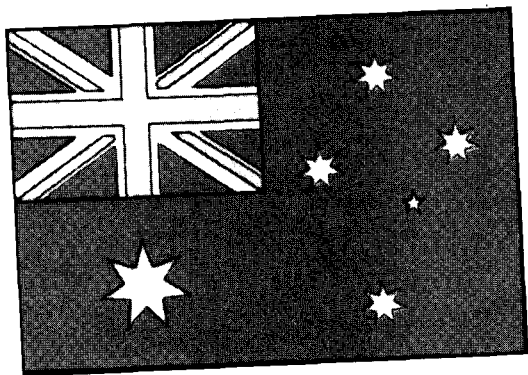


nra.org), says that murders with guns, assaults with guns, armed robberies, and home invasions all increased after the Australian government confiscated about 660,000 privately owned firearms in 1996. "According to the Australian government—and official statistics—the NRA has its facts wrong," *The Christian Science Monitor* reported.

Well, yes and no. The murder claim is somewhat misleading. According to the Australian Institute of Criminology, a government-funded think tank, the number of gun homicide victims dropped from 104 in 1996 to 79 in 1997. But since 35 of the 1996 victims died in a single episode (the Port Arthur massacre, which was the catalyst for the government's gun seizure), the number of gun homicide incidents actually rose. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the total number of homicides (with and without guns) also rose, from 350 in 1996 to 360 in 1997, before dropping to 333 in 1998. That year there were 54 gun homicides, about half as many as in 1996.

The NRA's other claims are on firmer ground. ABS figures indicate that, between 1996 and 1998, assaults rose 16 percent, armed robberies jumped a startling 73 percent, and unlawful entries went up 8 percent.



DATA

Pro-Choice Congressmen

By Katherine Mangu-Ward

School choice already exists for those who are able to pay for it, and many of those well-heeled parents have been elected to high office. In the House of Representatives, 37 percent of members with school-age kids are sending one or more children to private school (discounting 62 non-respondents). Fifty percent of senators with school-age kids do the same (discounting seven non-respondents). The comparable figure for regular American households with school-age kids is about 15 percent.

Which raises the question: Exactly when will they afford such an opportunity to their constituents?

Where Members of Congress Send Their Children to School



House of Representatives

Private School: 113 (71 Republicans; 42 Democrats; 0 Independents)

Public School: 193 (96 Republicans; 95 Democrats; 2 Independents)

No School-Age Children: 22 (13 Republicans; 9 Democrats; 0 Independents)

No Children: 45 (22 Republicans; 23 Democrats; 0 Independents)

No Response: 62 (21 Republicans; 41 Democrats; 0 Independents)

Total: 435

Senate

Private School: 41 (28 Republicans; 13 Democrats)

Public School: 42 (23 Republicans; 19 Democrats)

No School-Age Children: 1 (1 Democrat)

No Children: 9 (3 Republicans; 6 Democrats)

No Response: 7 (1 Republican; 6 Democrats)

Total: 100

SOURCE: "HOW MEMBERS OF CONGRESS PRACTICE SCHOOL CHOICE," THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION.

Defenders of gun control cite the 1998 decline in homicide as evidence that Australia's policies are working, while opponents cite the two-year increases in other offenses as evidence that the government has encouraged

criminals by disarming law-abiding citizens. It's hard to say who is right. Homicides in Australia have been fluctuating since the

late 1980s, and the upward trends in assaults, robberies, and unlawful entries began before 1996. Still, it may be significant that the robbery trend accelerated dramatically after potential victims were forced to turn in their guns.

No Liberté Online

By Sara Rimensnyder

A recent court decision in France may presage a frustrating conflict between the borderless Internet and the French elite. On July 24, the American Web company Yahoo! testified in Paris

against a Gallic court's ruling that it must block French users' access to a site where people buy and sell Nazi memorabilia. Jean-Jacques Gomez, the judge who decided the case, argues that Yahoo! disregarded French territorial boundaries by making the site accessible in France, where it is illegal to sell racist merchandise.

