

PERMISSIBLE POETRY

By Peter H. Wolf

MONEY!

Loose money in politics just grows and grows;
Campaigners must raise it or risk getting hosed.
The Supreme Court says it's speech,
But it really is leech
Off the influence bought freely through the nose.

(June 2007)

GREED

Most economic abuses grow out of greed,
And can wreak hefty havoc with surprising speed.
To expect the free market
To check greed or control it,
Like a fox guarding the chicken coop, doesn't succeed.

(October 2013 {and the Pope agrees! 11/26/13})

GLOBAL WARMING

Global warming is really scary.
True or not, we must be wary.
If a tipping point we reach,
You'll be living on a beach;
Or perhaps a bone-dry prairie.

(May 2014)

GUNS

I worked in a big-city court where we see the tragic, relentless results of guns every day -- from lost lives, to imprisoned lives, to wheel-chair-bound lives. They're not just mass shootings; they're the drip, drip, drip of daily devastation. When accidents and suicides are added to homicides, it all adds up to 31,000 deaths per year from firearms, 85 per day, one every 17 minutes.

Could we have too many endlessly available guns? Has allowing even more citizens to possess their own weapons ever quelled these senseless killings?

The horror of it all generated from me a poetic parody.
Could poetry shame us? Why not try...

In 1854 Alfred (Lord) Tennyson, then Poet Laureate of England, wrote "The Charge of the Light Brigade." His poem became immensely popular -- about a battle six weeks earlier in the Crimean War. (At least with Russia's takeover of Crimea in 2014 we almost know where it is.) There was a deadly rout of the British that arose from a mistaken decision for light cavalry to charge a well-defended Russian artillery position.

The poem suggests a similarly botched decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *D.C. v. Heller* in 2008. A bare majority held there is a constitutional right to keep and bear arms quite apart from a well-regulated militia. Our nation owns a consistently muddled failure to enact effective interstate norms for the safe purchase and possession of devices whose sole purpose is to kill, which even *Heller* would permit.

So here's my pleading poetic parody, with much thanks to Lord Tennyson whose poem is to the right:

2015
CHARGE OF THE GUN BRIGADE
Peter H. Wolf

*In one year, in one year,
Every year onward,
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
Gun accidents per year!
Many children so dear:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.*

*Homicides, homicides,
Every year onward,
Eleven thousand per year!
Not much to cheer.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode eleven thousand.*

1854
CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE
Alfred (Lord) Tennyson

*Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.*

*"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not tho' the soldiers knew
Some one had blundered:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.*

Suicides, suicides,
Every year onward,
Nineteen thousand per year!
 Cheerlessness, not cheer.
Stormed with shot and shell,
Sadly they rode and fell,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell,
 Rode nineteen thousand.

Injuries, injuries,
Every year onward,
Seventy-five thousand bled!
 Shot, but not dead.
Bodies oft shattered and broken,
They rode back, but not --
 Not a mere token.

Guns to right of us,
Guns to left of us,
Guns in front of us,
 Volleyed and thundered.
In theaters and malls,
In schools and in halls;
A profundity of guns --
Must it always be thus?
 All the world wondered.

Three thousand killed on 9/11;
We started two wars, lost
 thousands more.
Yet every two hours,
 To guns we lose seven.
In fourteen years since,
Twelve dozen times the gore.
The size of Miami,
 Yet where's the roar?

When can this agony fade?
Oh, the wild charge we've made!
On ourselves, by ourselves --
 All the world wondered.
Honor the gun brigade?
 Shame should be thundered.

Cannon to the right of them,
Cannon to the left of them,
Cannon in front of them
 Volleyed and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death
Into the mouth of Hell,
 Rode the six hundred.

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air,
Sab'ring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
 All the world wondered:
Plunged in the battery smoke,
Right through the line they
 broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre-stroke
 Shattered and sundered.
Then they rode back, but not --
 Not the six hundred.

Cannon to the right of them,
Cannon to the left of them,
Cannon behind them
 Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
 Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
Oh, the wild charge they made!
 All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
 Noble Six Hundred!