

Mail Call

Gun control can be rational

EDITOR:

This letter is a rebuttal to Mark Dean VanCleave's entertaining letter of Feb. 3. In his letter, he eloquently states his positions on firearms using the typical twisted logic of the National Rifle Association.

His assertion that any sort of restriction on buying a gun would drive potential buyers to black market dealers is a weak point. Using that logic we might as well legalize cocaine. After all, its illegality has fostered a thriving black market. It's ironic that the same individuals who promote unrestricted access to firearms also tend to favor stricter drug laws.

Now before you go calling me a "limp-wristed liberal," which I'm not, let me say I do favor the right to bear arms, within reason.

However, it goes against common sense to allow anyone unrestricted access to firearms designed for the sole purpose of slaughtering lots of people very quickly. You may feel that it is an inherent right for anyone to own any gun they choose. But I personally feel anyone desiring to own a weapon such as an AK-47 isn't playing with a full deck. Pat Purdy, the schoolyard murderer, is an excellent case in point.

Good thing he didn't have a bazooka, although I take it you'd probably say he should've been able to possess one. Frightening thought.

I suppose you can tell by now I'm not the NRA. I don't espouse the political views of the far right or the far left. I simply think a little common sense wouldn't hurt the country.

Michael Dilling
Graduate Student

The right to choose

EDITOR:

I am writing in reference to James R. Raatz' letter of Jan. 31.

Finally a member of the silent majority decided to speak up in defense of his own rights. I don't know about Mr. Raatz, but I'm beginning to feel bullied by all these pro-lifers. Pro-life is a choice that can be made whether or not Roe vs. Wade is overturned. But what about people on the other side of the issue, the pro-choice? Don't I have a right to make a choice?

I cannot ever support the reversal of Roe vs. Wade because I cannot support something that denies a woman's right to govern her own body. I cannot support bringing babies into the world who are unwanted, who grow up with the knowledge they are unwanted through abuse or neglect. I cannot support something which may cause women to die from the unhealthy conditions of some makeshift backroom clinic.

Whoever these pro-lifers are, they seem to care nothing for the rights of those people already living. Women who have abortions should not be automatically assumed as "evil" nor should their choice be seen as some sort of "convenience" for them. I am sure most of these women made their decision after much serious thought. How can one know what is really right for another without even trying to understand her situation?

I know there have to be people out there who agree with Mr. Raatz and me. Must we continue to be bullied by a vocal and harshly judgmental minority? Don't let your right to make decisions for yourself be threatened. It's time to speak up and let the vocal minority know the size of the majority they're up against.

Elizabeth Earle '89

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'Buying American' doesn't always mean buying quality

Last week while I was driving down Texas Avenue, I noticed a car with a bumper sticker that said "Buy American, Save American Jobs." Patriotism started flowing in my blood and I started feeling guilty about my foreign-made stereo, VCR, television, and even the German engine in my American car. But then I gave it some thought.



James Cecil
Columnist

Why did this man put this bumper sticker on his car? Are people not buying American? I guess not. He thought that by asking people to help save jobs they wouldn't buy American-made goods.

But that leads to another question: Why aren't people buying American?

Do people really look to see where a product was made before they buy it? What about the clothes you're wearing, where were they made? I doubt you took that into consideration when you bought them. Most likely you made your choice based on what the clothing looked like and the quality of the fabric and stitching. Most clothes are made overseas, even if they are made by an American firm, and that doesn't "save American jobs."

So, why didn't you intentionally buy an American-made good? Because, being a careful consumer, you bought the best quality product at the best price. Chances are you won't buy a lower quality product at a higher price, right?

But back to the bumper sticker. You wouldn't want to be held responsible for putting American people out of work, would you? Let's say you did buy American products instead of foreign-made goods simply because of where they were produced. If this is different from the goods you would buy normally, then you wouldn't be buying what you consider to be the best quality at the best price. Although, you might be helping to keep someone employed.

If all consumers based their buying decisions on whether or not a product was made in the United States, then our

country would move toward not wanting any imports. That would eliminate the U.S. trade deficit as well as foreign competition in the American market. We would have a situation where all goods bought by the American public would be made in the United States, thereby supporting millions of jobs.

Meanwhile, the other countries in the world would be competing against each other in attempts to get people to buy their products. How do they do this? Well, they simply try to outdo each other by producing higher quality and less costly goods with new technology. What do you think would be happening with the American-made products? All the U.S. workers would be deeply concerned about making the highest quality products at the lowest price, otherwise their conscience would bother them, right?

Wrong. Experience tells us otherwise.

In the early 1980s Congress passed legislation protecting U.S. auto makers from foreign (Japanese and West German) producers. This protection was to last for three years so the domestic auto makers could get back on their feet and become competitive in the world market again. Well, guess what? After three years the lobbyists for the auto makers were on their knees begging Congress not to end the protection. The industry claimed that it still wasn't able to compete.

