

“Ultimate Confiscation”

June 6 1996

Washington Post columnist and television pundit Charles Krauthammer, in an April 5, 1996 article condemning the House “assault weapon” ban repeal vote, revealed the truth about “reasonable” gun laws:

“[T]he assault weapons ban will have no significant effect either on the crime rate or on personal security. Nonetheless, it is a good idea, though *for reasons its proponents dare not enunciate.*”

“Passing a law like the assault weapons ban is a symbolic—purely symbolic—move.... Its only real justification is not to reduce crime but to desensitize the public to the regulation of weapons *in preparation for their ultimate confiscation.*”

That’s what this fight is really all about: the ultimate confiscation of all firearms. When I say such a thing, and I’ve been saying it for over 30 years, I’m accused of paranoia. I’m not paranoid; I simply know how to read.

On June 17, 1968, when the Johnson Administration’s Gun Control Act was still being debated, Rev. J. Elliott Corbett, then the secretary of the National Council for a Responsible Firearms Policy, said in a letter to a Maryland supporter: “We are now supporting the President’s Bill which provides stringent restrictions on rifles and shotguns. We shall also get behind the Tydings Bill which provides for national registration and licensing [of all guns].

“I personally believe handguns should be outlawed.... Our organization will probably officially take this stand in time *but we are not anxious to rouse the opposition before we get the other legislation passed.*

“It would be difficult to outlaw all rifles and shotguns because of the hunting sport. But there should be stiff regulations. The day may come in this country when police are issued weapons for 24 to 48 hours.”

The Rev. Corbett, who was the Director of the Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church, in 1974 formed the National Coalition to Ban Handguns. (NCBH recently softened its name to

“Coalition to Stop Gun Violence,” though its objectives haven’t changed and it’s still located in the Methodist Church building on Capitol Hill.)

I called Corbett several times about his organization’s plans and policies. Once, when he couldn’t answer a question, he turned over the telephone to Edward O. Welles, who he said had helped him set up NCBH. I was astounded, for Ed Welles was the founding chairman of another group formed in 1974, the National Council to Control Handguns. To reduce the confusion with NCBH, NCCCH was later renamed Handgun Control Inc.

About a year after starting what is now HCI, Welles, who had just retired from the Central Intelligence Agency, turned over the chairmanship to Nelson T. “Pete” Shields (who passed it to Sarah Brady).

In the July 26, 1976 *New Yorker* magazine (pp. 53f), Shields told columnist Richard Harris: “We’re going to have to take one step at a time, and the first step is necessarily—given the political realities—going to be very modest.”

“Our ultimate goal—*total control of handguns* in the United States—is going to take time... The first problem is to slow down the increasing number of handguns being produced.... The second problem is to get handguns registered. And the final problem is to make the possession of all handguns and all handgun ammunition—except for the military, policemen, licensed security guards, licensed sporting clubs, and licensed gun collectors—*totally illegal*.”

The step-by-step plan that Corbett laid out in 1968, that Shields revealed in 1975, and Krauthammer in 1996, is precisely what we’ve watched them try to do—with too much success. About 1990 HCI changed its corporate charter to allow it to pursue the so-called “assault weapons” ban of rifles and shotguns, and NCBH changed its name from “Handgun” to “Gun.”

No matter how restrictive the gun laws may be, when they fail to prevent a rise in crime—particularly some especially heinous crime like the slaughter of kindergartners in Scotland—the anti-gun crowd has an excuse: the gun laws aren’t restrictive enough.

The United Kingdom’s all-restrictive laws are the supposed model for U.S. gun “controllers,” but they’ve been very quiet, for their colleagues in Great Britain are now attempting the ultimate step: prohibition and confiscation of licensed handguns.

Yet dupes in the public, and even within our own ranks, still think our foes only want a “reasonable” gun law.

Editor’s Note

The names have continued to change. Handgun Control Inc. has since become “The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence.” But the goals remain unchanged.