

Confining the War on Drugs

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“Even in an iron crucible a transmutation can take place”

The war on drugs is a military metaphor that brings with it unfortunate associations of combat that do not apply to medical or social problems. This war has heavy costs in treasure and lives, and in damage and trauma could be more damaging to us than Vietnam. With war is also a consequent loss of rights. According to a UN declaration on drugs nations are required to silence pro-drug advocates. All this was summarized by the saying of Randolph Bourne “War is the health (or hell) of the state.”

Continuing with the military metaphor of the drug war it is only fitting that I, a former drug dealer convicted by the US, am now residing at a former barracks converted to a prison on the military base at Ft. Dix. In the occult symbology of the tarot a prison is a fortress turned upside down. Many of the corrections officers (COs) here are former noncommissioned officers (NCOs) that were stationed here when this was a more active base. This transition happened because at the end of the Cold War in the early 90's there were base closures. In response to protests, from those stationed here and the surrounding community, about the disappearance of jobs and the loss to businesses that would occur if the base was closed, Ft Dix prison was opened. Any area, but especially rural, would suffer for a while when a company goes out of business or moves. There was a need to reduce military expenditures and the only substitute that was seen as practical was the prison that would employ lightly skilled blue or khaki collared workers.

There really was not that much of a transition. Ft. Dix was a training camp for the army. Prisoners are trainees. They wear khaki, learn skills, obey similar hierarchies and rules, are confined and eat at a mess hall and are provided with basic services and the semblance of a community. The only difference is the absence of an esprit d'corps and mission.

The CO's have a secure, non demanding job with decent pay with medical and other benefits. They still wear a uniform and follow long established rules. They eat the same food we do which is similar to military fare of years ago. They rightly see that rural living is a good way to deal with stress and raise a family. Here they have better jobs than most in rural America.

Libertarians and legalization advocates tend to avoid two problems. One is the possible damage in dumping of so many addicts in already burdened poor areas from prisons and how to deal with the addict's transition to self supporting lives. The second is how to deal with those dependent on government work to support their families and the communities that depend on this militarized economy. There needs to be constructed a transition program that deals with both of these potential problems.

Federal Corrections Institute (FCI) Ft Dix and similar military bases can have a new role after the criminal population has been vacated. These former bases and prisons could provide a confined home for the addicted population. The idea is not to encourage, aid or prohibit addiction but to provide a refuge for addicts while they learn responsibility and job skills. They would be allowed to have heroin or perhaps other drugs for free or at a minimal cost while living in the most basic, though humane conditions.

While there are more dealers rather than addicts here I have talked to many addicts. They were involved in the drug treatment program here which qualifies many types of convicts for early

release. In private conversations many have said to me that if a place provided free or low cost heroin they would happily live in a barracks, eat the same food and even be confined. They would also gladly work at a full time job, not steal from anyone and obey orders. (One inmate said he would mop floors 20 times a day and that he worked as a chef on the outside). They would be willing to learn job skills and even occasionally listen to an anti drug lecture occasionally as they do now. Even if freely living on the outside many said they would volunteer for such the opportunity to live at a Ft Dix with heroin.

Addicts would be healthier and safer since they would get their heroin in the dosages and purity that they need with little risk of overdosing or getting adulterated or even poisoned drugs. They would have clean needles so as to avoid the plague of AIDS and hepatitis that is devastating their communities and families. They would have a warm, clean place to sleep and basic medical care. They would not have to worry about being mugged, arrested or not finding their fix. No worries about a warm place to stay or where their next meal is coming from or the many other worries of a street junkie. While I have no experience either of using heroin or counseling junkies I believe that they were honest with me in their acceptance of this idea.

I also believe that many on the outside would voluntarily contribute to a facility like this even if just to reduce homelessness and street crime. By confining a problem to an area one doesn't have to watch or secure everything everywhere. Many believe that the supposed security requirements of the drug war are making America into an Orwellian nightmare of cameras or cops on every corner where our own bodily fluids must be available for inspection. A haven for lost souls as I have suggested would remove such requirements for our cities. This would appeal to liberals and conservatives alike. Even evangelical groups would gladly help defray the costs here in order to provide an opportunity to heal and spread their message.

