

ENGLISH

U.S Election

Incited by a questions and answer session during US. elections the week before publication, Allan Howe's Herald Sun opinion piece *Beware of Friendly Fire* is a scathing discussion of the American governments position on gun control directed to an Australia audience. In a reasoned, collected tone, tinged with sarcasm, Howe argues that government policy does not measure up to the facts, and that by failing to confront the issue they are bringing shame upon their heads and failing the American people, bringing grief to the nation.

How employs alliteration in the title of the opinion piece, *Beware of Friendly Fire*. Beginning consecutive words with the letter 'f', he creates a definite and inexorable link between the two, not only appealing to the ear but connecting the meanings of the words, and drawing attention to the oxymoron in the phrase 'friendly fire'. This heightens the warning in 'Beware' and also positions the reader to view anti-gun control laws as ludicrous with the sarcasm in the alliterative phrase. Alliteration also links the title to the first paragraph, which begins with the word 'Fundamentalists'.

Opening with a discussion of fundamentalist Islam, Howe uses it as an analogy for "gun fundamentalists". After discussing the threat of Moslem terrorists to US democracy, Howe links it to the lack of gun control laws in America saying 'The country's "fun fundamentalists" are a much greater threat'. Through this association, Howe utilizes the negative views and fear many hold towards internal threats such as terrorists, transferring it to the views on gun control expressed by Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. This and the connotations of the word 'fundamentalist' causes such views to be seen by the reader as threatening to human life.

Immediately following this analogy, Howe begins employing inclusive language. He says that 'we' saw that the US can't handle the truth about current gun legislation and continues using inclusive language throughout the text, positioning the reader to take his opinion as their own by making them part of his group. Linking this with emotive language Howe writes further on: 'Those are leaders? God help us.' By the use of this strong emotive expression coupled with the incredulous nature of the preceding question, Howe not only includes the reader but evokes derogatory thoughts about the character and intelligence of the leaders in question.

Lest his argument be entirely based upon more subtle and emotional techniques, Howe follows up with some hard evidence to support his convictions. The first block of evidence refers to the event that incited the opinion piece, a response from Obama about gun control to a question posed by an unnamed audience member. After listing the question, Howe intercepts his report with a satirical "Awkward" before detailing Obama's response. Providing a commentary in parentheses on the way the reply was delivered, Howe not only succeeds in supporting his position with facts, but emphasizes how even Obama is not convinced by his own argument, positioning the reader to scorn holding the same view. Following this paragraph, Howe bluntly paraphrases Obama's reply, drawing attention to the implications of his response before recounting the words in which Obama expressed his sorrow at recent fatalities caused by inordinate use of guns, positioning the reader to view his regret as hypocritical.

Detailing further evidence, Howe makes a rebuttal base on the facts, proceeding to compare America with countries that have gun control laws before listing statistical evidence that supports his opinions. First detailing the gun incidents in Aurora and Columbine, Howe then notes even more recent events such as the fatalities on a Florida hairdressers' before concluding that Obama's statement that shooters are primarily protecting themselves does not correlate with the facts. Comparing American responses to these tragedies with those of other countries, Howe then details the effectiveness of gun control by comparing Australia and American statistics on homicide, murder and suicide rates. This exposition of evidence enables Howe to prove America's failings in this area definitively, appealing to the reader's logic and thus positioning them to agree with his contention.

Having begun by ridiculing Barack Obama, Howe moves on to lampoon Mitt Romney. Towards the end of the opinion piece he uses a narration of the basis of Romney's assertions to explain his view, the use of quotes from his speech casting ridicule upon his stance through formatting, and the incompatible nature of the quotes he has chosen to the issue at hand. He continues this pattern into the exposition of the response to the next question posed, using this subtle form of ridicule to cast incredulity upon Romney's stance and position the reader against him.

The final question, 'When are Americans going to confront their gun madness?' links to the image above the article. Both depict or allude to easy access to dangerous weapons and an irrational perspective, the image through a smiling expression on the face of a prospective gun customer, the text through the word 'madness'. This conveys an impression of vulnerability on account of unrecognized danger, and leaves the reader with the view that American -- and especially the American government -- must be absurdly blind.

Howe supports his contention that America has a ludicrous policy on guns and gun control through dual use of more emotional techniques and those based on reason and fact. Heavy use of evidence is gauged to a more thoughtful audience thus its use enables the opinion piece to have greater impact than if it relied solely on emotive devices, because it caters to those both emotionally and logically persuaded. Written to an Australian audience to inform of American issues, Howe's opinion is unlikely to have any direct impact on the issue, especially as the audience is limited to regional Australia, however his contention, accessible on the web, might influence Americans who find and peruse it, though the likelihood of this is small. The primary function is to educate Australia readers to the facts and a logical opinion.