

Give It to Them Straight

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The biggest mistake we make is failing to take the moral high ground on our issue, and letting our enemies define the terms.

THEY SAY: "We'd be better off if no one had guns."

WE SAY: "You can never succeed at that, criminals will always get guns." (FLAW: The implication here is that if you COULD succeed, it would be a reasonable plan.)

WE SHOULD SAY: "So, you want to institute a system where the weak and elderly are at the mercy of the strong, the lone are at the mercy of the gang. You want to give violent criminals a government guarantee that citizens are disarmed. Sorry, that's unacceptable. Better that we should require every citizen to carry a gun."

THEY SAY: "Those assault rifles have no sporting purpose. You don't need a 30-round magazine for hunting deer -- they're only for killing people."

WE SAY: "I compete in DCM High Power with my AR-15. You need a large-capacity magazine for their course of fire. My SKS is a fine deer rifle, and I've never done anything to give my government reason not to trust me, blah, blah, blah." (FLAW: You have implicitly conceded that it is OK to ban any gun with no sporting use. And eventually they can replace your sporting arms with arcade-game substitutes.)

WE SHOULD SAY: "Your claim that 'they're only for killing people' is imprecise. A gas chamber or electric chair is designed for killing people, and these devices obviously serve different functions than guns. To be precise, a high capacity military-type rifle or handgun is designed for CONFLICT. When I need to protect myself and my freedom, I want the most reliable, most durable, highest capacity weapon possible. The only thing hunting and target shooting have to do with freedom is that they're good practice."

THEY SAY: "If we pass this CCW law, it will be like the Wild West, with shoot-outs all the time for fender-benders, in bars, etc. We need to keep guns off the streets. If doing so saves just one life, it will be worth it."

WE SAY: "Studies have shown blah blah blah." (flaw: You have implied that if studies showed CCW laws equaled more heat-of-passion shooting, CCW should be illegal.)

WE SHOULD SAY: "Although no state has experienced what you are describing, that's not important. What is important is our freedom. If saving lives is more important than anything else, why don't we throw out the Fifth amendment? We have the technology to administer an annual truth serum session to the entire population. We'd catch the criminals and mistaken arrest would be a thing of the past. How does that sound?"

THEY SAY: "I don't see what the big deal is about a five day waiting period."

WE SAY: "It doesn't do any good, criminals don't wait five days, it's a waste of resources blah blah blah." (FLAW: You have implied that if waiting periods DID reduce crime, they would be a good idea.)

WHAT WE SHOULD SAY: "How about a 24-hour cooling-off period with a government review board before the news is reported? Wouldn't that prevent lives from being ruined, e.g. Richard Jewell? And the fact that this law applies to people who ALREADY own a handgun tells me that it's not about crime prevention, it's about harassment. Personally, I want to live in a free society, not a 'safe' one with the government as chief nanny."

THEY SAY: "In 1776, citizens had muskets. No one ever envisioned these deadly AK-47s. I suppose you think we should all have atomic bombs."

WE SAY: "Uh, well, uh . . ."

WE SHOULD SAY: "Actually, the Founders discussed this very issue - it's in the Federalist Papers. They wanted the citizens to have the same guns as were the issue weapons of soldiers in a modern infantry. Soldiers in 1776 were each issued muskets, but not the large field pieces with exploding shells. In 1996, soldiers are issued M16s, M249s, etc. but not howitzers and atomic bombs. Furthermore, according to your logic, the laws governing freedom of the press are only valid for newspapers whose presses are hand-operated and use fixed type. After all, no one in 1776 foresaw offset printing or electricity, let alone TV and satellite transmission."

THEY SAY: "We require licenses on cars, but the powerful NRA screams bloody murder if anyone ever suggests licensing these weapons of mass destruction."

WE SAY: Nothing, usually, and just sit there looking dumb.

WE SHOULD SAY: "You know, driving is a luxury, where firearms ownership is a right secured by the Constitution. But let's put that aside for a moment. It's interesting you compared guns and vehicles. Here in the U.S. you can AT ANY AGE go into any state and buy as many motorcycles, cars, or trucks of any size as you want, and you don't need to do anything if you don't use them on public property. If you DO want to use them on public property, you can get a license at age 16. This license is good in all 50 states. NO waiting periods, no background checks, nothing. If we treated guns like cars, a fourteen-year-old could go into any state and legally buy handguns, machine guns, cannons, whatever, cash and carry, and shoot them all with complete legality on private property. And at age 16 he could get a state license good anywhere in the country to shoot these guns on public property."

Final comment, useful with most all arguments:

YOU SAY: "You know, I'm amazed at how little you care about your grandchildren. I would have thought they meant more to you than anything."

THEY SAY: "Huh?"

YOU SAY: "Well, passing this proposal won't have a big immediate effect. I mean, in the next couple of years, neither Bill Clinton nor Newt Gingrich is going to open up internment camps like Roosevelt did fifty-odd years ago. But think of your worst nightmare of a political leader. Isn't it POSSIBLE that a person like that MIGHT be in control here some time in the next 30, 40, or 50 years, with 51% of the Congress and 51% of the Senate behind him? If that does happen, do you REALLY want your grandchildren to have been stripped of their final guarantee of freedom? And do you really want them to have been stripped of it BY YOU?"