

The Price of Posturing

By Bruce Gold, Politics and Guns
Canadian Firearms Journal – July/August 2016

One of the tactics used by anti-gun campaigners is the pretention that their policies are driven solely by the needs of public safety. They assert that the problems of crime and violence are so great that they create a need for immediate and dramatic action. They claim that there is a pressing need to “do something” or implement policies that “will help”. At the extreme end of the do something rhetoric we see the use of the “if it saves just one life” slogan.

If we examine this approach to gun control policy (or any policy) we are struck by the wonderful moral superiority that wraps around the proponents. With the one life claim or other moral verity they affirm an unmitigated defense of principle, untroubled by economic or political considerations. Their posture of moral absolutist is in itself a claim to virtue. It leaves critics of any specific policy playing defense against the charge that they are only critics because they are of a lesser ethical standard or the pawns of some vested interest, devaluing the human costs.

Unfortunate Realities

Unfortunately, we live in an imperfect world. A world where there is always the problem of limited resources and unlimited demands on those resources. Further, the root cause of violence is not some magical inanimate object (guns) that can be banned into oblivion. We live in a world where an imperfect humanity always has its share of people willing to use violence to get their way. We face the traditional problems of the bully imposing their will and the criminal balancing costs and benefits with violence to tip the balance in their favour. These ancient problems are only made worse by anti-self-defense policies that disarm the victim and fail to disarm the criminal.

We are also experiencing the impact of a growing wave of calculated political violence sweeping the western world. As the problems of the Middle East are shifted into the first world by mass immigration and by geopolitical considerations we can expect this violence, a prominent characteristic of the political process in Muslim countries, to increase.

We can pause here to clarify this new threat and who is behind it. Religious Islam is about theocracy and a state church. Muslims themselves violently disagree on the specifics of what the “true religion” is or does. Political Islam is the secular campaign to spread Islamic power and dominance by military, political and propaganda tactics. Direct military action, such as the “lone wolf” attack on our Parliament or more organized attacks such as the ones on Paris and Brussels are the military stick designed to seize the political initiative through intimidation. They are intended to drive our cowardly elites into an ever more desperate pursuit of peace through ever expanding “multicultural” concessions.

In both religious and political spheres it is the active minority that counts, no matter what the intentions and hopes of the majority may be. (A recent Canadian survey found the primary concern of most Canadian Muslims is employment. However, very significant minorities showed support for political Islam with 34% tolerant of Al Qaeda and 24% supporting the Islamic supremacy policies of the Muslim Brotherhood.)

Where our Elites put their Political Will

Despite the ongoing problems of crime and radicalism the elites in Canada show little sign of abandoning their campaign against law-abiding gun owners. The rhetorical claim used to support this campaign is that the fight is about public safety and moral leadership. Unfortunately, the facts on the ground reveal a campaign motivated by ideological determinism and vote hustling.

This is not new and despite some changes by the Conservatives, firearm's policies are still in the mess left by the Liberal's criminalization of firearms ownership in 1995. This was a fundamental change because unlike previous regulations, that respected centuries of Common Law and tradition, C68 criminalized firearms ownership itself. With this act the Liberals created two million instant criminals and criminalized seven to ten million guns. To make this radical change to our laws politically feasible they grudgingly brought in licensing and registration as a political safety valve. Their plan was to make ownership so arduous and legally hazardous that it would die out. Ultimately the plan failed and the costs of administration have run to billions of dollars and untold tens of thousands of police man-hours with no public safety benefit to show for it.

To understand why this criminalization of the law-abiding was an exercise in futility we can look at Statistics Canada data. This data reveals licensed gun owners have a homicide rate of 0.6 per 100,000, a third the average homicide rates of 1.85 per 100,000. Official statistics also demonstrate that licenced owners were accused of homicide in only 4.5 % of firearms homicides (Mauser). Public safety is not served when the vast majority of your effort falls on the law-abiding.

The Mounties Carry the Can

While the government has been busy policing the law-abiding other needs got short shift. In economics they call this the opportunity cost; money spent on one thing is not available for other projects.

Carbines

The issuing of patrol carbines (assault rifles) to the RCMP became a hot button issue after a semi-automatic rifle was used to kill four RCMP officers in 2005 (Mayerthorpe incident). By 2006 the force was reacting to criticism that their officers were outgunned and began to examine the need for a weapon with more reach and firepower than a pistol or shotgun. In a mere five years the force was able to establish that a need existed and commissioned reports in 2010 and again in 2011 recommending the adoption of a patrol carbine. By 2013 a short eight years after the need became blatantly obvious the force received its first carbines. By 2014, just nine years after officers demonstrated the need with their lives, some 1,333 had been issued – one for every 13 Mounties. The 2014 Moncton shootings that left three more officers dead is now finally accelerating the training and equipping of the force with the carbines.

Terrorism

With the reluctant realization that political Islam exists and is using political violence to influence policy Canada finally started to address its increasing security needs – sort of. When military violence broke

out on Parliament hill itself the pressing need to combat terrorism could no longer be talked away. The RCMP, well behind the curve as usual, shifted 600 officers out of organized crime, financial crime and drug investigations. Given the very real difficulties of anti-terrorism work and the long time periods needed to gain expertise it is hard to see how our “anyone in a red tunic” approach will succeed. One might also presume that their old duties also needed doing.

Time for choices

Good government demands a realistic cost / benefits analysis and rational policies. Yet the posturing continues. Quebec is now introducing its own version of the failed long gun registry. As always the rationales are irrational. Speaking in support of the official line Pierre Veilleux, of the Provincial Police Association fantasized about the powers of an administrative database. In his mind the new gun registry will enable first responders to magically obtain a list of all weapons with a single click of the computer. The grim reality, is that such a list, provided at great labour and expense, would list people who had 1/3 the general homicide rate and miss the 95% of killers who were not licenced. This exercise in futility and dangerous delusion is to be done in the name of “officer safety”.

The Police are happy – or at least the leadership is happy - to shift officers from the mafia beat and leave the firearms paper-pushers in place. Provincial Police are secure in the illusion that the law-abiding are the main threat to their officers. Political violence is still a “talk away” problem. How long we continue this folly in the face of a growing threat remains to be seen.

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