

Editorial

Weapons meltdown won't stop community meltdown

The Snohomish County Council's choice to halt the auctioning of confiscated weapons in hopes of curbing crime is full of good intentions.

The council passed the ordinance halting gun auctions by the sheriff's office on May 5, just 15 days after the Columbine High School shooting. Council member Kirke Seivers told the *Seattle Times* that the idea for the ordinance preceded the shooting. But the 4-1 vote with only council member Gary Nelson opposing had a clear connection to a desperate, nationwide scramble for prevention of violence.

As people all over the nation reel at the thought of a Columbine High School reenactment in their own hometown, it is no surprise that the tools of destruction are becoming a scapegoat.

Because it is true that if someone had ensured Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold were unable to get firearms and materials to make bombs, they would not have been able to inflict the amount of damage that they did. Guns are a more effective killing tool than easily accessible knives because a person wielding a gun does not need to be physically stronger than his victims. And bombs can hurt many people with one explosion.

The details of this horrific crime are complicated. Yet, the first reaction of local government in Snohomish County was simple: to impose a form of control on guns. Their ordinance sends the message that the guns, not the people operating them, are the problem.

That reaction raises the question: Will potential killers in our backyard now think twice about committing an act of mass violence?

Not too likely.

It's easy to point the finger at guns. They are a frightening symbol of death, even when respected as a tool for home protection. Guns are made to kill living things. Yet the knee-jerk reaction to blame an inanimate object for the thought processes of violent people is absurd. A gun cannot become a tool of senseless violence without the thoughts and the choices of a senselessly violent person.

Instead of melting down guns in a symbolic act of peace, the council should be digging for answers about how people become so horribly violent. The answers on how to prevent violence, as Sheriff Rick Bart stated to the council, is in our communities and in our homes. It is not in our inanimate objects.