

The Importance Of The Unfettered Right To Own Weapons

As our American ancestors understood so well, the bedrock of a free society is private ownership of property. And there are few rights of private ownership more important than the unfettered right to own weapons.

Why is ownership of weapons so vitally important? Not for hunting. And not even to resist aggression by domestic criminals or foreign invaders. No, as history has repeatedly shown, the vital importance of the fundamental right to own arms is to resist tyranny by one's own government, should such tyranny ever become unendurably evil and oppressive.

The lesson that Americans today have forgotten or never learned – the lesson which our ancestors tried so hard to teach us – is that the greatest threat to our lives, liberty, property, and security is not some foreign government, as our rulers so often tell us; instead, the greatest threat to the well-being of all of us lies with our own government!

Of course, there are those who suggest that democratically-elected public officials would never do anything seriously harmful to the American people. But let's look at just a few 20th Century examples: They confiscated people's gold. They repudiated gold clauses in government debts. They provoked the Japanese into attacking Pearl Harbor and then acted like they were surprised. They incarcerated Japanese-Americans for no crime at all. They injected dangerous, mind-altering drugs into American servicemen without their knowledge. They radiated the American people in the Pacific Northwest and then deliberately hid it from them. They have surreptitiously confiscated and plundered people's income and savings through the Federal Reserve System. They have plundered and terrorized the citizenry through the IRS. And, most recently, they have sent our fellow citizens to their deaths thousands of miles away in the pursuit of a relatively insignificant cause.

Those who believe that democratically-elected rulers lack the potential and inclination for destructive conduct against their citizenry are living in la-la land.

Liberty Or Slavery

Of course, the proponents of political tyranny are usually well-motivated. Those who enacted the gun-registration law in California point to criminals who have used semiautomatic weapons to commit horrible, murderous acts. But the illusion – the pipe-dream – is that bad acts can be prevented by the deprivation of liberty. They cannot be! Life is insecure – whether under liberty or enslavement. The only choice is between liberty and insecurity, on the one hand, and insecurity and enslavement on the other.

The true patriot scrutinizes the actions of his own government with unceasing vigilance. And when his government violates the morality and rightness associated with principles of individual freedom and private property, he immediately rises in opposition to his government. This is why the gun owners of California might ultimately go down in history as among the greatest and most courageous patriots of our time.

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Gun Control, Patriotism & Civil Disobedience



by Jacob G. Hornberger

The State of California recently enacted a law which requires owners of semiautomatic weapons to register their guns with the state. But when the law went into effect, thousands of California gun owners, although risking a felony conviction, refused to comply with its requirements.

These gun owners were immediately showered with harsh criticism, not only from their public officials, but from their fellow citizens as well. The critics implied, among other things, that since the law had been passed by the duly elected representatives of the people, the gun owners, as members of society, had a duty to comply with its terms.

The controversy raised important issues concerning liberty, property, government, patriotism, and civil disobedience.

By adopting the welfare-state, planned-economy way of life in the 20th Century, the American people of our time have abandoned the principles of individual freedom and limited government upon which our nation was founded. But they have also rejected and abandoned something of equal importance: the concept of patriotism which characterized America's Founding Fathers.

Two Different Notions of Patriotism

There have been two different notions of patriotism in American history. The one which characterizes the American people of the 20th Century – the one which is taught in our public schools – is this: patriotism means the support of one's own government and the actions which the government takes on behalf of the citizenry. The idea is that since we live in a democratic society, the majority should have the political power to take any action it desires. And although those in the minority may not like the laws, they are duty-bound as "good" citizens to obey and support them.

The distinguishing characteristic of this type of patriotism is that citizens don't make independent, personal judgments of the rightness or wrongness of a law. Instead, he does what he has been taught since the first grade of his government-approved schools: they place unwavering faith and trust in the judgment of their popularly-elected public officials.

The other concept of patriotism was the type which characterized the British colonists during the late 1700s. They believed that patriotism meant a devotion to certain

principles of rightness and morality. They believed that the good citizen had the duty to make an independent judgment as to whether or not his own government's laws violated these principles. And so, unlike their counterparts in America today, these individuals refused to automatically accept the legitimacy of the actions of their public officials.

Let us examine how "real world" applications of these two concepts of patriotism differ dramatically.

In The Eighteenth Century . . .

In the late 1700s, the British colonists suffered under the same type of oppressive regulations and tax system that present-day Americans are suffering. What was the reaction of the colonists to this regulatory and tax tyranny? They deliberately chose to ignore and disobey their government's regulations and tax acts. Smuggling and tax evasion were the order of the day! And the more that their government tried to enforce the restrictions, the more it met with disregard and disobedience from the citizenry.

Sometimes smugglers or tax evaders would be caught and brought to trial. The result? Despite conclusive evidence of guilt and the judges' instructions to convict, the defendants' fellow citizens on the juries regularly voted verdicts of acquittal.

And civil disobedience was not limited to economic regulations and taxation. There was also widespread resistance to conscription, especially during the French and Indian War. Those who were conscripted deserted the army in large numbers. And those who had not been conscripted hid the deserters in their homes.

This was what it once meant to be a patriot – the devotion to a certain set of principles regarding rightness, morality, individualism, liberty, and property; and it meant a firm stand against one's own government when it violated these principles.

. . . And Today

If an American of today were magically transported back to colonial America of the late 1700s, he would immediately find himself at odds with the colonists who were resisting the tyranny of their government. How do we know this? By the way which Americans of today

respond to what is a much more oppressive and tyrannical economic system: with either meekness or, even worse, with ardent, "flag-waving" support for the actions of their rulers.

And what is their attitude toward their fellow citizens who are caught violating the rules and regulations? Again, either meekness or fervent support of the rulers. After all, what was the reaction to the Internal Revenue Service's seizure of Willie Nelson's property? "I'll make a small donation but otherwise don't get me involved – I don't want them coming after me!" And to the conviction of Michael Milken for violating such ridiculous economic regulations that were so ridiculous that even King George would have been embarrassed? "He got what's coming to him – he shouldn't have made so much money anyway!" And to Leona Helmsley's conviction for having taken improper deductions on her income tax return? "She's obnoxious – she should go to jail." The thought of rising to the defense of these victims of political tyranny is anathema to the present-day American "patriot."

And what about jury trials involving economic crimes? Like the good, little citizens they have been taught to be, especially in their public schools, American "patriots" dutifully comply with the judge's instructions to convict fellow citizens of violating this regulatory and tax tyranny. Although they have the same power as their ancestors to disregard the judge's instructions and to acquit their fellow citizens, the thought of doing so is repugnant to present-day "patriots." They choose instead to do their "duty" and thereby become "patriotic" agents of their own government's tyranny.

Therefore, there is no doubt that the American of today would feel very uncomfortable if, all of a sudden, he found himself in the British colonies in 1776 in the midst of smugglers, tax evaders, draft resisters, and other patriots of the time.

This brings us back to the individuals in California who are refusing to register their guns.