

Graham T. Priest

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4-07-05

Gery McLaughlin
FAO Mr J. Mc Connell MSP
St Andrew's House
Regent Rd.
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear Mr McLaughlin,

Tackling Knife Crime - A Consultation

Thank you for your letter of 28th June together with the above document. I enclose my annotated 'executive summary' to be considered along with this more detailed response.

Firstly I wholeheartedly support the implementation of the three points i.e. the rise in age from 16-18 for purchase (not that criminals will buy knives!), the doubling of the sentence for use of an offensive weapon & increased police powers to arrest & search suspicious persons.

However I totally disagree with the licensing proposals and total ban on swords.

Please consider the following points not discussed or explained in the consultation document.

a) In the 'crime statistics for Scotland' and the 'number of convictions for handling an offensive weapon' on pp.2-3 it was not possible to tell how many offences were carried out with domestic as opposed to non-domestic weapons. Please provide this data to all the people interested, as this is the basic premise behind the consultation. If, as suspected, more domestic than non-domestic implements are used the legislation is not needed.

b) Page 3(5) fails to divulge the statistics relating to sword crime as opposed to domestic implement crime. Please publish this too.

c) Page 3(6). Although swords are designed for combat, many are valuable artefacts of great historical value and have been studied and collected by private individuals for centuries. Not every owner is concerned with their use in criminal activity (ask the Queen who owns many thousands of swords) and this aspect of sword ownership is not even discussed.

d) Pages 4 to 5 are the way forward without the rest. Do only "young men" p.5(10) carry knives? Hard to believe that this is not a sexist comment! I cannot see any mention of social factors, family influences, racial background, educational attainment, poverty etc. here. Surely alcohol & drugs are only symptoms and not the causes of crime.

e) Page 6(18). Your definition will outlaw all gardening, craft, woodworking & similar knives not used to prepare food. I assume tradesmen and artists will need to be licensed?

f) Page 7(22). This definition will apply to pruning hooks, machetes, scythes, shears and similar agricultural implements. Will farmers and gardeners need a licence too?

g) Section 2. The whole premise that the creation of licences & bans can control crime should be examined in the light of the situation with certain firearms, and in particular handguns, that have been in force for many years. I think statistics will show that the use of such weapons in crime has increased despite the vast amount of effort, money and time that has gone into this process. The general public are no more safe than they were, the public purse is diminished and law-abiding citizens have lost a legitimate interest or hobby.

h) All the conditions proposed in p.9(26) are a potential bureaucratic nightmare. Have we not learned from EEC experience? Remember the 'straight bananas'? Here the assumption is made that such items are newly manufactured. What about antiques? Should decorative items be marred with modern "ID numbers"? Would we deface an oil painting or piece of porcelain in this way? Retailers would need an army of officials to keep track of the weapons & tools. Do not MPs & JPs have enough to do already? Such a paper trail is unworkable and will not deter a single criminal. The implements are in every home already and will simply 'vanish' until needed in a criminal role. This is just a 'knee-jerk' reaction or an attempt to create yet another 'quango' for the benefit of the political/legal professions.

i) Page 10(32). Cost is always under estimated (note your famous premises!). Local authorities struggle to fulfil their legitimate roles as it is. Either law abiding citizens will be penalised financially to set up an ineffective system, or some profit making 'specialist' concern will remove resources from schools & hospitals to operate a scheme that is only a window dressing.

j) Page 10(33). Of course second-hand dealers of non-domestic knives & swords exist. Each year hundreds of collectors and dealers attend events such as the 'War & Peace Show' at Beltring in Kent (20th-24th July). This has a thousand stalls, many with antique or vintage weapons on sale. I enclose a leaflet for the Military Odyssey at Detling and suggest that a one of you attends. At least some Scottish companies are represented. The local economy, particularly with regards to accommodation, food & drink, fuel etc. benefits hugely each year. Unlike the average soccer match no violence or anti-social behaviour ever takes place!

k) Totally ignored in your consultation is the role and circumstances of the individual collector like myself. I bought my first weapon (a sword) at 14 years, have amassed a large collection of antique and vintage bayonets and hope that my children will be able to sell them for their financial well-being on my death. Ownership has increased scholarship in an obscure field and has helped me write books and articles. This has supported various museums & collections, international organisations etc. that lack the funds to carry out such work. Both the National Army Museum in London & the Royal Armouries in Leeds have gained from my hobby. Your potential legislation will remove the value of my collection, as it will be impossible to sell it, deprive me of my hobby (as trading within the collection will be proscribed) and will criminalise me for carrying out a peaceful activity that I have enjoyed for 46 years.

