

A lot of folks foolishly believe that we should give “a little bit” so Schumer and Metzenbaum would leave alone the guns that most of us own and use. That, supposedly, would improve our image, and make us look more reasonable.

In fact, it’s a prescription for disaster.

You can’t make a yapping mongrel dog go away from your door by throwing him an occasional bone. He only yaps louder and gets bigger and stronger.

The majority of gun owners didn’t care when Congress passed the ban on ridiculously misnamed “cop-killer bullets” (hard-jacketed bullets that have never killed a cop), and the restriction on “plastic guns” (which do not exist), or even when they enacted the “Brady” waiting period bill. And a lot don’t care about those military-style guns that are now hanging by a thread.

But has passage of any of those bills—with some gun owners’ blessings—improved our image and sent the anti-gunners away happy? Or did it merely whet the other side’s appetite?

The piling on of regulations, executive orders and ever-more prohibitive gun bills proves what some of us have been saying for years: our foes will not rest so long as any of us own any type of gun.

The Danger of Being “Reasonable”

August 22, 1997

Not long ago I heard Rep. Charles Schumer say gun owners should draft “reasonable” gun legislation before our political opponents drafted an unreasonable law and forced it on us. Schumer said it with all the sincerity of the serpent coaxing Eve to eat the apple in the Garden of Eden.

Trouble is: Like Eve, a lot of gun owners are heeding that seductive call. They’re tired of fighting off the gun laws that the Schumerites keep

telling us are inevitable. They're tired of writing letters to legislators, and checks to pro-gun organizations.

More and more gun owners—and an appalling number of their leaders—seem convinced that more gun laws are unavoidable, and that we are merely delaying the inevitable. And that when it finally comes, it will be much worse than the compromise we could make today.

I've heard it before. It was a lie then and it's a lie today.

The big fight this month in California, and the big fight next month in Congress, is over "Saturday Night Special" legislation which would prohibit the domestic manufacture and/or sale of small and/or less-expensive handguns which have not been importable since the Gun Control Act of 1968.

The late Sen. Tom Dodd (D-Ct.), principal author with the Johnson Administration of GCA '68 (and father of current Sen. Chris Dodd), introduced legislation in 1970 which would do the same thing as Sen. Barbara Boxer's (D-Calif) "Junk Guns" bill.

Those bills would prohibit guns which fail to meet the BATF's arbitrary "point system"—supposedly defining GCA '68's nebulous prohibition against importing handguns "not particularly suitable for sporting purposes."

The "point system"—which assigns a minimum number of "points" for features like weight, barrel length, caliber, adjustable sights and loaded chamber indicators—has never been either law or regulation. The only place it exists is on the BATF import form. There was never any opportunity for public comment or other requirements of the Administrative Procedures Act.

The point system came into being, I was told at the time, as a result of a meeting between gun companies and BATF. They devised a piece of protectionist legislation intended to allow the importation of as many of their products as possible, while eliminating the smaller, lower-priced competition which upset Sen. Dodd and his Connecticut gun maker constituents.

One of the key BATF officials who developed the "point system" was a gun collector with ties to the gun industry and some of the gun scribes. He was accused of having a too-cozy relationship and receiving too many "sample guns." In the middle of a rumored BATF internal affairs investigation, he committed suicide.

But the "point system" lives on.

In late 1969, a spokesman for the Nixon Justice Department, Don Santarelli, testified that the Administration supported a "Saturday Night Special" ban, but hadn't been able to define the phrase. In January 1971, he invited NRA and several gun magazine editors to a meeting in the Roosevelt Room, just off the President's Oval Office at the White House. I was amazed by the horsepower on the other side of the table—not

only friends Don and G. Gordon Liddy (then in Treasury), and others from the agencies, but high-ranking White House figures Bud Krogh, Charles Colson and even John Erlichman attended parts of the meeting.

Don's assignment was to convince us that we had to devise our own version of a "Saturday Night Special" bill—else a far-worse version would be shoved down our throats by our enemies.

"You are merely fighting a delaying action," Don said.

"No," I replied, "we are fighting a holding action—holding what we've got. The pendulum of public opinion is already swinging away from the extreme that gave us the Gun Control Act."

I've discussed that meeting many times with Don, an NRA Life Member who "never dreamed" that NRA would eventually create ILA and begin to harness NRA's political and legislative power.

But suppose our side of the table had given in that day; suppose we had devised a "Saturday Night Special" bill (as the arms industry did in 1974).

If we had endorsed, or allowed to pass, such an "inevitable" law a quarter century ago, we certainly wouldn't still be fighting the same battle in 1997.

What guns and gun rights would be left to defend today?

Don't let Schumer or anyone else ever convince you a gun law is "inevitable."

Lobbying Effectively

December 10, 1997

Fortune magazine lists NRA as the sixth-most-effective lobby on Capitol Hill—because of the strength and support of grassroots members. Handgun Control Inc., which has relatively few active supporters outside the press, is rated No. 68.

The article in the December 8, 1997 *Fortune* is based on a survey of 2,200 members of Congress, Hill and White House staffers, lobbyists, and other Washington insiders. Because it tells *why* the leading groups are effective, it is "must" reading for anyone who hopes to influence either Congress or his county council.