

Industry News

SAAMI, Remington Awakening, 'Crime Bill' Causes Sales Boom

Text & Photo
by Robert Hausman

The formerly low-profile Sporting Arms & Ammunition Manufacturer's Institute (SAAMI), which was founded in 1926 to establish gun and ammo manufacturing standards, is now entering a new role as an advocacy organization. The organized attacks on the industry on the part of the media and some members of Congress has prompted the formerly rather staid organization which is composed of 16 major manufacturers into action.

The group's new effort will include the distribution of background papers on legislative issues (presented in five pocket-size folders), and a series of meetings with representatives of the major media.

Finally, a Washington representative will be hired to take SAAMI's case to Congress. More cooperation between SAAMI and the newer, more politically aggressive American Shooting Sports Council, Inc. (ASSC) is also on the drawing board.

It may have taken some of the more old-line firearms companies a while to discover that the anti-gunners were really after all guns and ammunition, but it's nice to have them in the fight at last.

Remington

Remington Arms Co. (a SAAMI member) is also undertaking its own activist agenda in light of recent proposals before Congress that call for prohibitive increases in the federal excise taxes on handgun ammunition to help pay for health care reform.

Thomas L. Millner, president and CEO, says he has written to 15 members of Congress — who represent districts where Remington sites are located — to express his company's opposition to these proposals. He is planning a trip to Washington to meet with Congress.

At the Grand American, the annual "world championship" of trap shooting held in Ohio in mid-August, Remington distributed 10,000 fliers asking sportsmen to get involved by writing to their elected representatives. Recently, Remington's 2,500 employees were urged to become activists as were a group of 250 Remington dealers during a meeting in Denver.

Millner emphasizes that his beef is not with the various health care proposals but rather with those "who would use that important national debate as a ruse to limit our rights and abilities to lawfully conduct business."

Remington's focus is heavily on the damage the proposed ammo tax will cause to the industry, its workers, and proven existing conservation programs funded by the present excise tax. Millner's letter explaining the company's opposition to the tax was also published in at least one newspaper in Herkimer, NY, not far from the company's Ilion firearms plant.

Gun Ban Spurs Sales

The Senate passage on Aug. 25, of the unfunded social welfare program dubbed the "crime bill," with its gun and magazine ban provisions, is resulting in a business bonanza for the industry. Just as the passage of the Brady Bill (now the Brady Law) gave incentive to the public to purchase handguns and ammunition (before they couldn't anymore), now the passage of the so-called "crime" bill is stimulating the purchase of long guns looking anything remotely military. A high tech appearance, or those with plastic stocks, are eagerly being snapped up by buyers who want anything that remotely resembles an "assault weapon."

Also selling well and in short supply for some models are modern high capacity auto-

loading handguns and magazines which will be banned by the new law.

An informal survey of dealers found guns not on the ban list are selling as well as those that are. One dealer who specializes in pre-89 import ban rifles reports business climbed 50% in the first weekend after the "crime" bill's passage.

Manufacturing production has been brisk to keep up with the demand and there have been unconfirmed reports that some manufacturers have temporarily ceased production of more traditional looking sporting models to shift emphasis to the manufacture of military styled products. Apparently the American public is not buying President Clinton's argument that they will be safer without these guns.

While many manufacturers are cashing in on the demand for modern looking guns, others seek to carve out their market niche with more traditional firearms. One such firm is herewith profiled.

A Fox Gets The Game

The famous old A.H. Fox guns are being built once again by Connecticut Shotgun Mfg. Co., P.O. Box 1692, Dept. GWK, New Britain, CT 06051-1692. Offering the higher grades of the original Fox 20-gauge double barrel shotgun — polishing, bluing, engraving, stock checkering and fitting are all performed manually. Production, which began about a year ago, is limited to only about 100 units annually. Prices range from about \$5,000 to \$25,000 with a one year wait for delivery. High labor costs for the firm's European trained gunsmiths account for the high purchase price.

Tony Galazan, a longtime high-grade gun trader and Connecticut Shotgun Mfg. Co.'s CEO, explains that the A.H. Fox guns were manufactured in Philadelphia, PA, from 1905 until the early 1930s. Production was then undertaken by Savage Arms who produced them until World War Two.

In the course of his business as a dealer in fine used guns, Galazan found that the A.H. Fox specimens were among the greatest in demand and decided to produce them once again. While 12-gauge Fox guns were built from 1905, 20-gauge guns were not marketed until 1912 and very few 20-gauges were ever manufactured. Galazan estimates that about 3,500 were made with fewer than 700 of these being in the higher grades. Their rarity and "perfect proportions" led him to produce the smaller gauge gun. Serial numbers are being assigned sequentially from the point earlier production was halted.

