



Writer's Block

Guns: What Others Do

BY WILLIAM KERR
For the Press & Dakotan

In regards to the gun issue, there is something that is frustrating to me: Neither side of the issue gives any credence to the measures that have been more successful in other countries than either what we now have, or even than what our leaders are now proposing. At least that is my impression, as I have neither seen in print nor heard via radio or TV any reference to the ideas that have worked elsewhere in England, France, Germany and other rich countries of the world.

We seem again to be acting as a nation, both our leaders and our citizens as a whole, like teenagers. We are sure that our ideas are the best for us and we won't even listen to anyone else, and do our negotiating (fighting) only about those we dream up. Like the idea of arming our school staff and teachers! Put more guns within the possible reach of any teenager who loses it mentally and wants to kill?

And, contrary to a recent editorial printed in this newspaper, we cannot keep handguns out of the hands of bad people. We can, however, keep them out of the hands of the rest of us (and the stores that supply them) so the bad people have a much tougher time stealing them from either the police or the military. And, if you think you are protecting your home with them, think on this: I have read many times quotes of police officials who said that if you keep a handgun in your home, the most likely person to be shot with it is one the inhabitants, not intruders.

When Lois and I were in France for several weeks — and Germany and Belgium for some days each (on our dream vacation in 1976) — we really enjoyed the feeling that we were safe on the streets where the police carried only night sticks for weapons. They did not need guns. The biggest threat we experienced was a prostitute who followed us for a block when we were walking from a train station to our hotel in Paris, trying to get me to leave my companion and join her!

As best I remember, hunting weapons, rifles (also for militia use) and shotguns were registered and hand



William KERR

guns and machine gun-like assault weapons were strictly forbidden. The big difference, of course, is that rifles and shotguns (even sawed-off shotguns) are harder to hide than handguns. The proof of how well that works is that, if memory serves, we (U.S., other than police) are still killing more people with handguns than all of the rest of the rich countries put together.

With our latest horror of school children being killed with a machine gun-like assault weapon that is available in about half of our Walmart stores in mind (*The Atlantic* recently referred to Walmart as "America's No. 1 gun store"), I think we sorely need to consider the methods used by other countries to reduce the killings in our country. (Who in the world, besides a soldier or policeman, needs an automatic machine-gun like assault weapon with a 30 round capacity?)

One problem we face is that it may take quite a few years to get the vast majority of the estimated 300,000,000 unregistered handguns now in the hands of the public into the hands of the police and destroyed if

we go the route of forbidding handguns and automatic machine gun-like assault weapons to private citizens. But even then, as more and more are turned in or taken from private citizens, fewer and fewer will be available to those who might lose it mentally and try to kill, or to criminals breaking into our homes and stealing handguns if present.

According to the Jan. 19 *Press & Dakotan*, there are now 1,138 more households or businesses in Yankton County likely to contain a legally registered handgun than there were in 2009. We had only 168 household break-ins and only four handguns reported stolen during those same three years, according to local law enforcement. We are fortunate to live in an area where we have 99 percent law-abiding citizens and good policing.

One of the things that leads us to our unhelpful decisions is the idea that we can find a way to please everyone. We have to look at the possibility that to please everyone, and still maintain a safe environment to live in, will not work with our present gun laws that make it easy to obtain handguns legally, which makes it much easier for criminals to find handguns to steal.

ing a spontaneous, never-to-be-recreated moment where anything might happen and sometimes did. It was an act of artistic daring.

The key word in all of that being, "was." Someone attending her first concert in 2013 would likely be appalled at the idea of accepting anything less than a note-perfect recreation of the audio — and/or video — experience. Which is how you get incidents like the one an engineer friend of mine once told me about. While working a live awards show, he had to use a machine to fix in real time the voice of a certain beautiful, but talent-challenged, singer. And this was in the 1990s.

So the furor over Beyonce feels at once vaguely amusing, tediously overwrought and about a generation late.