I hope to read that this really was a consultation and that common sense will prevail. Scotland could actually become a beacon for examining the causes of crime and for dealing with the social consequences in a logical manner.

Yours sincerely



Graham Priest

Consultation Questions

<p>Question 1 Should a licence be needed to sell non-domestic knives?</p> <p>NO THE KNIVES ARE NO DIFFERENT IN SHARE TO DOMESTIC KNIVES SO CANNOT BE SEPARATED FOR LICENCES.</p>
<p>Question 2 What types of knife should be covered by a definition of a non-domestic knife?</p> <p>TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE ANY DOMESTIC KNIFE CAN BE USED AS A CRIMINAL OR MILITARY WEAPON.</p>
<p>Question 3 What conditions should be imposed on someone seeking a licence to sell non-domestic knives?</p> <p>NONE</p>
<p>Question 4 What would be the costs for businesses of licensing the sale of knives?</p> <p>MANY ANTIQUE DEALERS, HERRINGBONE & BIV OUTLETS WOULD GO OUT OF BUSINESS. ONLY CIVIL SERVANTS OR USARL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WOULD PROSPER ON THE FEES.</p>

<p>Question 5 Should it be a criminal offence to purchase a (non-domestic) knife from an unlicensed seller?</p> <p>NO HOW CAN THE RESCENDANT OF A MILITARY ORDER WHO SELLS THE FAMILY SWORD BE EXPECTED TO HAVE A LICENCE? ARE THEY CRIMINALS?</p>
<p>Question 6 Should shops require a licence to sell swords?</p> <p>NO</p>
<p>Question 7 Should the sale of swords by shops be restricted to require them to sell only to members of approved organisations?</p> <p>NO THERE ARE INDIVIDUAL COLLECTORS & OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS.</p>
<p>Question 8 Should the sale of all swords be banned?</p> <p>NO MANY COLLECTORS OF USARNS WOULD BECOME WORKLESS. THIS IS UNJUST WHEN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO COLLECT & INVEST</p>

<p>Question 9 If so, should there be any groups who are exempted from that ban (i.e. should there be any reasons/uses for which it remains legitimate to sell swords)?</p> <p>NO JUST MANY GROUPS BUT INDIVIDUALS TO WHAT ABOUT ROBATE ARRANGEMENTS?</p>
<p>Question 10 Should the sale of only samurai swords be banned?</p> <p>NO</p>
<p>Question 11 If so, should any groups of people be exempt from that ban (i.e. should there be any reasons/uses for which it remains legitimate to sell samurai swords)?</p> <p>REAL SAMURAI SWORDS ARE VERY VALUABLE, ARTISTIC & HISTORIC ITEMS. MANY OWNERS WILL HAVE INVESTED HEAVILY IN THEM.</p>
<p>Question 12 How should a samurai sword be defined?</p> <p>ONLY DEFINITION IS A SWORD USED BY A SAMURAI!</p>
<p>Question 13 Is there a case for individual licences for the purchase of swords?</p> <p>SHOULD NOT BE NECESSARY AS NO LICENCES SHOULD BE MADE!</p>

Respondent Information Form

Please complete the details below and attach it with your response. This will help ensure we handle your response appropriately.

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Name: *GRAHAM PRIEST*

Postal Address:

Consultation title:
TACKLING KNIFE CRIME - A CONSULTATION

1. Are you responding as:

- (a) an individual (go to 2a/b)
- (b) on behalf of a group or organisation (go to 2c)

2a. Individuals:

Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in SE library and/or on SE website)?

- Yes (go to 2b below)
- No, not at all