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How About a Comprehensive Bone Ban Treaty?

In the opening scenes of screenwriter Kubrick's film 2001: A Space Odyssey, an ape from times long past picks up a bone and begins to experiment. The viewer presumes the creature comprehends the bone's potential for destruction for in the next scene, a group of apes attack another group of apes and beats them to death with . . . you got it, bones.

Fashionable rhetoric circulating around the world today suggests moral imperatives for eliminating nuclear weapons. A test ban treaty seems to be a logical first step. Let us imagine for a moment that we could wave a magic wand and all atoms heavier than bismuth became nonexistent . . . the means by which men create atomic weapons would simply disappear. Of course, large segments of the planet would go dark and cold for we would also lose the ability to heat and light homes with atomic power. Many of our navy's ships would lie dead in the water.

What "bone" would replace the "bomb"? How about guns? Another wave of the wand can eliminate all machines that operate on pressures greater than 100 pounds per square inch. Presto-changeo, all weapons powered with gunpowder would be rendered useless and the world would be rid of the means to launch lethal projectiles with high pressure gasses. Of course automobiles and airplanes would stop, electricity generating plants would spin down . . .

What new "bone" then? How about a microbe for which only we have the antidote that would eliminate our adversaries. Whoops! Better wave the wand again and eliminate all forms of life below carpet mites. Now the means for making penicillin disappear. All of the symbiotic relationships between plants, animals and microbes are thrown in disarray . . . with catastrophic results. Further, the EPA would convulse in fits of apoplexy over the sheer numbers species just driven to extinction. New bones keep popping up? No problem. Wave the wand . . . spears, arrows, catapults, clubs, and yes . . . even dried old bones can be made to disappear.

What kind of protection may we expect by wrapping ourselves in the cloak of morality? None. The Christians may have been Rome's most moral inhabitants but the lions had bigger bones. History of man is replete with examples. When predators have the biggest bones both life and property of a victim are certain to become the predator's possessions. Had the ape victims in Kubrick's film gathered up a mess of bigger bones, the scene would have a different ending: The righteous victims might have restored the peace by wiping out the invading predators. At the very least, the predators would have retreated and society of the era would have settled into a kind of cold-war balance of power . . . with the economies of both sides artificially bolstered by a "bones race."

Daily news provides us with examples of the ugliest predatory tendencies on earth; all perpetrated by men. The world's predators don't read papers signed by honorable men. Amongst signers, there will always be those who chose not to honor what they signed. Attempts to control technology deemed "too terrible to possess" have unintended consequences. It's clear that China now possess modern data on fabrication of United State's bones. Nobody knows where all the Soviet Union's suitcase-size bones have gone. Our own Commerce Department has sanctioned sale of billions of little bones (a list of ugly pathogenic toxins as long as your arm!) to Iraq.

It is incumbent upon those who would call themselves honorable to possess the biggest and baddest bones in existence. No matter what bones men may agree to ban, other men will simply ignore the ban or devise equally effective if not more terrible tools of destruction. The only way to stop them from being used is to nullify the advantages for doing so. Laying down our bones may well be suicidal, not only for ourselves but those we claim to protect. Wishing, naive passivism and "can't we all just get along?" mentalities contribute nothing to the defense of a peaceful existence. Truly honorable men cannot lay down their bones until the wave of a magic wand renders all men incapable of disservice to other men.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Nuckolls, III". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert L. Nuckolls, III

Doctors' kitchen knives ban call

A&E doctors are calling for a ban on long pointed kitchen knives to reduce deaths from stabbing.

A team from West Middlesex University Hospital said violent crime is on the increase - and kitchen knives are used in as many as half of all stabbings.

They argued many assaults are committed impulsively, prompted by alcohol and drugs, and a kitchen knife often makes an all too available weapon.

The research is published in the British Medical Journal.

The researchers said there was no reason for long pointed knives to be publicly available at all.

They consulted 10 top chefs from around the UK, and found such knives have little practical value in the kitchen.

None of the chefs felt such knives were essential, since the point of a short blade was just as useful when a sharp end was needed.

The researchers said a short pointed knife may cause a substantial superficial wound if used in an assault - but is unlikely to penetrate to inner organs.

In contrast, a pointed long blade pierces the body like "cutting into a ripe melon".

The use of knives is particularly worrying amongst adolescents, say the researchers, reporting that 24% of 16-year-olds have been shown to carry weapons, primarily knives.

The study found links between easy access to domestic knives and violent assault are long established.

French laws in the 17th century decreed that the tips of table and street knives be ground smooth.

A century later, forks and blunt-ended table knives were introduced in the UK in an effort to reduce injuries during arguments in public eating houses.

The researchers say legislation to ban the sale of long pointed knives would be a key step in the fight against violent crime.

"The Home Office is looking for ways to reduce knife crime.

"We suggest that banning the sale of long pointed knives is a sensible and practical measure that would have this effect."

Government response

Home Office spokesperson said there were already extensive restrictions in place to control the sale and possession of knives.

"The law already prohibits the possession of offensive weapons in a public place, and the possession of knives in public without good reason or lawful authority, with the exception of a folding pocket knife with a blade not exceeding three inches.

"Offensive weapons are defined as any weapon designed or adapted to cause injury, or intended by the person possessing them to do so.

"An individual has to demonstrate that he had good reason to possess a knife, for example for fishing, other sporting purposes or as part of his profession (e.g. a chef) in a public place.

"The manufacture, sale and importation of 17 bladed, pointed and other offensive weapons have been banned, in addition to flick knives and gravity knives."

A spokesperson for the Association of Chief Police Officers said: "ACPO supports any move to reduce the number of knife related incidents, however, it is important to consider the practicalities of enforcing such changes."

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/health/4581871.stm>

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