

ON TARGET

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WORDS WON'T WIN - ACTION WILL

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THE REAL REASON FOR THE SECOND AMENDMENT

The men who founded this nation considered the "right to own and bear arms" to be one of the most important rights of a free citizen. They stated this in the Second Amendment in the Bill of Rights and refused to adopt the Constitution until these amendments were included. They had good reason to believe that "to own and bear arms" was more than just a privilege. The history of the times shows plainly what that reason was.

Scarcely an article has ever been written against gun registration that failed to quote the second amendment. Yet, we consistently ignore or shy away from the real reason for this amendment.

We argue that fine guns are works of art, that collecting them is a fine hobby, that shooting them steadies the hand and sharpens the eye. We describe the pleasures of father and son hunting in the woods together. We discuss the possible value of armed civilians to repel a foreign invasion.

All such arguments fall short because they ignore the most important argument of all.

What was the real reason for the second amendment? It was simply this: To provide the citizens a means by which they could, if necessary, protect themselves against their own government.

Such statements today are labeled as political extremism. If so, then George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and Benjamin Franklin must be classed as "extremists". In their public statements and private letters these men held that the right of the citizens to protect themselves against their own government was "inalienable". The right to use arms when other measures failed was to these same men "self evident".

To understand such thinking we must first understand our Constitutional Republic and how it came into existence.

The founding fathers knew that the power of government is always a dangerous power in any hands. They were not only statesmen but students of history as well. They knew that every previous government in recorded history, without exception, had sooner or later turned this power against its own people-- had enslaved or imprisoned them, had confiscated private property and trampled on the citizens personal dignity.

They knew this had been true of every type of government, regardless of how the government leaders came to power. They knew that leaders elected by the people had often become the worst enemies of those that elected them.

The founders of our government, having just fought a war for Independence, tried to find every possible means to provide the citizens of the new republic with greater protection against government oppression. They sought this protection, not so much for themselves, as for those of us who are alive today and for future generations, as yet unborn.

They provided for the periodic election of government leaders by the people. A wise decision but not a new one. The ancient Greeks, among others, had used it in the past.

They dispersed the powers of government among different levels of federal, state and local units. This too, was well conceived but not new. Such a system had already been tried in France and elsewhere.

They provided a system of "checks and balances" between the departments of government. This also was an excellent system although it had already been tried in England with less than complete success.

They searched for something different-- a completely new idea. They thought they found it within the framework of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights. For the first time in history a written constitution specified that certain human relations, institutions, and affairs were outside the government's authority. The federal government was specifically forbidden to violate or infringe upon them.

The Constitution is, in effect, a contract between the people and their government. Under the terms of this contract the people agree to submit to certain reasonable regulations and to support the government in certain specified ways. The government in turn, agrees to limit itself to certain defined functions and to refrain from meddling in the daily lives of its citizens.

This was a completely new concept of government. Never before had the ideas of individual freedom and the citizens inal-

inable rights been written into a national constitution. Always before the government had said to the people: "You can" or "you must". Here the people said to government "you shall not!"

Perfect as it seemed at the time, the founders of our Constitutional Republic still feared that future leaders might misunderstand their ideas as to the proper functions of government. Therefore, they amended the Constitution with a "Bill of Rights" to provide clear examples of what they meant: Freedom of speech and freedom of the press... The right of peaceable assembly and freedom of religion... The right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure... The right to trial by jury...

These and many other rights are "guaranteed" to the people by the Constitution and its amendments but these documents are only words on paper. Let us ask ourselves the question: "Of what does this guarantee consist?"

What tangible means do the people have to insure that their government will live up to the terms of the contract?

Of course, we have the right to free and fair elections. But suppose the government should refuse to honor such elections. What then? More likely, suppose the government officials tamper with the elective processes so they are no longer fair? What are the people to do?

Our founding fathers lived at a time when a man's thoughts were largely his own. They could scarcely foresee the time of mass communications when eight million families would receive the same magazine, when 12 million people would read the same newspaper columnist, or 40 million people watch the same television broadcast. Is it impossible that government might gain control of these news media, then persuade the people to vote against their own best interests? What are the people to do in this case? If the people who believe in our original free government are finally reduced to a small minority what then are we to do?

How are we to protect our freedom of speech when those who speak out are silenced? What good is the right to petition when the petitions are never read? What value is one man's vote when millions of votes are purchased wholesale with government handouts?

This was the real reason for the second amendment-- to give the people one last "guarantee" by which they could protect themselves from their own government-- when all other measures fail-- by force of arms.

SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT VIETNAM

The question is whether the United States should withdraw its forces from Vietnam or should it increase its efforts for victory?

The lines seem clearly drawn: The communists, socialists and peace creeps say we should get out. Nearly all conservative groups are promoting an all-out offensive. Very few people (except Johnson and McNamara) seem to find the present situation to their liking.

Let's consider another question-- Just why are American troops fighting in Vietnam anyway?

Is it to protect the free world against communism? No, this cannot be the answer because if our government wanted to protect us from communism they would eject the communists from Cuba which would be comparatively easy instead of fighting in Vietnam 10,000 miles away.

Is it to defend the freedom and dignity of our fellow human beings? No, this cannot be the answer. The Hungarians freed themselves in 1956 and we could have most probably kept them free at little risk by simply giving them prompt diplomatic recognition and rushing in a token supply of weapons to show the communists we meant business.

Is it because we want to live up to our international agreements? No, this cannot be the case because we have no agreement to be there. After the defeat of the French an interim trusteeship was agreed upon under the Geneva Treaty of 1954, whereby the French would preside in the South and the Viet Minh in the North until National elections would be held in 1956. The United States government never permitted these elections to be held. Instead, Premier Diem, who had not even lived in Viet Nam for the previous 17 years, was placed in power in July 1954 by the CIA.

Why is it then, that American servicemen have been sent half-way around the world to die for a piece of worthless real estate that has neither material or strategic value? If this question were not perplexing enough, let us ask another-- Why are American troops forced to fight anywhere with obsolete weapons, with tennis shoes where combat boots are needed, with uniforms that are unbearably hot in a tropical climate and with ammunition rationed out to them only after the enemy begins shooting.

Is the real reason to distract the attention of the American public while a socialist dictatorship emerges in our own country? Is it one more excuse to tax the people into submission and destroy our free enterprise system?

Only Congress has the constitutional authority to commit this nation to an offensive military action. If we are to have war, then let the representatives of the people legally declare it as such and then give our troops the weapons they need to win it. If not, then let's get out of Viet Nam and stop killing our young men needlessly.