If Congress had left the auto industry to world competition, the companies would have had to bite the bullet to make improvements in design and pro-

duction. Without upgrading products they would have faced a great financial loss and possible bankruptcy. But since the industry was protected by legislation, the companies had no reason to make improvements. A steady consumer demand and cutting back on the number of imports allowed in the country means increased production for domestic firms. What does this mean, you and me, the average American consumer?

With fewer imported cars being allowed into the United States, the price of foreign cars goes up. Then domestic auto makers see that they can charge higher prices and stay below foreign prices. Also, with less foreign competition, the domestic producers can continue producing second-rate cars, you and I end up paying a higher price for the same shoddy products.

This scenario can be applied to products, not just cars and clothes. It's a simple fact that, when given a choice, consumers will want to buy the highest quality goods for the lowest price. It would be great if all of the top-quality goods were always made in the United States, as they once were. But that is no longer the case.

The people who initiated this "Buy American" campaign fail to see the matter. They need to ask themselves why it is necessary to launch a publicity campaign in the first place. Thinking of the long-term interests of this country, "Buy American" will hurt us. It is a very narrow, short-sighted attempt to solve our industry's lack of competitiveness with foreign products.

We should do our country a favor and "Buy Quality." If the quality product happens to be American, then great. If not, then our industries need to catch up, and losing customers to foreign firms provides the best incentive for them to do this.

James Cecil is a senior economics major and a columnist for The Battalion.

Humans continue down path to self-destruction



Todd Honeycutt
Columnist

Humans were placed on the Earth for spiritual advancement. Everything needed for their elevation is here — at least it was in the beginning. All of the necessary elements essential for their diet could be gathered or hunted. The air was clean and pure, without pollutants.

Nature was unbridled and free, full of splendor and glory. It existed only as a resource for humanity to take what was needed and to observe and learn from. All was perfect for people to evolve to a higher level of consciousness. Indeed, that was the Earth's sole purpose.

But humans chose not to take the high road. Instilled within them were base emotions — greed, laziness, idleness, lust. Humans found it easier to turn to materialistic, lower-level thinking. They developed their outer world rather than their inner. They exploited that which they found naturally around them to their own benefit.

People changed their world instead of changing themselves. They created society, which in turn offered more deceit, more corruption, through its different facets — religion, government, education. People moved toward technological, rather than spiritual, advancement. They harbored impurity, polluting the existing beauty to a state of massive uncleanness. Where once the Earth was perfect for its purpose, humans destroyed it beyond recognition, refusing its offer.

The physical body is also an important element in spiritual advancement. In essence, the body is the temple of the soul. Pollute the body, and one pollutes the mind.

It is necessary to keep the body healthy; but in the modern world health is unattainable. The air is polluted from industrial and automotive exhausts — even over the mountains and the oceans far away from civilization. The water sources beneath the earth are being contaminated through our destructive pollution, thereby requiring the water to be treated with chemicals before we drink it.

The food we eat is impure as well. Constantly we add spices and additives and preservatives to "enhance" our food. It is contaminated by poisons to protect it and chemicals to make it flourish. Even the so-called natural foods are

destroyed in this way. On all sides, the elements necessary for physical health — air, water, food — are polluted.

For spiritual development, our minds must be kept clean. Impure thoughts surround us. We fill our minds with whatever is nearby — television, movies, music, gossip, books, magazines. They are full of idiocy and asininity. "Trash" is a term often associated with the mass media. We are given everything so that we do not have to think. Rumination is a word unknown to most people and practiced by fewer still.

Immediate, relative concerns are the focus of our efforts and thoughts — very few holistic or humanistic views engage us. Just as we pollute our environment with poisons, we pollute our thoughts with trash.

To raise our consciousness, we must "revert" to a more natural state, one similar to Thoreau's way of life upon Walden Pond. The transcendentalists and the Buddhists, among others, know something of spiritual evolution. Our mental powers must be enhanced. So much in our mind is left untouched.

Meditation, instead of being laughed at and ridiculed, must become the norm. Simplification of life, returning to the basics of nature, turning away from luxury and idleness, is needed to help the whole of the masses. But humans have regressed to such a state that the masses refuse to accept that they are stagnating, much less that they should change their lifestyles.

A nation declines rapidly when its economy has no growth. Water, when

left standing, stagnates. The mind when left uncultivated, decays. The essence of humankind, where the mind falls people must follow.

Humans see only the material world — a world of facts and figures, of money, none of which are carried over into the next world. Ours is a world with room for little else but individuals and their wants and needs. Humans have moved apart from the purpose for which they were sent.

As the lyrics to a song say, "No eternal reward shall await us now for waiting the dawn." Humans, in their greed, laziness, and idleness, are destroying themselves.

Todd Honeycutt is a sophomore psychology major and a columnist for The Battalion.



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