



Is this the future of the Second Amendment? Workers at Kearny Smelter & Refining Co. in Kearny, New Jersey, melt confiscated and "surplus" firearms. Are your guns next? Photo: AP/Wide World

SAVE

Selling Out The Constitution

216 Congressmen Assault Our Right To Bear Arms

by Dwight Swift

YOUR GUNS

Anyone who has read American history is familiar with the insightful arguments our Founding Fathers used to craft the legal bedrock of this country. With the brilliance of Washington, Jefferson and Madison in mind, *SOF* thought you might like to read the astute reasoning used by today's members of the U.S. House of Representatives when they voted to restrict the Second Amendment to the Constitution and pass H.R. 4296 "Assault Weapons Ban" on 5 May 1994.

Rep. Robert Menendez, D-N.J.: "Mr. Speaker, today we are each asked a simple question: Do you think we should allow the sale of assault weapons to continue unchecked? Make no mistake, a 'no' vote today means that you think it's just fine to go ahead and keep flooding the streets with these guns by the thousands. A 'no' vote means, 'Yes, I saw the news last night, I saw that child's life was snuffed out by a stray bullet from an UZI. But you know, they are entitled to those UZIs.' Well, Mr. Speaker, I think

most of America says they are not.

"Our country has become a battlefield, and semiautomatic assault weapons have become the armaments of choice. Far too many people have been killed or crippled for us to pretend that these weapons are merely for sportsmen and hunters.

"Today we are asked to decide whether the blood in the streets is simply an acceptable loss in defense of liberty, or an intolerable slaughter of our neighbors and families. Who do you think will thank you for de-

fending this slaughter? — your version of liberty? Say no to the killing. Say no to weapons designed for murder. Say yes to life — vote yes on the assault weapons ban.”

Typical of gun grabbers throughout the country, Rep. Menendez attempts to appeal to sentiment with a speech that's long on emotion but conspicuous in its lack of facts or specifics.

Rep. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., took a different tack that showed he was not as concerned with disarming law-abiding citizens or addressing crime, as he was with putting gun lobbyists out of work:

“Mr. Speaker, Congress has a choice today on the assault weapons ban. Members of Congress can stand with the gun lobby, or they can stand with the police. The well-funded National Rifle Association lobbyists got up this morning determined to save their jobs by threatening members of Congress that a vote for the weapons ban would endanger their political lives. But thousands of men and women also got up this morning, put their badges on, their police uniforms on and their lives on the line to protect our families and our communities. These policemen are begging Congress to help take these combat weapons off the street and out of the hands of the mentally unstable, the criminally violent, and the drug gangs.

“So, Mr. Speaker, I say to my colleagues, ‘Take your pick, members of Congress. Protect the political lives of gun lobbyists or the lives of policemen across America.’”

“History will undoubtedly view today's debate with incredulity if we fail. A nation awash in violent crime watches as its national legislature cannot bring itself to prohibit 19 of the most dangerous weapons available. Let us hope Congress has the courage today to take this small step toward making American families safer.”

From the misinformed we go straight to the clueless:

Rep. Romano Mazzoli, D-Ky.: “Another argument I have heard is the shrouds and the flash suppressors and the pistol grips and folding stocks, that they are really only cosmetic additions to the weapons. At the full committee I asked that very question of the chairman of the committee,

‘... do they have some substantive facility for the people who would use them for wrong purposes?’ In fact, they do have a use for wrong purposes: You can fire more quickly, you can do more damage with these features than without.”

Rep. James Traficant Jr., D-Ohio: “Congress is getting phone calls. People are saying, ‘Vote no, vote no,’ from good Americans who believe Congress will ultimately take away their guns.

“As a former sheriff, let me remind members today that Congress is getting no phone calls from the graves of victims in cemeteries all over America.

“Mario Andretti cannot drive his Indianapolis 500 race car on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and you do not need a machine gun with a grenade launcher and a bayonet to kill a rabbit.”

Traficant and Mazzoli missed the point. It is not illegal to possess an Indy race car — only to drive it on the interstate. Grenade launchers and machine guns are already separately regulated; the 19 firearms being banned are semiautomatic rifles identical in function to many hunting arms. We can only puzzle at Rep. Mazzoli and ask him how one can increase the rate of fire of any of the firearms on the ban list by adding a collapsible stock or flash suppressor.

Rep. Butler Derrick, D-S.C.: “These weapons are the macho symbol of lawlessness. More and more the lawless employ them. It is clear what place these weapons have in our society: It is a place of self-destruction.

“Vote to ban these tools of anarchy. If we do not, we enshrine this violence in our culture.”

Rep. Tim Roemer, D-Ind.: “It is unthinkable that in our society, we continue to allow citizens to walk the streets with guns that have grenade

launchers, flash suppressors, and bayonet mounts. What legitimate recreational purpose could these characteristics possibly serve?”

Many felt that unlike offensive, yet protected speech, weapons must have some government-defined redeeming value to fall under constitutional protection; well, the Second Amendment is not about duck hunting or recreational use and there have been no recorded crimes where criminals used rifle-mounted bayonets.

