

Gun Lobby 'Logic'

IT'S true, a ban on the sale of assault weapons and large-capacity cartridge clips wouldn't prevent all killings like those that took place in Killeen, Texas, last week. But such a ban would undoubtedly curtail the wide availability of the rapid-fire weapons favored by mass killers. It would erect one very practical barrier in front of disturbed individuals bent on murder.

The House of Representatives, all too predictably, didn't see it that way. The day after the Killeen massacre a substantial majority of congressmen stuck to their guns, so to speak, and struck from the anticrime bill a provision that would have banned many semiautomatic guns as well as multi-bullet magazines like the one used in Killeen. The logic that prevailed, as it has so often in the past, is that criminals kill, not guns.

Pro-gun forces revel in suggesting that baseball bats, scissors, cars, and other implements that people may use to kill one another should be banned too. It's really no different with a handgun that can pump out 17 rounds in a couple of seconds, they argue. When was the last time someone with a pair of scissors killed 23 people and wounded dozens of others in the space of a few minutes?

Then there's the "you ban as-

sault weapons and next it'll be my hunting rifle" argument. Why does one follow the other? Nobody is calling for the elimination of all firearms.

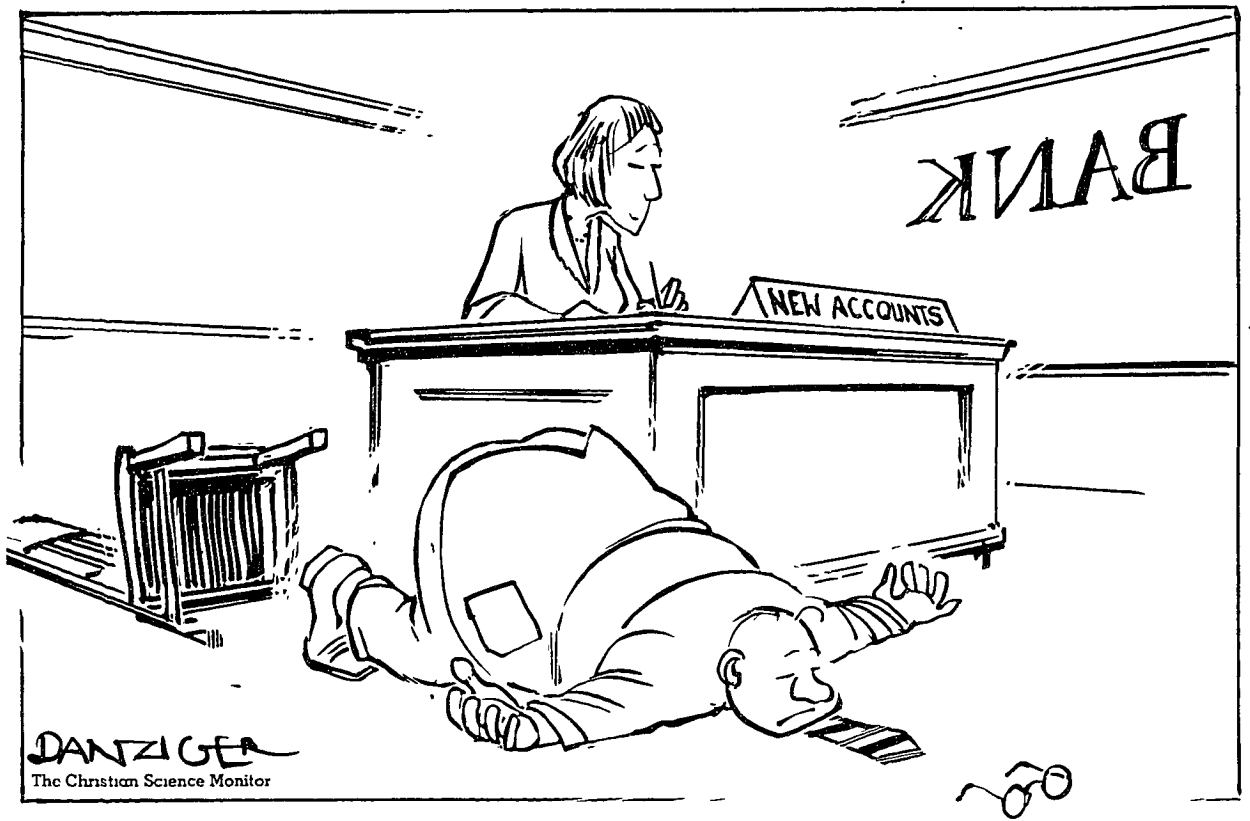
Gun lobbyists respond to tragedies like Killeen's with expressions of sympathy for the victims and calls for stronger law enforcement - both sincere emotions. One National Rifle Association spokesman observed that these mass killings wouldn't happen if people like the Killeen murderer were put behind bars where they belong.

Is he suggesting we push aside such legal niceties as due process of law and round up everyone who displays hateful or unbalanced behavior?

Better to begin with such rational steps as waiting periods, background checks - and a ban on the sale and ownership of weapons that have no legitimate recreational or protective purpose.

