



NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS FOUNDATION, INC.

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LEAD AMMUNITION AND THE SHOOTING SPORTS *

by

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The use of lead by the arms and ammunition industry has shown a steady increase. Most of the consumption has been by sportsmen. According to the International Lead and Zinc Study Group, the ammunition industry used 45.8 thousand short tons of lead in 1961; it went to 47.8 in 1962; it further increased to 49.9 in 1963; and in 1964 it jumped to 56.5 thousand short tons.

Last year was a good sales year for the majority of companies, both in sporting arms and ammunition. General reports for the first part of 1965 indicate that sales for the year may pass 1964.

There are a number of reasons for the increased consumption of ammunition. In the past 20 years in America the number of hunters has doubled. In the last decade there has been a boom in reloading by individuals and clubs; the devoted shooter, who uses a great many rounds, can shoot cheaper by reloading. A prosperous society, with more leisure time, has meant an increase in the number of skeet and trap shooters. More and more sportsmen clubs have built ranges for rifle and pistol shooting. Private enterprise, in the form of shooting preserves, has resulted in more than 2,200 private and commercial areas being opened; 46 states now allow preserves to operate with seasons of from five to nine months.

There has been a general mass exodus from the metropolitan complexes for weekends and vacations outdoors. A percentage of these people enjoy a variety of shooting. There has also been an increase in competitive shooting: over 2,700 shooters entered the Grand American trap shoot at Vandalia, Ohio, last year. There are few participant sports anywhere in the world that attract this many competitors.

Because of improved wildlife management techniques, many wildlife species are more abundant than ever before. There are more deer in America than when the white man came. The mourning dove is now the number one game bird in America; nearly 20 million are harvested each year with no damage to the breeding flock. Many species, such as elk and antelope, have made dramatic comebacks. In fact, no game species in America is in danger of being over-harvested.

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What are some of the problems facing the shooting industry today? The hunter, especially in high-population states, may have trouble finding open land on which to hunt. Part of this is being overcome by the purchase of lands by state game departments; this is paid for by the hunter through his purchase of licenses and tags. The federal government has several programs, including land acquisition, that will provide more hunting space. All of these programs were instigated by sportsmen who recognized the problem of open space years ago.

There are not enough shooting ranges near the metropolitan centers. Many national organizations, private enterprise and clubs are working to solve this problem. A place to hunt and shoot in America is a definite problem facing the American sportsman but not an insoluble one.

The major problem facing the world of recreational shooting is the continual harassment of sportsmen by politicians who enter bills to restrict the ownership and use of sporting firearms and ammunition. So far this year, more than 300 bills have been entered in state legislatures and Congress which would hamper the law-abiding sportsman.

No one questions the fact that there is a crime problem in America. The shooting industry, above everyone else, realizes that the criminal misuse of firearms is a regrettable and deplorable situation. But the fact that a criminal uses a firearm to commit a crime has no connection with the more than 20 million responsible citizens who enjoy recreational shooting.

Some politicians, who would like to abolish firearms ownership, try to link criminals and sportsmen in a web of guilt because of the association of firearms. There are now about 20,000 federal, state, county and city laws and ordinances on firearms already on the books. Yet some lawmakers do not think this is enough.

For years, sportsmen and the shooting industry have asked that laws be rewritten and aimed at the criminal misuse of firearms. We have also asked that the courts be stricter in enforcing laws now on the books. The F.B.I. recently reported that nearly 80 percent of all crimes committed were by persons with a previous criminal record. During the past four years there were 168 policemen killed by firearms. Seventy-nine percent of the people involved in these homicides had criminal records. A large percentage were out on parole. Why do the sociologists and criminologists turn these hardened criminals loose to prey on society?

The shooting industry is in favor of mandatory penalties for persons who use a firearm in the commission of a crime; the mandatory sentence would be in addition to the time required by law for that particular crime. If new laws are needed, the industry believes that the best approach is that the laws be aimed at criminal misuse without any infringement on the rights of law-abiding citizens. Such bills are now entered in the legislatures of California, Texas and Illinois. Rep. Robert Casey has a similar bill in Congress now, H.R. 5642.