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Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga.: “Mr. Speaker, there is no legitimate reason for any individual to own an UZI, an AK-47 or a TEC-9. These are the vicious instruments of war, the implements of death.”

Rep. John Porter, R-Ill.: “These are weapons with no hunting, sporting, or other legitimate purpose and for which there is no reason for anyone to own except

to aid in the commission of crime.”

Rep. David Skaggs, D-Colo.: “The legislation before us today will begin to take off the streets the most deadly of all firearms — military-style assault weapons designed for no other purpose than to kill human beings quickly, and in large numbers.”

Skaggs' argument is based on the fallacy that criminals obey the law. Military-style rifles are no more or less deadly than non-military rifles of similar caliber. Semiauto military style firearms are no more designed to kill people than any other semiauto firearm.

Derrick: “Assault weapons are used by criminals, not hunters or sport shooters. The sole purpose of these weapons is to kill a lot of people quickly. What was originally intended for military combat, has now become the weapon of choice for drug dealers and gangs.”



Gun-grabbing guru from New York, Democratic Rep. Charles Schumer led the attack against gun ownership, “... these guns are plainly and simply killing machines. They have no place ... in a civilized society.”

Few criminals pack the bulky, expensive "assault" rifles this legislation seeks to ban, though numerous congresspersons thought they had all the answers — backed up by BATF statistics, no less:

Derrick: "Mr. Speaker, every year the problem of gun violence seems to get worse as more assault weapons find their way into the hands of criminals. It is estimated that there are roughly one million assault weapons in the United States. According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, between 1990 and 1993, reports of assault weapons increased by 35%. From 1990 to 1993, the percent of firearms traced that were assault weapons rose from 5.9% to 8.1%. Since studies show that assault weapons make up only 1% of the firearms in circulation, assault weapons are in proportion used more often to commit crimes. In fact, these weapons are 18 times more likely than other guns to be cop-killers, and 16 times more likely to be traced to crime than other firearms."

Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y.: "Mr. Speaker, whatever the gun advocates say, the facts prove a different story: When a firearm is used for crime, it is 19 times more likely to be an assault weapon than some other type of gun."

Roemer: "Opponents of this bill cite statistics which indicate that assault weapons account for only 1% of the guns in circulation. What they neglect to point out is that this 1% is used for over 8% of criminal activity."

Rep. Rick Lazio, R-N.Y.: "According to the BATF, while semiautomatic weapons comprise only 1% of privately owned guns in America, they account for more than 9% of guns used during a crime and traced."

Rep. Michael Andrews, D-Texas: "Federal statistics show that, al-

though semiautomatic assault weapons account for only 0.5% of privately owned firearms in this country, they are involved in 8.4% of crimes involving firearms. In other words, assault weapons are 17 times more likely to be traced to crimes than conventional firearms."

Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y.: "If only 1% of all guns held by the public are assault weapons, why are they used in 7% of all crimes?"

Rep. Sherwood Boehlert, R-N.Y.: "We are reliably informed that these assault weapons represent nearly 30% of guns traced to organized crime, drug trafficking and crimes involving terrorists."

Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y.: "Polls have shown that 77% of Americans want an assault weapons ban. Violence is in our streets, violence is in our cities and our towns, and yet we sit and wring our hands and do not react to it at all."

Derrick: "Well, 80% of the people in this country want to ban assault weapons."

There also seemed to be interesting thoughts regarding the effectiveness of this bill. Congresspersons seemed to agree that only law-abiding citizens will be affected.

Rep. Walter Tucker III, D-Calif.: "If one or two lives can be saved, Mr. Speaker, then it is certainly worth it. The Constitution is not in jeop-

ardy, but certainly crime and violence can be abated by the passage of this bill."

Roemer: "The simple fact is that we will not completely stop the violence on our streets with this ban. What we are finally doing with this bill is finally taking a definitive stand against violence in our streets and in our schools."

Rep. Don Johnson, D-Ga.: "Mr. Chairman, I support an assault weapons ban because very simply, I believe that it will save lives. Let me be clear; I do not think it will reduce crime in America ... We cannot stop sick individuals from getting guns, but what we can do is make it harder for them to get weapons equipped to fire dozens of shots without reloading."

Rep. William Hughes, D-N.J.: "Mr. Chairman, this issue is about common sense. It is not about eliminating crime because there is nothing we can do to eliminate crime."

Rep. Marilyn Lloyd, D-Tenn: "After reviewing homicide statistics and seeing these daily incidents involving semiautomatic assault weapons, I cannot justify their existence. I realize that this measure will not eliminate the problem of violence ... but it will create a major obstacle."

Rep. C. W. Young, R-Fla.: "There is no doubt this ban will not prevent all criminal activities, but if it saves the life of one innocent victim ... then this ban is worth enacting today."

If, in Rep. Young's view, saving one innocent life is worth robbing the American people of their right to defend themselves and stand up to tyranny, then we can only hope Young's constituents help him find more suitable employment, preferably overseas.