Gomez had ordered Yahoo! to return to court in July with evidence that they had taken steps to block French users. Instead, company co-founder Jerry Yang sent an expert witness to testify that such a barrier would be

BRICKBATS

◆ **Cruising to a Virginia Beach strip club to celebrate his 23rd birthday, Paris Williams and two of his friends decided to watch a sexually explicit movie on the TVs they had recently installed in their 1997 Hyundai. Unfortunately, a state trooper on the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel spotted them and charged them with public display of obscene material. He also discovered—oops—some crack and marijuana in the car.**

◆ **Last year, a Connecticut law went into effect allowing police to seize the weapons of people they think might pose a danger to themselves or others. Police subsequently raided Thompson Bosee's home in Greenwich and took 11 firearms that he legally owned. Why did they think he might pose a danger? Because someone had allegedly seen him in his yard with a gun, and when they checked, they found he'd failed to appear in court eight years earlier on a drunken driving charge.**

◆ **The word *history* has been deemed sexist and will no longer be used at England's Stockport College. The school has also banned *ladies and gentlemen* because of their association with social class. *Mad, crazy, and manic* have been tossed because they stigmatize mental illness. *Man-made* is sexist, so it's out too. And the phrase *slaving over a hot stove* minimizes the horrors of slavery, so it can't be used either.**

—Charles Oliver

technically impossible. In interviews, Yang has been blunt: "We are not going to change the content of our sites in the United States just because someone in France is asking us to," he told the French daily *Liberation*. Gomez will issue his decision in mid-August.

In related news, the French government is pushing the Liberty of Communication Act, which would require anyone publishing a Web site to register with the government. The bill's opponents have pointed out that anyone who wants to publish anonymously can evade the law simply by using a foreign Web host.

French leaders aren't oblivious to such logistical problems. At a G-8 meeting in May, Prime Minister Lionel Jospin called for "a collective response on a global scale" to Internet crime and terrorism.

The Net, an intrinsically global medium, clearly has the French authorities in a tizzy. They've fought doggedly in recent years to defend their territory against cultural marauders (read: the United States, with its blockbuster movies and Anglo-Saxon words). But what to do about the confounded Internet? Convince the whole world to conform to Paris'

views on free speech? That's gonna take a lot of *vin rouge*.

Back to School

By Jesse Walker

One popular cause during the last several years has been the drive to close the School of the Americas, a training center for Latin American soldiers in Fort Benning, Georgia. The school's alumni include former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, former Haitian dictator Raoul Cedras, and Salvadoran death squad chief Roberto D'Aubuisson, along with many less-famous auto-

crats, assassins, and thugs. Critics have long charged the institute with teaching torture, terrorism, and politically motivated murder.

These charges were bolstered in 1996, when some of the school's manuals came to light. The Pentagon subsequently admitted that the texts discussed such techniques as "motivation by fear, payment of bounties for enemy dead, false imprisonment and the use of truth serum," while denying that the materials were still in use. (Prior to this, of course, the military had denied that such texts existed at all.)

In May, as the argument grew more audible, Congress stepped in and shut down the School of the Americas. In the same breath, it

opened the Defense Institute for Hemispheric Security Cooperation, which will teach the same curriculum to the same people, in the same place. Amazingly, this was

packaged as a reform,

but Sen. Paul Coverdell (R-Ga.)

wasn't fooled—the changes, he told the press, were "basically cosmetic." This

was an impressive admission, given its source:

Coverdell, who died of a stroke in July, had long opposed closing

or seriously reforming the school.

Recoding Downtown

By Charles Paul Freund

Here's a market paradox: In recent decades, the massive redevelopment of many older cities has led to the seeming antithesis of dynamic urban life. Innumerable downtown streets have been lined with new but sterile "box" buildings and are often devoid of any activity not generated by offices. There are many causes behind this effect, including bad development, zoning, and a tangle of safety code restrictions.

Safety codes have been deadly for older buildings. Many owners who have considered rehabilitating old properties have had to abandon their plans when faced with the enormous costs of bringing a structure "up to

