

Why Did it Have to be... Guns?

by L. Neil Smith

Over the past 30 years, I've been paid to write almost two million words, every one of which, sooner or later, came back to the issue of guns and gun-ownership. Naturally, I've thought about the issue a lot, and it has *always* determined the way I vote.

People accuse me of being a single-issue writer, a single-issue thinker, and a single-issue voter, but it isn't true. What I've chosen, in a world where there's never enough time and energy, is to focus on the one political issue which most clearly and unmistakably demonstrates what any politician—or political philosophy—is made of, right down to the creamy liquid center.

Make no mistake: all politicians—even those ostensibly on the side of guns and gun ownership—hate the issue and anyone, like me, who insists on bringing it up. They hate it because it's an X-ray machine. It's a Vulcan mind-meld. It's the ultimate test to which any politician—or political philosophy—can be put.

If a politician isn't perfectly comfortable with the idea of his average constituent, any man, woman, or responsible child, walking into a hardware store and paying cash—for any rifle, shotgun, handgun, machinegun, *anything*—without producing ID or signing one scrap of paper, he isn't your *friend* no matter what he tells you.

If he isn't genuinely enthusiastic about his average constituent stuffing that weapon into a purse or pocket or tucking it under a coat and walking home without asking anybody's permission, he's a four-flusher, no matter what he claims.

What his attitude—toward your ownership and use of weapons—conveys is his real attitude about *you*. And if he doesn't trust you, then why in the name of John Moses Browning should you trust him?

If he doesn't want you to have the means of defending your life, do you want him in a position to control it?

If he makes excuses about obeying a law he's sworn to uphold and defend—the highest law of the land, the Bill of Rights—do you want to entrust him with *anything*?

If he ignores you, sneers at you, complains about you, or defames you, if he calls you names only he thinks are evil—like "Constitutionalist"—when you insist that he account for himself, hasn't he betrayed his oath, isn't he unfit to hold office, and doesn't he really belong in *jail*?

Sure, these are all leading questions. They're the questions that led me to the issue of guns and gun ownership as the clearest and most unmistakable demonstration of what any given politician—or political philosophy—is really made of.

He may lecture you about the dangerous weirdos out there who shouldn't have a gun—but what does that have to do with you? Why in the name of John Moses Browning should you be made to suffer for the misdeeds of others? Didn't you lay aside the infantile notion of group punishment when you left public school—or the military? Isn't it an essentially European notion, anyway—Prussian, maybe—and certainly not what America was supposed to be all about?

And if there are dangerous weirdos out there, does it make sense to deprive you of the means of protecting yourself from them? Forget about those other people, those dangerous weirdos, this is about *you*, and it has been, all along.

Try it yourself: if a politician won't trust you, why should you trust him? If he's a man—and you're not—what does his lack of trust tell you about his real attitude toward women? If "he" happens to be a *woman*, what makes her so perverse that she's eager to render her fellow women helpless on the mean and seedy streets her policies helped create? Should you believe her when she says she wants to help you by imposing some infantile group health care program on you at the point of the kind of gun she doesn't want you to have?

On the other hand—or the other party—should you believe anything politicians say who claim they stand for freedom, but drag their feet and make excuses about repealing limits on your right to own and carry weapons? What does this tell you about their real motives for ignoring voters and ramming through one infantile group trade agreement after another with other countries?

Makes voting simpler, doesn't it? You don't have to study every issue—health care, international trade—all you have to do is use this X-ray machine, this Vulcan mind-meld, to get beyond their empty words and find out how politicians really feel. About you. And that, of course, is why they hate it.

And that's why I'm accused of being a single-issue writer, thinker, and voter.

But it isn't true, is it?