

A Few minutes with the Boss

By: Joseph Andalina

Lawmakers and prison

No, not lawmakers actually in prison, but we do have some of that, don't we? Rather, a recent *Chicago Tribune* article spins a story designed to make us all sob with grief that inmates in some prisons live in deplorable conditions. A spokesman for a prison watchdog group adds "you're not going to make this person better." (Is that from being in prison or living in deplorable conditions, which can be one and the same?)

I'm gasping as I write that. Is that what prison is supposed to do—make someone better? You could have fooled me.

The spokesman goes on to say that "conditions inside the state prisons are wretched." Monitored visits revealed inmates housed in gymnasiums, standing water in living conditions, and there are rodents.

Rodents among the killers, rapists, robbers, burglars, and child molesters? Or rodents among vehicle burglars, thieves, DUI offenders, domestic batterers, or druggies? Rodents in a prison? I feel sorry for the rodents. I know guys who were in prison. They aren't all bad, but the ones who "get it" know they deserved to be there.

But what is our fine legislators' solutions to overcrowding, standing water, and rats? Let them out, of course. (Not the rats, folks; but that would be the humane thing.) No, only the well behaved inmates. We already know how the last early release effort by our governor went, don't we? Back in 2009, the agency assigned to make the decisions to free the well-behaved prisoners when it was discovered that inmates were released earlier than the 60-day mandate of days one must serve to be given a *Monopoly Get out of jail Free* card, and that some of the 1700 inmates freed went on to commit a variety of other crimes when let loose on society once again.

One nice fellow released who was earlier sentenced to three years for a brutal attack on a woman served about a year. He was a good boy, despite the standing water and the "Mickey the mouse" lookalikes. Let out in October of 2009 under this program, he was arrested the very next day on suspicion of assault and sent back to the standing water and deplorable conditions.

Well, what can you expect? All that pent up frustration for being "good" for 14 months can weigh heavily on any criminal. We need to be empathetic. Not think that prisoners should serve out their sentences. What is the matter with you heartless folks?

One of our legislators says "early release is not popular." Well, thank you Captain Obvious. You've got that right. But are we trying to make people better who go to prison after victimizing the rest of normal society? Instead of dipping into our budget for D-Con to destroy innocent mice that are only looking for a home, why don't these people let the prisoners do the time in the first place? If their mothers, kids, uncles and aunts and the entire village, as Hillary might say, can't convince them not to commit a crime, then prison is where they belong.

And giving a break to a non-violent person might be okay as long as when they are out they don't come back. If they do, it's time served plus.

But I do have one alternative. If every member of these watchdog groups and every legislator in favor of early release voluntarily takes a misbehaving inmate home for one month to house, shelter, feed, and monitor **their** behavior in order to make them a better person, then maybe we could support their efforts. You first, Mr. Softie.

But this doesn't happen. They just let the crazies out to mingle with the rest of the community while they hide in their ivory towers. It is us who must deal with them when those jail bars open. I'd rather have the mice.

Vita é Bella