

TKC036

Carefully considered as the executive's proposals are there is a growing sense that Edinburgh's response to any difficult situation is to introduce a ban. This in turn creates a sense (right or wrong) that, for political ends, the executive is prepared to victimise minorities. A recent comment went along the lines of "Why would anyone need to own a sword?" I am paraphrasing but I could equally ask, "Why would anyone want to go to a soccer game, or play shinty, or go hill walking?" Edged weapons interest many law abiding people. There are many reason for this: they may be historical re-enactors, they may have an interest in antiques, they may have an interest in the technology of such weapons, they may have an interest in the heroic martial traditions of Scotland. Whatever decision the executive makes it must recognise this aspect and seek to minimise the intrusion of law into the benign interests of law abiding, tax paying voters. The real problem here is not swords or knives but the misuse of swords and knives and the people who perpetrate this misuse will simply move onto other weapons if their access to swords and knives is restricted. It would be cold comfort to me if me or any of mine were stabbed to death with a sharpened length of mild steel after knives and swords were banned. The potential absurdity of a ban was demonstrated in a newspaper letter some months ago that called for any knife ban to be extended to baseball bats on the grounds that the British do not play baseball. The analogy here is good as the writer clearly could not see that a baseball bat is simply a turned length of hardwood. Likewise a knife is simply a sharpened length of steel. Rather than banning or restricting something that can simply be manufactured by a criminal would it not be better to beef up current laws and introduce hefty prison terms for carrying any potentially offensive weapon? There are many good reasons for owning a sword or decorative knife. There are none for carrying this item in the street. Let's get tough on the violent criminals and let the poor old Scottish voter keep his grandfather's bayonet hanging on the wall. Legislation should hurt criminals so use this opportunity to send them a message that even being caught with a blade will result in years in prison. The target "audience" for this legislation are young and two years to a teenager is forever.

Target the perpetrator, not the tool he or she uses, as they will just find another tool. Many of you will have families: ask yourselves one question only...what legislation will make the streets they walk truly safer?

Best wishes in your deliberations.

Bob Johnston