

A mother and two of her daughters, relatives of ours, visited us from Sweden several years ago. A local relative was impressed that one of the young women was a hunter and regularly took part in the fall moose season. He asked her several questions about the rifle she used, the way the hunt took place, and so forth. Then, he showed her his guns.

“What do you need all those for?” she asked. “In Sweden, we have hunting guns, sure, but we have just what we need. A rifle for moose and other large game, a shot gun for small game. We would never have a bunch of weapons like this.”

He was flustered. The same loss for intelligible words appeared after a young man in Florida asked Senator Marco Rubio if he would pledge to refuse any donations from the National Rifle Association. Rubio hemmed and hawed, mentioning his “agenda”, whatever he meant by that, several times in the same sentence, but never really answered.

Another friend recently told of an encounter with a neighbor of a relative in the Southwest. The woman had mentioned that her husband had asked her if she were taking her gun on a hike. She had replied that she would not; it was too heavy. My friend asked the lady what would have been a reason for taking the weapon along. She could not answer; there was not, of course, any logical reason to arm herself on this hike.

And now, the person who calls himself President of the United States has said—arm teachers, problem solved. What a foolhardy statement to make, but only the latest in a series of stupid remarks that have come from the highest office in the land for the last thirteen months.

What has happened to our country? We demonize immigrants—though most of us are descendants from people who have spent only a few generations in this country. We think the solution to problems is force. We refuse to accept proof that our climate is changing, and not for the better. We don’t provide adequate and affordable health care for our people. Bullying has become a national pastime. We allow degradation of our air and water. We let our soil erode and allow much of it to end up in the Gulf of Mexico. We let greed determine corporate behavior. In less than two hundred and fifty years we have used—and used up—the best of a pristine continent. And it appears that greed and power have been the chief motives.

It seems that a group of young people, reeling from the horror of the massacre at their school this month, have taken the lead in attempting to bring some sort of sanity back to this land again. Gun control, and a change in whatever mentality it is that is so pervasive in this country these days, is a vital starting point to regaining some national self-worth. There is no reason for anyone—whatever his or her age—to have the kind of weapons that many consider is their right to “bear.” A misreading of the Constitution, and an absolutely insane alliance between politics of the most conservative right and the gun activists, have been major factors in bringing us to this point.

I hope all of our local schools join in the walkout on March 14th. I hope many also rally—in Washington, D.C. or any number of other towns and cities across the country—on March 24th.

And, each one of us must also pledge to take some action. The first thing I will do is write a letter asking the Congressman of our gerrymandered district the same question the young man in Florida posed to Senator Rubio. “Will you, John Moolenaar, give all the money you have received in campaign contributions from the NRA to charity? And will you promise never to take another dime from that organization?”