

Inquiring Minds topic - October 27, 2017

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GUNS

I would like us to consider the place of guns in our culture. This is not to be a discussion of the 2nd Amendment or such legalisms. Rather I would ask you to consider what it is about guns that is so important to many people in our country.

The events in Las Vegas have been a reprise of many horrific mass killings by people who have no apparent connection or bias against those they kill. This sort of event has happened in a number of other countries -the UK, Australia, Sweden - come to mind, with a consequence of legislation against guns. A large number of our citizens appear to reject this. Why?

TIME for October 17, 2017, published an analysis of these mass killings. To me this was not helpful. An NPR anchor suggested that the left, that believes government can solve problems, asserts that legislation on the guns themselves would help, while the right believes that the problem is that of a bad person and the only solution is to do something about that person: "guns don't kill people, people kill people". Thus no action should be taken by government.

Why do people want a gun? Freudians have suggested that a gun projects sexual potency. Others have suggested that our "frontier spirit" is embodied in gun ownership.

As we grew up, or our children, did any of you observe a child picking up a twig and pretending it was a gun? At what age did this happen? What was the derivation of this fascination? Was this encouraged by adults?

The NRA and associates argue that everyone should have a gun so good guys could shoot bad guys. They claim this would make us safe. Some doubters fear that bystanders would be slaughtered in the confrontation. The police contend that they would not be able to distinguish a bad guy from a good guy in such a confrontation.

This is a thoughtful diverse group to whom this will not be an unknown subject. Thus no additional reading material is attached.

What is the relation of our culture to guns? Do we think that 33 thousand deaths and 100 thousand injuries last year attributed to guns in the US is a health issue? How does this comport with who we think we are? Is a gun important to your personal freedom? Is a gun important to your perception of safety? If mental illness was a basis to restrict access to guns, would personal freedom be compromised by inquiry into mental illness? Are only certain kinds of guns appropriate for ownership in our culture?