A few lawmakers, like Rep. Chet Edwards, whose Texas district includes Killeen, rejected the gun lobby's logic for the first time and voted for the ban - despite the probable political backlash and despite the White House's opposition to the measure. Perhaps next time the issue reaches the floor of Congress - as it surely will - more legislators will turn from the old illogic.

CONGRESSMAN FLOOG IS TOLD WHAT REAL BANKS CHARGE FOR BOUNCED CHECKS



A Bad Way to Select Americans

AMERICA is supposed to be about fair play and equal opportunity. That is high among the reasons so many people around the world want to live in the United States. So it's ironic that last week's "green card" lottery was a mockery of fairness.

The lottery was created by Congress last year as part of an immigration-reform package. Under the new law, some 700,000 newcomers are admitted to the US each year. Most arrive under provisions favoring close relatives of current residents (the majority of these family members come from Latin America and Asia), people with designated skills, and entrepreneurs starting businesses. However, the law also

created a special category of immigrants from 34 nations, mostly in Europe, on the ground that would-be immigrants from those countries have been disadvantaged under US policy since 1965. Visas for permanent residency are to be awarded to this group - 40,000 for the first three years, 55,000 thereafter - according to an annual lottery.

The first lottery set off an unseemly scramble among applicants - most of whom are already in the US, often illegally. Visas will be granted to the first 40,000 aliens whose valid applications arrived at a postal center in Merrifield, Va., after 12:01 a.m. on Oct. 14. At least 5,000 desperate hopefuls descended on Merrifield

in the hours before the deadline. Many, with the help of organized interest groups, dumped hundreds of envelopes apiece into mail bins at the site.

The post office accepted applications for five days (ultimately processing more than 5 million), but many experts agreed that applications received after the first few hours would be too late. The first-come, first-served procedure was fair only on its face. In fact, owing to the rule allowing multiple applications and sophisticated mailing strategies devised by immigration lawyers, the aspirant who, with a kiss and a prayer, sent off a solitary envelope from Warsaw or even Cleveland had almost no chance of winning one of the coveted visas.

If the green-card lottery was questionable in practice, it's equally dubious in theory. It is largely the creation of Sen. Edward Kennedy (D) of Massachusetts, at the instigation of the Irish lobby. As Irish applicants will receive 40 percent of the lottery visas for the first three years, the scheme can be regarded principally as an amnesty program for illegal Irish immigrants.

Irish immigrants are as welcome in the US as those from any other country, but not more so. The reintroduction of nationality-based quotas, from which US immigration policy departed in '65, serves no national purpose. And the lottery could actually encourage illegal immigration by Europeans who see the lottery - though a long shot - as their best chance to obtain a US green card.

The mad scramble ignited by the lottery, the insider tactics that favor some applicants over others, and the lottery's underlying departure from rational immigration criteria all serve to demean US immigration policy.

Choosing Sides in Yugoslavia

The editorial "Balkan Fires," Oct. 4, misses the point. The US cannot support Serbia or the Serb-led federal Army, both under the leadership of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, because he is a hard-line communist with no integrity.

The US must support the emerging countries who stand for the same things we stand for: democracy, human rights, open borders, and a free-market economy. Then peace will come to the Balkans.

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'Wise use' for whom?

I am disappointed with the article "Land Use Advocates Make Gains," Oct. 3. Only 10 percent of US forests are left - 90 percent are gone without a realistic chance to renew. Tree farms have not had a good record; the soil is not restored after clear-cut and slash-and-burn methods.

The shipping of 1 of 4 trees to Japan and Korea and the use of modern machinery have cost the jobs of millworkers and log-

gers. Like blacksmithing, logging is becoming an occupation of the past. Loggers need help now adjusting to new jobs.

What upsets me most is the insidious suggestion that the destruction of natural resources benefits man. This destruction is for lumber barons and industry - not for man but for money and greed.

Margaret Flanagan St. Paul, Minn.

The report on the "wise use" movement is both informative and balanced. However, the author omits an essential statement of fact when quoting me.

My complete statement was: "Unlike other sectors of the United States economy, natural resource development on nonagricultural lands involves a mixture of socialist and capitalist enterprises. Government owns the means of production on a large fraction of the US land base [one-third]. Government ownership can create political strain in a largely capitalist economy. Since we are not socialist, there is no national rhetoric of responsibility when we force people off

the [government's] land. This is analogous to kicking tenant farmers off state-owned farmlands." Only the italicized section was published.

Government's failure to assume responsibility for the social and economic consequences of its actions raises questions about whether government ownership is wise public policy. The "wise use" movement can be an important force in helping to bring democracy to government land ownership.

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From here to infinity

Regarding the article "Frontline's" Literate Voice," Oct. 3: Producer David Fanning has a Sisyphean task if he is accurately quoted as "doing television for the highest common denominator." Schoolchildren learn to add fractions by writing them as equivalent fractions with the lowest common denominator. A highest common denominator can never be found, because doubling the one you have always gives you a larger one.

Harold P. Boas College Station, Texas