The reasons that most people would support this haven is that it would result in a great lessening of the social costs in emergency room visits, petty theft, violence, homelessness, crowded prisons and the other continuing tragedies that make our cities a drain on the economy and our soul. Drug use would lose the romance of being a dangerous quest. Drug abuse would be confined to a small area with established addicts who could not spread their ways. Videos and visits of this boring, yet safe refuge of these unfortunates would discourage the young from making this bad choice. Since addicts could leave after getting clean and/or getting a job skill this place would be inviting to them. Dealers would go out of business since this place would drain away their customers.

This program could also provide the beginnings of a community based program where addicts and scientists alike could look into different recovery programs and see how effective they are and with what kind of populations. Eventually the addicts might be able to live or work in their former community with the needed skills and receive their drugs from a medical provider. Hopefully these prisons turned into gated communities could be privately funded and operated eventually.

I don't think that the CO's would mind either. They would be kept on so that the new population of addicts would not escape or attack each other frightening the surrounding community. This is basically the same job that CO's have now. The community knowing that these addicts are behind the fence topped with razor wire could feel safer since there would be a less dangerous population. Addicts are usually pretty harmless people and do not attack or fight among themselves unless they are denied their drug of choice. They have less of a history of violence or theft than the average criminal here who may have engaged in much violence in order to protect a large enterprise.

I would make a provision that here that a variety of addiction counseling services would be allowed to set up shop here if they can find private sources of funding and are not cultish. This is to avoid any cult phenomena like Synanon forming here. The government has supported such bad projects before and if there were choices for the addicted population then cultish behavior will be less likely to develop.

There is now in our prison almost every variety of religious worship since we are a very varied bunch of people here with over 20 countries represented as well as many languages, cultures, classes and occupations. I expect the same amount of diversity with the addicted population. It would be an ideal place to conduct experimentation for different recovery drugs and modalities. Addicts, for example, could be required to watch a videotape of their behavior under the influence, participate in physical activity programs like hiking that are available at the base. Various benefits like special meals, entertainments etc could be offered to nudge them into positive directions.

I do not know how this programming concept would work for other drugs like cocaine, crack or methamphetamine. Heroin addicts are much mellower and the desire for sex is lessened. The users of these other drugs are more stressed out and some do get psychotic. Some appetites for drugs are truly death defying. There needs to be medical supervision and legal releases signed. There is also an increase in the drive for sex for some, so there could be conjugal visits or co-ed facilities as a reward for good behavior. There are a variety of addicts here and they get along without drugs and I have heard that on the street they got along as well on drugs. There are many cross addicted people. Those who become problematic could be given medication, therapy or just forced to go through withdrawal. I have heard of prisons where you can get any drug you want through a black market.

Under such strict military security as here you could have legal experimentation with psychedelics such as LSD. This would resume the drug and alcohol recovery experiments with psychedelics done successfully in the 1950s. The founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill W., advocated the use of LSD as a treatment for alcoholism and he mentions this in his autobiography "Pass it on". Before LSD was banned from research over a 1000 scientific papers were written on its use in treatment of alcoholism and other addictions. There is legal research with other psychedelics going on right now in Spain and Switzerland as well as in the US

FCI Ft Dix is actually three different sections that are each separately encircled with fencing and have their own medical, educational, gym, athletic fields, offices and dining facilities so there is room here for experimentation. The facility can hold over 4500 inmates total in over 15 different buildings. There are at least seven different barracks or living units here in my section. The facilities here can be made to look like a barracks, a campus or a home with little cost depending on whether there is a basic, experimental or therapeutic vision for type of care provided. There is a small camp here that is unfenced that could be used for those in recovery or as a halfway house

Whether there is room here in the minds of those that make decisions is an open question. Such is the problem of those involved in the confinement of others that they can end up confining themselves. Perhaps a large donor like drug legalization advocate George Soros or the Gates foundation would help. Open up thy heads, oh ye Gates! This could be a site for Soros eyes.