

Slammer State...continued from page 3

decreased by seven-percent, even as the prison population continued to grow ever larger.

As Reeves did point out, the cumulative costs of these highly punitive policies is that the Department of Corrections' (DOC) budget has doubled since 1990, rising to \$575 million a year. Although this annual five-hundred million dollar plus expenditure does not include the more than half-a-billion dollars spent over the past seven years building seven new prisons as the cancer-like spread of the mid-American gulag archipelago sprouted across the rural Missouri countryside.

Reeves noted that the DOC budget is the second fastest growing item in the state government behind Medicaid, but this was before nearly 100,000 Missourians, half of them children, were excised like meddlesome carbuncles off the body politic. The DOC has now regained its despairing distinction of leading double-digit departmental budget growth at the state revenue tax trough.

What has not been placed into context by the mainstream media is the comprehensive or even personalized context of this diversion of societal resources. The opportunity-costs — that is, the comparison between what has to be given up to finance one program over another — of this tremendous growth in the use of incarceration has had a direct negative impact on every citizen in the Show-Me State, while not providing an appreciable return in the increased safety and security of our communities.

PART TWO...Next Issue

HELP ME LORD...



I've walked the scandalous boulevard of broken dreams, as life's lessons taught me how life isn't always peaches and cream.

I hurt a lot of people in my life, including myself and now I'm sitting in prison with nothing left on the shelf.

As time passed by I searched for a source greater than me, but in search for such a source has proven to myself not to be.

So I searched a little bit deeper just to make sure, but I still came up empty because this heart of mine wasn't pure.

"Lord, please help me out" was a prayer that I said, please help me to find out why all of this madness is inside my head.

Show me how to live right and to be an example to others, teach me how to preach Your Holy Word to my sisters and brothers.

Lead me to those who are in desperate need of change, create in me a new heart and spirit so that my life won't be strange.

I was purposed to do Your Will, so please straighten me out, take the crooked out of me and show me what my life is all about.

Lord, if You do for me all of what I am expressing, I will surely serve You with all my mind, heart and soul as a blessing. Amen.

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