Once upon a time, we sang the virtues of authenticity. "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing," went one song title. "Whatcha See Is Whatcha Get," went another. But those songs — and virtues — are decades out of date. Beyonce did not create the new Zeitgeist, she is simply a child thereof — and if her performance was an implicit untruth, well, the same can be said of much of our arts, sports, news media and certainly our politics, rife with talking points and message discipline but void of simple respect for your or my intelligence.

Lies, implicit and explicit, are woven into life to a degree that would have made a 1940s Hollywood press agent grin — and stunned a reporter who once kept Jack Kennedy's extramarital secrets. And someone calls it an "outrage" that Beyonce lip-synced "The Star-Spangled Banner"?

What's outrageous is that authenticity is disappearing from whole sectors of public life like condensation from a pane of glass. And that did not begin last week. It's been happening for years. It's been happening all around.

With apologies to Beyonce: Oh, say, can you see?

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children playing on Saturday and Sunday. Please welcome players and their families to the community!

We also have volunteer opportunities available to help with the tournament, which is taking place at the Kiwanis/4H Building (Alcoa Ice Arena). Please contact Rhonda Schenkel at 605-660-4292 for information on volunteering and/or how you can support our young Miracle Hockey players!

Please visit our website for more information and a schedule of games: www.yanktonice.org.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Immigration's Moment Is Here

THE MIAMI HERALD (Jan. 30): The rapidly changing mood in Washington on immigration, particularly evident in the willingness of prominent Republicans like Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida to challenge die-hard opponents of reform within their own party, represents a significant milestone in the long fight to ensure fairness for everyone living within America's borders.

Rarely has the power of the vote on a divisive national issue been so evident and so immediate. And so useful. The turnaround comes as a direct consequence of a quadrennial election in which President Barack Obama won a second term after capturing 71 percent of the Hispanic vote, forcing immigration opponents to confront reality.

As Sen. John McCain acknowledged recently, "We are losing dramatically the Hispanic vote, which we think should be ours." Welcome to the future, sir. Immigration advocates have been insisting all along that the issue is one of fairness, given that undocumented immigrants perform a vital service by taking low-wage jobs that keep the economy humming but which many Americans shun.

In good times, they provide cheap manpower for building booms. They toil on our farms, clean our yards and homes, wash our cars and our clothes, even look after our children and elderly parents — but are relegated to the shadows because of unrealistic immigration laws that deny them a chance to move up the ladder.

This week, the fairness argument and the political argument finally came together as eight senators of both parties — including Sen. Rubio and Sen. McCain — offered a joint plan to reform immigration, with President Obama applauding their plan and offering his own blueprint to bring 11 million undocumented residents out of the shadows.

The willingness to work in a bipartisan fashion is encouraging. It's the way Congress should work. But even though the moment is ripe for change, this is far from a done deal. The tactic of endless hearings and procedural wrangling almost killed health care reform and will doubtlessly be tried again to kill an immigration overhaul.

Supporters of change must be prepared to overcome this likely obstacle. Among the thorniest issues will be enforcement, with Sen. Rubio among those saying that a failure to focus on keeping our borders safe would be a deal-breaker.

Clearly, enforcement is important. No one wants a repetition of what occurred in the 1980s, when the last immigration overhaul led to a new tide of immigrants hoping to take advantage of relaxed laws.

But enforcement advocates must be realistic. There is no way to seal the borders hermetically. Already, net immigration from Mexico has been around zero for several years, while deportations have soared and the border is protected as never before. How much is enough?

In the weeks and months ahead, there will be opportunity to assess the proposals in Congress. For the moment, it is important to note that the bipartisan ideas put forward propose a sweeping reform instead of the slower step-by-step approach that would have been far less effective. This alone is a victory for reform advocates.

So is the insistence on a path to citizenship, as opposed to mere "legalization," which is tantamount to permanent second-class status. If weak enforcement is a deal-breaker for some, a failure to include a path to citizenship is a deal-breaker for others.

Polls consistently reflect public support for reforming the nation's immigration laws. Congress, time to move on it.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

■ Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

■ In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the **PRESS & DAKOTAN** will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

■ Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

■ Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Thursday, Jan. 31, the 31st day of 2013. There are 334 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Jan. 31, 1963, during the Civil War, the First South Carolina Volunteers, an all-black Union regiment composed of former slaves, was mustered into federal service at Beaufort, S.C.