Some politicians have entered bills in Congress and the states which would eventually lead to the abolishment of all recreational shooting. While perhaps honestly trying to get at criminals, they have encompassed the sportsmen. These bills do not use the term "abolishment"

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but that is what would happen. It is easy to wrap the sportsmen in so much red tape that it is almost impossible for him to own and use a firearm. Philadelphia recently passed an anti-firearms bill so restrictive that a non-resident cannot even drive through the city with a .410 shotgun locked in his trunk. To obtain a permit for a target rifle, an applicant must be subjected to the same treatment as a criminal; he is fingerprinted, mugged, and investigated. It takes weeks of fighting red tape for the most respected citizen to obtain a firearm permit. Although most crimes committed with firearms are handguns or concealables, the Philadelphia ordinance includes sporting rifles and shotguns as well.

The hunter today is subjected to city, county, state and federal firearms laws. In addition, he must know the firearms laws of his state game department and those of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The hunter is almost compelled to be a lawyer to keep from inadvertently violating some law. Yet lawmakers are crying for more laws. If the American hunter is harassed much more, he will quit recreational shooting rather than submit to this deluge of regulations and bureaucratic red tape.

The dedicated shooter in America fears registration of firearms. He knows that the history of registration the world over has lead to confiscation. He knows from a score of countries that registration eventually leads to abolishment of ownership and use of firearms.

The shooter knows that if registration is voted into law the police will be in charge of administration. He has thousands of historical reasons to fear police control. When police are given registration powers they become judges and not enforcers of laws. Registration means that the police would have the authority to say who could and could not own a sporting firearm. If there is the merest shadow of doubt about an applicant, the natural tendency is for the police to say "no."

How far do the anti-firearms people want to go? In the Massachusetts Legislature last year a bill was entered which would have required that each hunter store his firearm at the courthouse. Whenever he wished to hunt he would go to the courthouse, fill out a form stating where he would be hunting and when he would be back, and he would then be "loaned" his own gun. Fortunately this bill did not pass.

The worst bill now before Congress is S.1592, entered by Senator Dodd, of Connecticut, as an administration bill. Without mentioning the word "registration," this bill would give the Secretary of the Treasury complete powers of registration. It would stop all mail-order sales of firearms to consumers. Senator Dodd has succeeded in making "mail-order" a dirty word, despite the fact that many old-line respectable houses such as Sears, Montgomery Ward and Abercrombie and Fitch ship sporting firearms in compliance with all laws. This bill, if passed, would completely put out of business more than 400 shops that make custom firearms, receivers and conversions.

By increasing the dealer's license fee 100 times--not 100 percent--more than 8,000 small dealers would be forced to quit handling firearms and ammunition.

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It would be difficult for a gun owner to ship his firearm for repairs, to ship to another state for hunting, or to carry his gun into Mexico or Canada for hunting. No person could import a firearm if the Secretary of the Treasury thought it would be contrary to the public interest. There are no adequate provisions for the 750,000 people who collect firearms. An individual who might reload his own ammunition and sell part of it to a friend would have to buy a \$1,000-license. For 20 pages, S.1592 harasses the responsible manufacturer, dealer and sportsman. But it never gets to the heart of the supposed reason for the bill--crime prevention. It is not aimed at criminal misuse of firearms but uses the powers of interstate commerce as yet another bureaucratic centralization of more power in Washington.

Co-signers of S.1592 are Senators Joseph Tydings, Maryland; Vance Hartke, Indiana; and Robert Kennedy, New York. Hearings on the bill will start the week of May 17 before the Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency of the Judiciary Committee. Senator Dodd will preside as chairman over the hearings on his own bill.

People who have no interest in recreational shooting will show little or no concern for S.1592. Yet this bill, if passed, will be a further penetration into the bleeding side of American freedom. It will be another federal envelopment of states rights. It will be another victory for those who believe every transaction of American business must be controlled by Washington.

The sporting arms and ammunition industry is in a strange position. It contributes greatly to the economy and recreation of the nation but some lawmakers want to abolish the industry.

Hunters in America pour \$1.5 billion into the economy each year, much of it in depressed areas. Sportsmen, who have been leaders in conservation for decades, support the state game departments which are charged by law to care for all wildlife. Hunters spend over \$150 million a year on the management of wildlife. The shooting industry supports thousands of workers all over America. More than 20 million honest citizens participate in recreational shooting.

The shooting industry had a good sales year in 1964 and 1965 could be better--if the industry and sportsmen do not get legislated out of business.

The industry and sportsmen are fortunate in having many legislators who are wise and true friends. We will need the help of all our friends if we are to survive against the onslaughts of those who believe that more laws automatically solve any problem--those who are devoted to an all-consuming government.

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