the Wisconsin prison system. Although the DOC does not have its own Kim Jun Un, and dissent does not incur the death penalty, there are many similarities in how the two organizations operate.

For one thing, group-think is pervasive within the DOC. Virtually every person promoted within the DOC adheres to a common set of beliefs about how the DOC should be run. Those who don't agree either keep their mouth shut or don't get promoted. One of the guiding principles (whether they admit it or not) is that people are sent to prison to be punished. Merely losing one's freedom is not enough. They must be made to suffer as much as the law allows by enduring privation and harsh treatment. Another guiding principle is the belief that prisoners in general are incapable of making good decisions and must be protected from themselves. Prison administrators strive to restrict and control every aspect of a prisoner's life so the prisoner has no opportunity for independent thought or action. They base their policies on what I call the Moron Doctrine.

The Moron Doctrine simply considers what the dumbest, least educated person without any common sense would do, and bases its policies on the need to control that person. The result is that we are subjected to a barrage of rules and restrictions which are tailored to control the dumbest of the dumb.

The latest example of this is the upcoming abolition of the jogging tracks in Stanley prison. Stanley is basically split in half with 2 housing units on one side and 3 units on the other side. Each side has an oval jogging track which passes in front of the units which is used to walk or jog during outside recreation and to walk to and from other prison buildings - such as school, Health Services, visits, etc. The problem is that each housing unit has a courtyard where guys from that unit can sit outside which is located next to the jogging track.

For some reason, it annoys prison officials for the guys out on the jogging track to speak to the guys in the courtyards of other units. So they are shutting down the jogging track in front of the units and turning it into a L shape where it does not come near the housing units. Power and control is what prison officials are all about. There are rules prohibiting prisoners from talking to guys in the courtyards as they pass by. If the officers started writing conduct reports, the talking would stop.

But that would not allow them to implement a new, more restrictive policy. The person who identified the "legitimate security concern" and formulated a proposal to address it, will no doubt be putting it on his resume for his next promotion. This same thing has been going on for so long within the DOC there aren't real security issues to address so they have to invent them to get a promotion. Every time I hear about how things are in North Korea, I think of the DOC. They are so much alike.

The strangest thing about the new policy? Prisoners from all 5 units mingle in B Building where the chapel, school, library, hobby and clinical services are located. Prisoners from different units are still going to be seeing and talking to each other.