

# AN INSIDE VIEWPOINT

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Over the centuries our society has progressed to an enlightened, liberated union of the masses.... or has it? Unfortunately industrialization has created a society in which the virtues of honest toil and pride of workmanship are endangered. Most people work at dull, trivial jobs, while many others suffer chronic unemployment. And while it is true that many people enjoy a high material standard of living, and can purchase many gadgets and luxuries, these things have not fulfilled real human and social needs. Even the demand for them is not real, but is artificially created by advertizing campaigns and planned obsolescence. Such items do not bring happiness and peace of mind, but only a growing clamour for more and more material possessions.

Meanwhile, the materially less fortunate people are separated from the richer ones by a wider and wider gap and look on in growing envy and anger. The upper and middle income inhabitants of cities have been able to escape to the suburbs, leaving behind the less fortunate who are neither intellectually (i.e. academically) nor psychologically equipped to pursue the financial gains that are necessary to enjoy the benefits of the affluent society.

Having come to the realization that this lifestyle lies beyond their grasp, they are naturally frustrated. This frustration has manifested itself in excessive abuse of drugs and alcohol, which in turn has been the root of much of the crime that leads to an overburdened prison system.

Instead of searching for a realistic solution to the alcohol and other drug related crimes, the government has chosen to throw millions upon millions of dollars into a failing system that serves to warehouse this growing segment of society. Considering the big money generated from taxes on the sale of alcohol and pharmaceutical drugs, how can the government not have a vested interest in keeping these sales going? And add to this the employment and business generated by the placement of new correctional facilities in areas of sagging economic conditions.

I believe that the possible answer to penal reform is to be found in governmental reform. When we can start to address the problems of drug and alcohol abuse in the community without being hampered by the self-interest of government bureaucracies and big business, then we will have an unbiased viewpoint. When people find themselves caught up in the justice system because of crimes attributable to substance abuse, they should be directed by a court sentence and their willing participation to programs that will address their abuse problems and make them more aware of the importance of their role as individuals in the social structure. Once these objectives have been realized we could turn the institutions into the cattle barns for which they are more aptly suited.