On this date: In 1606, Guy Fawkes, convicted of treason for his part in the "Gunpowder Plot" against the English Parliament and King James I, was executed. In 1797, composer Franz Schubert was born in Vienna.

In 1865, Gen. Robert E. Lee was named general-in-chief of all the Confederate armies.

In 1917, during World War I, Germany served notice it was beginning a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare.

In 1929, revolutionary Leon Trotsky and his family were expelled from the Soviet Union.

In 1944, during World War II, U.S. forces began a successful invasion of Kwajalein Atoll and other parts of the Japanese-held Marshall Islands.

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman announced he had ordered development of the hydrogen bomb.

In 1958, the United States entered the Space Age with its first successful launch of a satellite into orbit, Explorer I.

In 1961, NASA launched Ham the Chimp aboard a Mercury-Redstone rocket from Cape Canaveral; Ham was recovered safely from the Atlantic Ocean following his 16 1/2-minute suborbital flight.

In 1971, astronauts Alan Shepard, Edgar Mitchell and Stuart Roosa blasted off aboard Apollo 14 on a mission to the moon.

In 1990, McDonald's Corp. opened its first fast-food restaurant in Moscow.

In 2000, an Alaska Airlines jet crashed into the Pacific Ocean off Port Huenueme, Calif., killing all 88 people aboard.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair

met at the White House; Bush said he would welcome a second U.N. resolution on Iraq but only if it led to the prompt disarming of Saddam Hussein. Pushing for a new resolution, Blair called confronting Iraq "a test of the international community."

Five years ago: President George W. Bush, speaking at the Nevada Policy Research Institute, said he would not jeopardize security gains in Iraq by withdrawing U.S. forces too quickly. A drifter pleaded guilty to murdering a young woman who'd gone missing while hiking in the north Georgia mountains; Gary Michael Hilton was swiftly sentenced to life in prison in the death of Meredith Emerson.

One year ago: Republican Mitt Romney routed Newt Gingrich in the Florida primary, rebounding from an earlier defeat. Retired Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, who'd led the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia for more than 15 years, died at 88.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Carol Channing is 92. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Ernie Banks is 82. Composer Philip Glass is 76. Former Interior Secretary James Watt is 75. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands is 75. Actor Stuart Margolin is 73. Actress Jessica Walter is 72. Former U.S. Rep. Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., is 72. Blues singer-musician Charlie Musselwhite is 69. Actor Glynn Turman is 67. Baseball Hall-of-Famer Nolan Ryan is 66. Singer-musician Harry Wayne Casey (KC and the Sunshine Band) is 62. Rock singer Johnny Rotten is 57. Actress Kelly Lynch is 54. Actor Anthony LaPaglia is 54. Singer-musician Lloyd Cole is 52. Rock musician Jeff Hanneman (Slayer) is 49. Rock musician Al Jourgensen (Jesus Jones) is 47. Actress Minnie Driver is 43. Actress Portia de Rossi is 40. Actor-comedian Bobby Moynihan is 36. Actress Kerry Washington is 36. Singer Justin Timberlake is 32. Folk-rock singer-musician Marcus Mumford is 26.

Thought for Today: "Happiness is not having what you want, but wanting what you have." — Rabbi Hyman Judah Schachtel, American theologian, author and educator (1907-1990).

FROM THE BIBLE

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe. Hebrews 12:28. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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Published Daily Monday-Saturday

Periodicals postage paid at Yankton, South Dakota, under the act of March 3, 1979.

Weekly Dakotian established June 6, 1861. Yankton Daily Press and Dakotian established April 26, 1875.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078.

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YOUR LETTERS

Don't Miss Hockey Action

Julie Perakslis, Yankton

Board Member, Yankton Area Ice Association

The Yankton Area Ice Association and Miracle Hockey is proud to host a Squirt "B" Tournament in Yankton this weekend. Squirt-level boys and girls hockey involves youth ages 9-11. We have six teams attending this tournament. The teams are coming from Omaha, Ames, Sioux Center, Spirit Lake, Aberdeen and Rushmore. There will be more than 100