

## Letters to the Editor, Southern Daily Echo

17<sup>th</sup> January 2012

Dear Sir

It was depressing to read the substantial coverage (*7<sup>th</sup> January, Jenny Makin*) given to the totally false concept that more and stricter gun control laws will have a beneficial effect on violent crime by linking that concept to the multiple murders committed by Michael Atherton.

Certainly the UK's gun control laws are strict and generate a great deal of bureaucratic activity, both by the police and law-abiding gun-owners. Because of their complexity and irrationality, they also generate lots of prosecutions of people who have committed no anti-social act.

But linking bureaucratic activity to social usefulness is invalid unless the activity generates genuine, measurable, social benefits. And the UK's gun laws have only ever generated waste and harm.

There have been 3 major changes in UK gun laws since WW2, in 1968, 1988 and 1997.

### **The effects were the same every time:**

- Crime increased
- Sport shooting was damaged
- Trade was damaged
- More police resource was diverted from useful work to bureaucracy

Let us consider 1988, when the law introduced more shotgun controls. Both the police and the government claimed that the new controls would reduce crime without affecting sport shooting. But this is what **actually** happened:

- Robberies with shotguns, previously stable, climbed by 26% over the next 4 years;
- From steady growth, lawful shotgun owners went into immediate decline, with police pressure pushing 1,000 out of the sport every week for 4 years, a total of 200,000;
- Trade was severely damaged, with many shops going out of business;
- About 3 million police man-hours were consumed and therefore not available for useful work.

The device, if any, used in violent crime and murder, is relatively unimportant. By comparison with human intent, it is immaterial.

Here in Jersey a man snapped about 5 months ago and stabbed 6 people to death with kitchen knives. The Gold, Silver and Bronze in British murdering are held by a doctor with a syringe and 2 arsonists. Over 9 out of every 10 British murders are committed WITHOUT guns. To imagine that the c.9% of British murders committed by shooting (of which about 90% are with illegal guns) would **not** occur if, by some magical regulation, the murderers had had their guns removed, requires a substantial level of faith, as there is absolutely no evidence to support such a belief.

The most serious failing of British gun control is that it stops victims from defending themselves effectively – with a gun – against violent criminals.

Yours sincerely

**Derek Bernard**