

# Why all true citizens need their own guns

Jun 7 2006 **Birmingham Post** (<http://icbirmingham.icnetwork.co.uk/birminghampost/>)

*Shootings continue daily and knife crime has reached epidemic proportion. Here Dr Sean Gabb from the Libertarian Alliance explains why he believes we need more guns to make us safer*

The current debate on armed crime is depressingly predictable. Everyone agrees something must be done.

Just about everyone agrees this something must include laws against the sale or carrying or simple possession of weapons. More controls on weapons, the argument goes, the fewer weapons on the street: therefore lower levels of armed crime.

Now, this whole line of thinking is nonsense. We already have some of the strictest controls in the developed world on the carrying of weapons.

We also have some of the highest levels of armed crime. Indeed, we are reaching the point where we shall need to show proof of identity before buying knives and forks.

If we want to do something about armed crime that has any chance of working, we need to rethink our entire approach. I would suggest that, instead of trying to remove weapons from society, the authorities should allow us to keep weapons for defence and to use them for defence.

I am not talking about the right to carry baseball bats or pepper sprays, or even various kinds of knife. These have their uses for defence - but not against a determined criminal who may be younger and faster and more experienced in close fighting. I am talking about the right to arm ourselves with guns - and to use these where necessary to protect our lives and property.

This is not a new approach. It is, rather, a return to the old policy of our country. Until the end of the 19th century, anyone in Britain could walk into a gun shop and, without showing any licence or any form of identification, buy as many guns and as much ammunition as he wanted, and could carry loaded guns in public, and could use these for selfdefence. The law not only allowed this, but even expected it. We were encouraged to take primary responsibility for our own protection. The function of the police was simply to assist.

We should go back to this old approach. We should go back because it is a question of fundamental human rights. The right to keep and bear arms for defence is as fundamental as the rights to freedom of speech and association.

Anyone who is denied this right - to keep and bear arms - is to some extent enslaved. That person has lost control over his life. He is dependent on the State for protection.

The default reaction to this argument is to cry out in horror and ask if I want a society where every criminal has a gun, and where every domestic argument ends in a gun battle?

The short answer is no. The longer answer is to say that more guns do not inevitably mean more killings. There is no evidence that they do. What passes for evidence is little more than an excuse for not trusting ordinary people with control over their own lives.

Take armed crime, both professional and domestic. Britain had no gun controls before 1920, and very low rates of armed crime. Today, Switzerland has few controls, and little armed crime. Those parts of the US where guns are most common are generally the least dangerous. There is no necessary correlation between guns and armed crime.

Focusing on professional crime, gun control is plainly a waste of effort. Criminals will always get hold of guns if they want them. At most, it needs a knowledge of the right pubs to visit.

Plainly, the maniacs who carried out the recent drive-by shooting in Manchester do not seem to have read the Firearms Acts 1920-97. They do not seem to have noticed that most guns are forbidden, and that the few that are allowed must be licensed. All control really does is to disarm the honest public, and let the armed criminals roam through them like a fox through chickens.

Indeed, free ownership of guns may often reduce armed crime. The current round of official gungrabbing began after the Hungerford massacre back in August 1987. But the wrong lesson was learned then. Just consider what might have happened had someone else beside Michael Ryan been carrying a gun in Hungerford High Street. He might have been cut down before firing more than a few shots. As it is, he killed nearly 20 people before armed police could be brought in to stop the shootings.

Think of the burglaries, rapes and other crimes that might never happen if the victims were armed, and therefore able to deal with their aggressors on equal terms. Anyone can learn to fire a gun. And nothing beats a bullet. As the old saying goes: "God made men equal, and Smith and Wesson make damn sure it stays that way."

But let us move away from armed burglars and rapists and the occasional lone psychopath. We need guns to protect us from the State. So far from protecting us, the State is the main aggressor.

A low estimate puts the number of civilians murdered by states this century at 56 million - and millions of these were children. In all cases, genocide was preceded by gun control. How far would the Holocaust have got if the Jews in Nazi Germany had been able to shoot back? How about the Armenians? The Kulaks? The Chinese bourgeoisie? The Bosnians? In all previous societies, guns and freedom have gone together. I doubt if our own is any different.

I conclude with our own society. Our authorities have so far done nothing to disarm violent criminals. There is nothing they can do in the future to disarm them. This being so, can you seriously agree with the argument that you should be disarmed, and therefore powerless to defend yourself and your loved ones against the armed street trash who are beginning to turn this country upside down?

Laugh at me. Call me mad. Call me evil. But just remember me when you or your loved ones are being raped, or mugged, or dragged off never to be seen again.

n Dr Sean Gabb is the Director of the Libertarian Alliance. It exists to put the radical case for freedom in social, economic and political matters. Its web address is [www.libertarian.co.uk](http://www.libertarian.co.uk).