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Rhetorical Analysis of the Document “Jail?”

The document “Jail?” is an undressed household flyer sent by the Conservative Government of Canada. The document argues that house arrest is a mild punishment for convicted criminals and that it must be replaced with prison time. “Jail?” is persuasive through its logical argument, appropriate credibility, and the use of visual and verbal texts that appeal to the reader’s emotions.

“Jail?” uses two reasonable points to back the argument: home confinement as a lenient punishment and the fact that criminals living within society may endanger the public around them. The document asks; “Why should convicted thieves, arsonists and vandals serve their sentences watching TV, playing video games, and surfing ‘websites’ on the internet?”. A home confinement sentence allows many criminals to stay home and enjoy many delights that are not available in prison which is an easier way to serve time. Having such entertainment and freedom may result in defeating the purpose of the punishment. Furthermore, a criminal who lives among the public can endanger society in many ways. Firstly, the criminal may still be involved in illegal activities from home; for example, selling and distributing drugs. Also, the criminal may get others involved in his illegal activities. As the document discussed, criminals under house arrest will lead to a lack of peace of mind for the local families living in that area. Therefore, the brochure has a logical argument filled with good reasoning that moves the reader to agree with the Conservative’s argument.

The credibility of the document is very appropriate because: the author is knowledgeable with the issue, and because the readers needs are kept in mind. The author of the document, Conservative Government, has knowledge and resources that allows them to view the issue from multiple points of view, qualifying them to provide a more coordinated solution for the issue. In addition, the document priorities the readers needs and provides them with a solution that will fulfill these needs, “Conservative Government wants to send those convicted of arson and theft to jail.” Therefore, “Jail?” has an appropriate credibility because of the Conservatives’ knowledge and resources and because of the document’s concern for public needs.

Lastly, the document builds a very emotional appeal to the readers by using a combination of literal and verbal texts. Firstly, the flyer’s cover gives the readers a sense of insecurity and a sense injustice. The man in the picture is a visual representation of what a criminal would look like while serving a home confinement sentence. Dirty cloths, unshaven, holding a cigarette with one hand and a beer with the other, setting in a dark room on a dirty old fashioned couch; All of these visuals result in communicating a sense of insecurity in the reader who now knows that criminals like this maybe living next door. Also the only text on the cover of the flyer, “Jail?”, provokes a sense of injustice in the reader. This causes the reader to question the justice of house arrest. Do thieves, arsonists and vandals deserve such mild sentences? Furthermore, the flyer contains another picture, which represents a jail cell door. This picture provides the reader with a sense of relief and justice. The reader acquires a sense of relief and security knowing that there is a solution to this issue. Knowing that these criminals will face real jail time as a punishment for their deeds gives the reader a sense of justice. Moreover, the author communicates with the reader in first person, “It is unacceptable that you could have an arsonist or thief living right next door, serving an easy sentence in his own home. Local families deserve more peace of mind than that.” This gives the reader a sense of relief and security knowing that the Conservative Government is fighting to insure the public’s security. Lastly, the document contains a strong diction to support the emotional appeal to the reader, for example, the brochure uses strong words to define the criminals such as thieves instead of for example shoplifters. Thus, the document’s pathos is extremely persuasive though its use of visual and verbal text.

To conclude, this document is persuasive because it uses all three persuasive modes, logos, ethos, and pathos appropriately. The document presents a very logical argument that is supported by a couple of good reasonable points, the document’s credibility is very appropriate and gains the readers trust by fulfilling their needs and lastly, the emotional appeal to the argument was well supported by the visual and verbal texts in the flyer. At last, the main purpose of the document along with political purpose are both fulfilled through the flyer’s verbal and visual elements.

Works Cited

"House arrest - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia." *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Mar. 2013. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House\_arrest>.