

Military weapons, six-shooters similar in intent

By Mike Montesano

The Jan. 25 Emerald editorial on gun control was notable both for its lack of tolerance, and its lack of rationality. I ob-

Commentary

ject on two grounds: that it was unprincipled and logically fallacious in style, and inaccurate and misleading in content.

Firstly, the editorial's favorite form of attack seemed to be the use of meaningless catchphrases and pejorative labels. This is the cheapest form of appeal to fears, emotions, and prejudices. For example, NRA members are said to "find pleasure in collecting the instruments of death." More people die in automobiles each

year than from guns, yet few car collectors think of themselves as collectors of "instruments of death." Further, non-gun owners are "peace-loving liberals," while gun collectors are said to exist only to provide weapons for "the criminally insane" to steal.

I consider myself to be a "peace-loving liberal," yet I see few problems with responsible gun ownership. And gun collectors, if only to protect their valuable collections, keep their guns under lock and key, not easily available to thieves. Finally, a home-owner who keeps a gun for self-defense is labeled "paranoid." Have you ever been threatened, or had your family threatened, by an invading criminal? Police can't be everywhere; if my home is

ever invaded by an intruder at night, and the cops can't arrive for five or ten minutes because they're too busy with all the other crimes, I'm damn well prepared to defend my life, my home, and my loved ones with whatever means are available. On the other hand, I'd be overjoyed if such a sad event never occurs, and will be satisfied to simply enjoy myself at the target range of the local gun club.

Secondly, I object to the inflammatory demagoguery evident in carelessly spouting the names of well-known military weapons, such as the Uzi, M-16, and AK-47. This is a blatant attempt to mislead people into believing that fully automatic "machine guns" are involved. This could not be further from the truth. The public generally

cannot buy fully automatic weapons. Only heavily regulated collectors may do so.

The guns here in question are semi-automatic (one shot per pull of the trigger), like many hunting rifles. The only difference is that these guns look like modern military weapons; they don't function like them. And what's wrong with that? There is no difference between admiring and owning facsimiles of modern military weapons and admiring and owning facsimiles of weapons of the Old West, like six-shooters and Winchester lever-action carbines.

For those who care, here's my suggestion: a five-day waiting period for all gun purchases, so that a thorough, multi-state background check can be made, and a mandatory

gun safety and maintenance course for all new gun owners. Were you aware that the NRA itself administers the most highly regarded gun safety programs in the nation?

Despite my own status as a "liberal" (I'm an environmentalist Democrat, and am not an NRA member), I plan one day to be both a gun owner and a hunter. I do not appreciate anonymous third parties arrogantly assuming that they know better than I what is best for me. Above all, I fear fanatics of the sort that don't realize that fanaticism is worse than any opinion could ever be.

Mike Montesano is a University law student working toward a master's degree.

Letters

Injury

I am appalled by the IFC's decisions not to fund Women in Philosophy. As Lani Roberts pointed out (ODE, Jan. 26), the decision was based on misinformation.

Not supporting Women in Philosophy is a serious injury to not only women interested and working in philosophy, but all women. I also urge the IFC to reconsider its decision.

Jo Trigilio
Philosophy graduate student

'Seamen'

President George Bush should not have exploited the religiously organized, national anti-abortion demonstrations by suggesting the repeal of the Supreme Court's 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion. True leaders seek and recommend realistic solutions despite their personal prejudice.

Bush knows criminalization of timely abortions by women choosing that option would inevitably lead to increased incidence of infanticide, death of pregnant women, child abuse and neglect — not to mention enormous increases in federal and state expenditures for welfare, crime, social and educational services already inadequately funded.

A major cause of unwanted pregnancies is the opposition of religious leaders, because of religious dogma, to birth control education and ready access to contraceptives.

New administrations should give serious consideration to the wisdom and enlightenment offered by foreign cultures as a means of leavening our own. The present subject and chaotic state of our nation suggests a dose of French rationalism.

Readers interested in this perspective will find scintillating conversation in French philosophy. Denis Diderot's (1713-1784) engaging descrip-

tion of the French encounter with the sexual mores of the South Sea islands in "Supplement to Bougainville's Voyage," in Rameau's Nephew and Other Works (Chapman and Hill, London, 1926).

This felicitous, if less propriety, regard for children is explained when Count Bougainville, first Frenchman to cir-

cumnavigate the world, the French ship's captain, chaplain and crew are invited by the native Chief to enjoy the pleasures of the islands. It is hoped this generosity will be reciprocated by the guests through the contribution of their vital genetic identities to the genetic vigor of the island's population.

Abortion will decline when people regard themselves, and others, not as sinners but as healthy, loving, responsible members of society adhering to the age old counsel of sages: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Bert P. Tryba
Eugene

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