In the United States, a man who is convicted of a crime of the State is soon made to be guilty of another crime, one against humanity – the grime of lethargy. There are currently about 2.3 million American men and women in United States prisons. Feeding, housing, guarding, and overall maintaining this mass of people costs money, and a lot of it. As our federal government already spends more money than it has, this is an obvious issue. Having workers doing nothing but menial work, such as cleaning, laundry, and cooking is also an issue in and of itself. It’s not helping the criminals in question rehabilitate themselves. They’re simply waiting out the clock until they get out. Nothing more, nothing less.

The average annual cost of keeping a person in prison is $31.2K. Multiply that by the total number of prisoners, and, well…. I’m sure you get the point. The American federal government has a current outstanding debt of $24.48 trillion, and that is increasing exponentially every year. Over $71 billion being added each year to keep criminals locked up until they can do the crime again obviously isn’t helping.

As for the second extremely apparent issue with the current prison system, there’s not a lot more to say. Time-outs never work on the smarter children, and for good reason. Why stop doing what they want to do when all they’ll get is a bit of bored time? The same can be said for inmates. Not only does the lack of stimulating work hurt their minds, it does nothing to motivate them to change. To make a child stop fighting, you introduce them to sports. To make them stop lying, you have them write stories. The human mind doesn’t change all that much as it grows older.

What if we could make the prisoners productive? Make them, if not an asset, at least less of a burden of a country? This can be done through redirectional discipline and introduction to direct consequence. If a man is in prison for theft, you need to show him how that theft affects the victims and give him another option. My proposed solution to this issue is twofold- directly introduce criminals to victims of their type of crime and get them skills. I believe firmly that if a mugger is shown what happens to the woman he mugs on the street after the fact, it will shift his mind, even if just a little. And as for the second point, I find it to be the most important. Many criminals are just that because they don’t know any other way of living. If a program is begun in prisons to teach inmates working skills, it could be beneficial for both. The prisoners get a new skillset that cn help them find work outside of crime once they get released, and the prison gets cheap work on products or services that can be turned into a profit for the country.