

The National Rifle Association is an Easy Target for the Government and the Media

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With rare exceptions, most liberal pundits, late night TV hosts and standup comics have been castigating and ridiculing the NRA and its Executive Director Wayne LaPierre for recent statements Mr. LaPierre made about Bill Clinton. He charged that the President has accepted a certain amount of violence to further the President's gun-control agenda. He further went on to accuse the President of being responsible for the death of Northwestern University basketball coach, Ricky Birdsong.

Mr. LaPierre charged that Mr. Birdsong's killer, Ben Smith, was a felon who should have been prosecuted when he was caught trying to purchase a gun from a legitimate gun dealer. Why have laws that are not enforced by this administration, he asked. Why, indeed?

My original impression of the National Rifle Association was that it was an organization of "gun nuts." I also knew that the NRA had the most powerful lobby in Washington and in general, it was an organization that I certainly could never empathize with, given my aversion for all guns.

What changed my opinion was an interview by JFK, Jr. in *George* magazine of then NRA president, Marion Hammer, a grandmother of three. She didn't seem to fit my stereotype of a gun aficionado at all. She was a reasonable, articulate and credible woman who explained what the NRA stood for and its achievements.

I was particularly impressed to learn how progressive this organization has been in respect to women's issues. There are no "glass ceilings" in the NRA as women have been elected to the NRA Board of Directors as far back as 1948. Their slogan, "refuse to be a victim," is the theme behind the NRA's training and defense programs designed for women who feel threatened by crime and criminals.

Ms. Hammer stated that she is most proud of the Eddie Eagle Gun Safety program she initiated to teach youngsters the importance of safety around firearms. In addition, the organization sponsors competitions and is responsible for training law enforcement instructors who train thousands of police officers and sheriff's deputies every year. After researching the background of the NRA, I have come to believe that its membership is composed of millions of law-abiding, responsible citizens.

Still the demonization of the NRA continues and normally, I wouldn't be that concerned except for one little thing. It's a little something called the Second Amendment and the NRA is dedicated to protecting its existence.

I've said it before and I'll say it again. I hate guns. I'm terrified of them and I don't ever want to own one but there is a very good reason that the framers of the constitution included it in the Bill of Rights. It is there to protect Americans from an oppressive government. Like Mother Nature, our Constitution is nothing to fool around with and I was shocked when a certain piece of paper crossed my desk.

On it was a simple statement reporting that a joint resolution had been proposed in the House to repeal the Second Amendment. I thought it was a joke but I verified that House Resolution 438, had indeed been introduced on March 11, 1992 by Democrat New York Representative Major Owens. The bill is frightening in its brevity:

“H.R.438: A joint resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution of the United States repealing the Second Amendment to the Constitution”

I don't know what Major Owens had in mind but fortunately he was unsuccessful in passing this legislation. But why didn't this assault on our sacred Bill of Rights merit any media attention?

The headlines show madness is increasing in our society. A first grader kills another with a gun he found at home, a man goes berserk in Los Angeles and kindergartners are the victims and we are frantically seeking answers and a course of action. Mothers of victims have been organizing a million women march for May 14th in Washington, D.C. to demand more gun control.

I sympathize with these women and share their horror at the escalating number of children affected by gun violence. But please, don't try and convince me that any new law would have prevented the murders of their children. Gun control legislation has never affected criminal activity. It merely regulates the ownership of guns by law-abiding citizens. In fact, statistically, more lives are saved by guns than lost.

Last September, there was an incident in Centerreach, L.I. that could have turned lethal had it not been for the presence of a gun in the right hands. Lance Corporal Gregory Jean-Pierre, a black marine, and two white buddies went into an all-white pub and were chased out and beaten by an angry mob of crazed racists. The chase ended when the friend reached his nearby business, got his rifle and shot a warning shot over the heads of the mob beating Jean-Pierre and his other friend.

"If I hadn't fired, they would've been killed," said Peter Wolfinger, 27, of Centerreach. "They just wouldn't stop. It was crazy, really crazy."

One year after Australia, using lists of licensed owners, confiscated over 600,000 guns from its citizens, a study shows that criminal activity and assaults against women and the elderly increased dramatically. Armed robberies were up 44 percent. What a surprise!

In the 1963 children's film, *Flipper*, it wasn't considered controversial to show a young boy with his rifle but today a scene like that would be eliminated. What has changed in our society that weapons have become deadly in the hands of our youth? Could Hollywood be responsible?

More and more, villainy is glamorized in films like *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* with guns being the weapon of choice. I've seen so many movies where the star is shown assembling the gleaming metal parts of a high-tech gun, each piece snapping sharply into place with a dramatic thud and then used to mow down the opposition.

To a normal teenager who is raised in a functional family unit the gun remains merely a weapon on the screen but when a teen comes from a ravaged neighborhood with little parental guidance and burdened with neglect, that weapon becomes a desirable tool to attack his circumstances.

The movie industry refuses to take responsibility for the impacts of its glorification of the gun but don't expect this administration to criticize it. It's so much easier to target the 125 year old NRA than to reprimand an industry that contributes generously to its campaign.