Then there were those statements that are so asinine we are hard-pressed to offer any logical response. These



Democratic Rep. Butler Derrick from South Carolina: "These weapons are the macho symbol of lawlessness. Vote to ban these tools of anarchy."



Rep. Louise Slaughter, a Democrat from New York, spoke with authority on a topic she obviously knows nothing about: "It is clear why criminals prefer assault weapons. Their rapid rate of fire and random spray make them the most dangerous and fearsome guns around." Unfortunately, few of these so-called "assault" weapons are used by criminals, and semiautos don't spray nor have a rate of fire more rapid than many so-called hunting arms.

gems stand on their own and will hopefully follow their creators around come election time.

Traficant: "Mr. Speaker, I am a former sheriff and let me say this: The Second Amendment to the Constitution makes sure that Americans can bear arms and have the right to protect themselves, but the Constitution never intended for individuals to strap a Stinger missile on their back and then cite the Second Amendment privilege."

Slaughter: "It is clear why criminals prefer assault weapons. Their rapid rate of fire and their random spray make them the most dangerous and fearsome guns around. In just five horrible seconds, an UZI can fire 30 bullets. In the underworld of gang warfare, this destructive power is the key to success."

An UZI submachine gun can do better than that — 50 rounds in five seconds — but full-auto firearms are not what this bill is about. Semiauto firearms fire once each time the trigger is pressed. If Slaughter can fire 30 rounds in 5 seconds (horrible ones or not) with any of the weapons this bill seeks to ban, we'll endorse her reelection.

Rep. Charles Schumer D-N.Y.: "... the whole idea of our bill ... is very simple: To prevent people like Mr. Obremski [a violent criminal] from getting assault weapons. He should be locked up, but if he is not and people like him are not, they should not have assault weapons."

Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass.: "Mr. Speaker, the Constitution does not permit Americans to own bazookas. It does not permit Americans to own antitank weapons. And it does not permit Americans to own

assault weapons.

"We should ban these weapons, to disarm the criminals and the teenagers in this country that are terrorizing citizens of this country right now on every neighborhood corner in this country."

Derrick: "Mr. Speaker, all of us know what the problem is. There are large parts of our country today that the government can no longer



"... the Constitution does not permit Americans to own bazookas. It does not permit Americans to own antitank weapons. And it does not permit Americans to own assault weapons." Rep. Edward Markey's constitutional acumen was representative of 216 members who sold out the Constitution on 5 May 1994.

protect its citizens in. You know, if we want to see the route that we are headed for out in the future, what we need to look at is the places of crisis in the world today, to look at Bosnia, to look at Somalia, to look at Haiti, to look at other places around the world where guns have gotten out of control and government can no longer protect its citizens."

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y.: "Mr. Chairman,

the NRA apparently has never seen a gun it didn't like.

"The 'R' in NRA clearly no longer stands for rifle; I say it stands for reprehensible ... It's suggesting that it would be a blow to democracy for Congress to regulate guns whose sole purpose is to kill as many people as possible as quickly as possible."

Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif.: "I rise not to engage in a dispassionate intellectual debate about weapons of death but rather to unashamedly make an emotional appeal ... to vote to save human lives."

Derrick: "If this bill fails today, we are no longer a democracy."

Rep. Cardiss Collins, D-Ill.: "The NRA should realize that they are doomed to failure. Nobody really agrees with their views because Americans know that the NRA stands

for Not Really Aware, or in-Need-of-a-Reality-Adjustment. They must be stopped before these John-Wayne wannabes misuse the Second Amendment to turn America into a shooting gallery."

We also found many comments shockingly revealing:

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y.: "Mr. Speaker, this bill is a good first step toward what I hope will one day be a more comprehensive federal system of gun control legislation — a system that does not prohibit sportsmen from hunting but does protect our citizens from mayhem in the streets. This bill prohibits military style assault weapons that spray a large number of rounds in a relatively short period of time. These large-capacity clips have no legitimate civilian use, period. They are useless to hunters — five rounds into a duck will only make duck soup. They are military weapons designed for use against people — they are perfect for wiping out an opposing gang, arming a paramilitary organization, or shooting students on a bridge."

Rep. Sindy Yates, D-Ill.: "I have read and heard the NRA's arguments and I find them very difficult to take seriously. Nowhere in the basic document of the United States is there a constitutional right, written or implied, giving an individual a separate right to bear arms."

Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.: "We are faced by an urgent need to find a balance between the right of someone ... to bear a weapon ... and the right of someone ... to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

The two always went hand in glove to us.

Rep. Christopher Shays, R-Conn.: "Americans have the constitutional right and protection to bear arms. Their government has the constitutional responsibility to regulate that right."

You can see by these words that the future holds a long, hard fight against some of the mental midgets running the country who would abrogate our rights in the name of safety or the worn out "crime control" cliché. If there was a glimmer of hope among this group it was stumbled upon quite by accident by representative Derrick: "The average citizen out there has a lot more sense than this body [Congress] has." ❧