

A Proposal for How To End the Fiscal Crisis in the Schools

The answer is: Stop the Insane Prison Building Spree in the State.

When Gov. Jim Edgar announced his budget in the Spring, he proudly proclaimed that his program was one of "Kids, not Concrete." Edgar obviously was proceeding along the lines of politicians who feel that "truth" is whatever they say it is and can get the media to say it is. Since his "kids not concrete" statements, Edgar has failed at every step to help our children.

As a result, we have not only the school crisis but also

** the AFDC crisis;

** the fact that Illinois' "budget cuts in welfare last year ranked among the most severe in the nation" (Craines Chicago Business, 2/15/93);

** the fact that "For the second consecutive year, Illinois was singled out . . . for its harsh treatment of poor people" (Chicago Sun-Times, 2/10/93);

** and the fact that Illinois was found to have the 46th worst infant mortality rate in the U.S. and to be the 35th worst in overall child health (Center for the Study of Social Policy, Winter, 1993).

While all of this devastation of children is going on due to Edgar's budget, he is proceeding to build more and more prisons, including a current proposal for a super-max prison. This prison will be incredibly expensive and will fail in every one of its goals. Consider the following.

During the past 15 years, Illinois has built 15 prisons and nothing has improved -- crime is not down, no one feels any safer. Experts across the country are noting that we cannot build our way out of the crime problem -- that it must be solved with preventive programs that foster human growth, with programs that provide jobs, education, and housing. Even Edgar's own hand-picked Task Force on Crime and Corrections, consisting predominantly of rich, white men, noted this in its final report to him. Nonetheless, Edgar's only response to this is to build more prisons, including the "Super-Max."

The costs of such a building frenzy are enormous. The cost to build the "Super-Max" is alleged by Edgar to be \$66 million, although realistic estimates suggest that the real cost will be over \$100 million. Other cells that

are being added on as you read this will cost another \$100 million. Finally, it will cost about \$90 million a year to run these prisons. **So, there you have it. \$100 million for the "Super-Max," \$100 million for current prison construction, and almost \$100 million to run these prisons for one year. You need \$300 million to solve the fiscal crisis in the schools?? There it is.**

There is one additional irony in all of this that you should know. Since most experts agree that providing a good education will help keep children out of prison, keeping the schools shut is a good way to help send our children to prison and to justify the building frenzy. And please don't miss the larger issue here -- 80% of our school system consists of African-American and Hispanic children and 80% of the prison system consists of African-American and Hispanic prisoners. In one case, the transfer is direct. Edgar is turning a high-school in East St. Louis into a prison.

Don't let Edgar use our money to build still more useless prisons. Demand that the money be used to open the schools -- today! Demand that Illinois not spend \$40,000 a year to cage a prisoner in the Super-Max prison and only \$3,600 to educate a child in Chicago.

This leaflet is prepared by the Committee to End the Marion Lockdown (CEML). We are a Chicago-based organization that has opposed control unit or super-max prisons, all of which are based on the notorious federal prison in Marion, Illinois. For additional information or presentations to your organizations, please contact us at:

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