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class Americans began to acquire the habit, believing that cleanliness would help them climb the social ladder. Their views were reflected in Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (1868), which depicted the relative ease with which Dick, a street urchin, marched into respectability with a good scrub and a change of clothes.

Washing became the norm in most middle-class households by mid-century. But while washstands became common, bathtubs were still a novelty; in 1860, Boston had only 3,910 of them for a population of 177,840. Full-body bathing provided an adventure to those who tested it out. As New York socialite George Templeton Strong commented after building himself a bathroom in 1843, "I've led rather an amphibious life for the last week—paddling in the bathing tub every night and constantly making new discoveries in the art and mystery of ablutions."

By the late 1850s, hand soap had come into common use. American manufacturers satisfied the growing popular demand for soap by increasing production of French-style toilet soap in addition to the coarser grades used for washing laundry and cleaning floors. During the 1880s, the Cincinnati-based firm of Procter and Gamble became one of the first U.S. companies to successfully mass-produce hand soap, beginning with the introduction of the Ivory bar in 1882. But even as the "culture of cleanliness" spread among all social classes, as late as 1906, only 20 percent of the houses in Pittsburgh had bathtubs.

Thinking About Guns

"Second Thoughts About Gun Control" by James D. Wright, in *The Public Interest* (Spring 1988), 1112 16th St. N.W., Ste. 530, Washington, D.C. 20036.

At least 20,000 laws now exist in the United States that regulate or restrict the ownership or use of firearms. But do these "gun-control" laws actually reduce crime? Wright, a sociologist at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, no longer believes they do.

About 20,000 murders occur in the United States each year; 60 percent are committed with firearms. In addition, firearms are involved in half of all U.S. suicides, and approximately 2,000 accidental deaths. The *total* number of gun-related deaths is 30,000, only one to two percent of the total annual number of U.S. deaths.

Most estimates of the number of guns owned by Americans are "produced by advocates" favoring or opposing control, and are therefore not reliable. What is known is that about 250 million guns (excluding military weapons) were legally imported or manufactured in the United States during this century. Wright estimates that 150 million of these weapons remain in private hands, and that half of U.S. households have at least one firearm. Thus, even if guns were completely outlawed, the existing stock would be sufficient to supply criminals "for at least the next century." If these weapons were confiscated, police would have to seize several hundred guns to get *one* gun used in a crime.

For a criminal, a firearm is a tool that produces extra income at little cost. Duke economist Phillip Cook reports that robberies committed with

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guns yielded an average of more than \$150 (in 1976 dollars), three times more than in robberies committed with other weapons. Thus, even if the street price for a handgun tripled, robbers could recoup their expenses after two or three crimes. Moreover, if handguns were *completely* prohibited, criminals could easily create high-powered homemade weapons. Afghan tribesmen, Wright notes, make rifles capable of handling Soviet AK-47 cartridges using technology far less sophisticated than that available to the Mafia.

Social science research indicates that "gun control" laws do not reduce crime. But Wright maintains that this does not necessarily mean that such laws should be abolished; an equally plausible case can be made from social-science evidence that stricter, nationally standardized gun controls might be the solution. In short, Wright says, researchers can show that existing policies do *not* work, but they can rarely demonstrate that a new policy will be *more* effective. The gun-control debate, like most other similar controversies, centers not on "facts," but on "values, ideologies, and world views" impossible to quantify.

PRESS & TELEVISION

Copyright Confusion

"Copyright Cracks Up" by David Bollier, in *Channels* (Mar. 1988), 19 West 44th St., New York, N.Y. 10036.

"Only one thing is impossible for God," Mark Twain once remarked. It is "to find any sense in any copyright law on the planet."

Twain's quip, notes Bollier, a *Channels* contributing editor, aptly describes the current imbroglio over the ownership of TV programs. Television copyright law, he argues, has become a "baroque monstrosity."

Even using photocopiers, reproducing printed material is relatively expensive. Television shows, however, can be broadcast to millions of homes at an extremely low cost. New technologies such as videocassette recorders and cable television further reduce the expense of duplicating a TV program, increasing the odds that a show will be broadcast without a copyright-holder being compensated.

Copyright owners say they should be paid every time their work is broadcast on television or duplicated for home use. But the courts and Congress have ruled that ownership of *intellectual* property is not the legal equivalent of owning personal property; a copyright represents a share of an "intangible creation" whose use must be carefully defined.

Since 1976, Congress has introduced 420 amendments to U.S. copyright law, proposing such custom-crafted fixes as royalty taxes in attempts to provide fair compensation for copyright-holders affected by new technologies. But Congress has blocked more stringent proposals, such as taxing blank videotapes or requiring installation of anticopying chips in videocassette recorders. In 1984, the Supreme Court further thwarted copyright owners by ruling that private, noncommercial copying of televi-