

GUN CONTROL AS CLASS WARFARE

by Rosemary Fury

Opponents of gun control are in big trouble. They will lose the battle against gun control unless they drastically change their tactics. There are two fundamental reasons for this impending defeat. First, the liberal/conservative split over gun control is likely to give way to a *class* consensus in favor of restrictions on weapon ownership. Second, gun control opponents have failed to enlist the support of those people most injured by such legislation.

For decades, the debate over gun control has been divided along standard political lines of left vs. right. Advocates of gun control have surprisingly gained the support of the liberal political base with a conservative-sounding argument: i.e., restrictions on handguns will reduce violent crime, thus aiding the cause of "law and order." Their opponents have appealed largely to a conservative audience with God-and-Country rhetoric about our "Constitutional Rights." The popular conception of the issue is one of a political struggle. As we shall see, such a conception is dangerously flawed.

Gun control got its start in this country as a racist measure to disarm Blacks after the Civil War—to prevent them from taking revenge on their former owners. Restrictions on weapon ownership are still racist today. Blacks and minorities suffer at the hands of both racist groups and redneck cops. The Black Panthers formed in the 1960s specifically to counter police brutality in Oakland County, California. Studies show that minorities are disproportionately the victims of authority, whether it's Mexicans drowned in Texas, Cubans and Haitians beaten up in Miami, Blacks gunned down in Detroit, or Orientals abused in Seattle. When courts turn a blind eye at brutal police departments, denying gun ownership to minorities is tantamount to denying them self-defense.

It is also true that Blacks and other minorities constitute a large percentage of America's poor, and it is the *poor* who stand to lose the most from gun control. Rich people can afford to live outside dangerous urban areas and maintain well-armed, high-paid suburban police departments to protect their lives and property. But for the poor person without the means to flee the ghetto, handguns are the cheapest, most effective form of self-defense available. A couple hundred dollars (or less) is a small price to pay for the security of one's family and possessions.

Gun control advocates argue that handgun ownership damages the ability of inner-city police forces to protect their residents. But to the ghetto-dweller, as we have seen, the police look more like enemies than defenders. Urban police departments are not paid to protect poor people. They're paid to protect local merchants and their property, and they're paid (unofficially) to protect various organized crime operations. Understaffed and unresponsive, the police can't possibly provide adequate service to all their citizens. Under gun control, big-city residents would not only be unable to defend themselves against organized criminals, but would also be incapable of helping to defend their friends and neighbors.

Gun control advocates loudly call for disarming average Americans, but do they want to disarm the police? Certainly not! *Their law-and-order rhetoric is just thinly disguised support for Big Brother.* In fact, they look forward to a society where the government has total control over the population. Under such conditions, no one could step outside official bounds without special permission. Gun control would give the police a free hand in abusing people, while the ruling class could compel the masses to conform to their wishes.

While gun control opponents are quick to proclaim the importance of an armed populace to our national defense, they overlook the importance of gun ownership as a deterrent to oppression by *our own government.* High taxes, restrictions on travel, government surveillance, business regulations, etc., are making domestic slaves of all of us. All that stands between our present narrow freedoms and total bureaucratic control is the determination of Americans to resist repression. Traditional ways of controlling government (elec-

tions, political pressure, etc.) have become increasingly ineffective. Gun ownership helps draw a bottom line beyond which authorities tread at their own risk.

Some people have a lower tolerance for repression than others. Tax resisters, Black Panthers, environmental activists, and others have already hit their bottom line, and have used the force of arms to repel the invading state. While they have suffered for their defiance, they still send an important warning signal to the bureaucrats, thus making life a little safer for the rest of us. Without gun ownership, there would be no *ultimate* check on the tax collectors, conscriptors, and regulators that populate our federal government.

A common argument leveled by advocates of gun control is that handguns are most often used in domestic disputes, where family quarrels end with gunshots. There is no disputing the statistics. However, the conclusions drawn from them are highly vulnerable. Proponents of gun control assume the desirability of limiting gun usage in domestic disputes. Do we really want to do that? "If it saves lives, then it's worth it," the line goes. But are these lives *worth saving*?

Women have been the victims of domestic abuse for centuries. Because of our relatively weaker physical stature, we have been virtually enslaved by men (women are still considered property in many of the world's cultures). Handguns are the great equalizer. More and more cases have come to the courts where women have "murdered" their abusive husbands. Gun control advocates deplore this, but why shouldn't we defend ourselves against such abuse? Why should the lives of violent bullies be spared? So that they can continue to destroy the lives of the defenseless? Gun control would make it easier for wife-beating and child abuse to continue unchecked. I would rather see such brutes dead than see women and children with no alternative to submission.

Gun ownership is vital right. Handguns are an essential form of self-defense for the lower class of society that doesn't have the personal armies and suburban fortresses of the upper class. Private gun ownership serves as a powerful check on police and other pigs who terrorize minorities, on the expansionist desires of foreign governments as well as the encroachments of our own state, and on the ability of men to systematically abuse and exploit women and children. Gun ownership gives people the real option of resisting an authority that becomes too oppressive to bear. As such, it is a valuable tool for ensuring personal freedom.

In short, gun control is *class* legislation. It is an attempt by the elite rulers of society to disarm the weaker class and make them submissive to their will. In the near future, leading liberals and conservatives will likely set aside their minor political differences for the benefit of their combined class interest, and enact legislation restricting the ownership of weapons of self-defense. They will succeed in this, too, unless opponents of gun control expand their base of support to include the traditionally liberal constituency of the underclass: the poor, minorities, and women. These groups have the most to lose from gun control, and the most to gain from the right to unrestricted gun ownership.

Published (prophetically) in 1983 by Loompanics Unlimited

Loompanics went out of business in January, 2006.
Paladin Press obtained rights to 40+ titles. Details here:
archive.org/details/Loompanics_Catalog_2003/mode/2up

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Rosemary Fury is an editor of *The Spark* (P. O. Box 528, Port Townsend, WA 98368), a newsletter of contemporary anarchist thought. It's about time gun rights activists looked toward anarchist and libertarian ideas—they alone seem to have a complete picture of what's going on with the conservative (Bush, Dukemajian) and liberal (Metzenbaum, Kennedy) alliance to disarm all non-statists.