Top Notch Gloves

A quality accessory for fall shooting can be found in the Marksman Model H16 shooting gloves. Constructed of an unlined Cabretta leather shell, the gloves conform to the hands for extra trigger finger sensitivity. An adjustable loop and pile closure allows a comfortable fit.

The Marksman gloves are part of the extensive Promark line of sports gloves and mittens available from Wells Lamont, Dept. GWK, 6640 West Touhy Ave., Niles, IL 60714-4587. The firm's offerings include fabric and leather outdoor, shooting and hunting gloves as well as a separate product line in women's sizes.

Providing a product specifically for ladies is something more manufacturers need to do if the interest of women in the shooting sports is to be encouraged. Research has shown the lack of suitable outdoor clothing and gear designed specifically for women is one of the major barriers to their participation.



An exquisite gun deserves to be handled with quality gloves. Here the Promark Marksman shooting gloves cradle a newly produced top-of-the-line A.H. Fox shotgun.

Gun Production Up 77% In First Half Of 1993

Evidence continues to mount that firearms sales are booming around the country — the latest statistics coming from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF).

BATF reported that total firearms production was up a whopping 77% in the first six months of 1993 over the same period in the previous year — from 2,885,643 to 5,110,337.

The increases were as follows:

— pistols: up 106% from 1,094,064 to 2,257,614;

— revolvers: up 79% from 309,044 to 552,618;

— rifles: up 71% from 676,774 to 1,155,654; and

— shotguns: up 42% from 805,761 to 1,144,451.

And clearly most of the increased production is flowing into the domestic market, since exports were up an impressive 40% — from 295,370 to 412,942 — but still far behind the overall increase in production.

The single most impressive statistic was that production of .50 caliber revolvers jumped 886% from 2,874 to 28,327.

Many gun dealers say the anti-gunners, including President Clinton, are their best salespersons.

"A lot of people are afraid they might not be able to have a gun. That fear has prompted them to buy one," Cesare Vincenzi, assistant manager at Jim's Military Collectibles in Plano, TX, told Associated Press.

Lee Papageorgio, who owns Edelman's gun shop on New York's Long Island, pointed out, "This (assault weapons) ban is having the adverse effect of what they're trying to accomplish."

"When that legislation first came out, it was like a bazaar in here. We couldn't get enough from distributors. People are afraid they won't be able to get one in the future. That's what a feeding frenzy is all about."

The Brady Bill also was a boon to gun sales last year.

Norman Van Wegenen, who runs a gun store in Orem, UT, said, "There was a tremendous surge in sales late last year and in May. It was unbelievable."

He and other dealers have given mock sales awards to the President.

"Bill Clinton has been very, very good for sales. We appreciate it," Van Wegenen said. "People are just concerned about their enduring right to own firearms."

AP noted the huge demand has driven the

prices of models such as the Colt AR-15 Sporter rifle up from \$800 to \$1,500 or higher, even though anyone who has wanted such a gun has had plenty of time to buy it because of the prolonged fight over the Crime Bill.

AP also pointed out that many people expect the boom in gun sales to continue, because the anti-gunners will continue pushing even more oppressive measures.

"There's been a steady flow of buying. This bill (the Crime Bill) gives the buying frenzy extra length," said Bob Lesmeister of the National Association of Federally Licensed Firearms Dealers and editor of the association's *American Firearms Industry* trade magazine.

UK May Abolish Right to Silence

In proposed new guidelines for police in the United Kingdom, which the Conservative government of Prime Minister John Major hopes to enact this fall, the rewording of the caution read to suspects effectively demolishes the right to remain silent.

The Wall Street Journal reported on Aug. 19 that the broad new guidelines undermine the principle that a suspect is presumed innocent until proven guilty, and that a defendant's silence can be used against him or her.

Under the new guidelines, British police would caution a suspect: "You do not have to say anything. But if you do not mention now something which you later use in your defense, the court may decide that your failure to mention it now strengthens the case against you. A record will be made of anything you say, and it may be given in evidence if you are brought to trial."

This has not yet been offered by Attorney General Janet Reno and President Clinton in the US. "But this is the U.K., and there aren't any Miranda rights," the *Journal* noted. "There isn't even a Bill of Rights, or a written constitution. A government majority can, in theory, change the law whenever it wishes to do away with free speech, free press, peaceful assembly or the right to bear arms."

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