The Federal Government Is Out Of Control

September 21, 1995 by Phyllis Schlafly

Seldom have I been so depressed as I was watching the C-Span telecast of the Senate hearings on Ruby Ridge. Bob Packwood is the tragedy of one arrogant man out of control, but Ruby Ridge is the tragedy of arrogant government out of control. And that is much more dangerous.

It is difficult to come to any conclusion other than that federal law enforcement agencies have so much more money than they need, and employ so many more agents than they require to fulfill their legal mission, that they have resorted to inventing "crimes" and creating "criminals" in order to keep busy and justify their appropriations.

You don't even need to have listened to Randy Weaver's dramatic testimony to come to this conclusion. The federal agents indicted themselves by their own admissions under interrogation by the Senate committee.

The federal agents who testified before Senator Arlen Specter's investigating committee expressed no apology for their actions. They repeatedly said that they would follow the same course of action if they had it to do all over again.

ATF agent Herb Byerly maintained that "the techniques that I used were proper." He was following the example of Attorney General Janet Reno, who has stoutly maintained that the Justice Department made no mistakes in the Waco debacle that incinerated 80 men, women and children, and that she would order the same actions if she had the chance to do it all over again.

It's no wonder that people distrust government today. It's no mystery why ordinary Americans have concluded that the government is our enemy, not our friend.

The Senators at the Ruby Ridge hearing could not conceal their amazement at how busybody federal agents had built a case out of virtually nothing into a monstrosity that involved millions of

dollars, an 18-month siege of the little cabin on a remote Idaho mountain, a federal assault force of 400 agents armed with sub- machine guns, and the killing of two innocent people.

An ATF confidential informant talked a loner named Randy Weaver into selling two shotguns (that could have been bought at any Sears Roebuck store), and entrapped Weaver into using a hacksaw to saw a portion off the barrel. The ATF then labelled Weaver a "major arms trafficker."

In forwarding this case to the federal prosecutor, the ATF lied in saying that Weaver had been convicted of crimes and was suspected of bank robberies. The government agents used a helicopter to spy on Mrs. Weaver's vegetable garden and falsely called it a possible "marijuana grow area."

Under questioning by the Senate committee, the ATF spokesman admitted that the only "evidence" against Weaver consisted of uncorroborated verbal statements by a confidential informant who said he assumed he would be paid only if he got a conviction. The ATF agent had tried to enlist Weaver as an accomplice informant, and it appears was out to get him because Weaver refused.

Although Randy Weaver was not dangerous in any way and had never even pointed a gun at anyone, the federal agents killed his 14-year old son Sammy with a shot in the back and then killed his Weaver's wife Vicki with a shot to her head while she was standing inside her own cabin holding her 10-month-old baby.

Mrs. Weaver was killed by FBI sharpshooter Lon Horiuchi, who claims it was an accident. Yet, Horiuchi testified in court that his sharpshooting skill was so precise that he could hit a target within a quarter-inch at a distance of 200 yards.

Court records show that, while Vicki's body lay in the cabin, the FBI used microphones to taunt the family, "Good morning, Mrs. Weaver. We had pancakes for breakfast. What did you have?"

Why hasn't anybody been prosecuted for the murders of Sammy and Vicki Weaver? Why hasn't anybody been prosecuted for issuing the unconstitutional rules of engagement telling FBI agents that they "can and should" use deadly force against armed males outside the cabin (interpreted in the field as "if you see 'em, shoot em")?

The answer to those questions is buried in the ATF and FBI coverup and destruction of documents that followed these outrageous actions.

The Justice Department first tried a slap on the wrist for several agents. The senior FBI official in charge of the Ruby Ridge operation, Larry Potts, received the same penalty that the FBI gives out for losing a government cellular telephone.

A couple of months later, Janet Reno promoted Potts (a close personal friend of FBI Director Louis Freeh) to the number-two job in the FBI, and defiantly bragged to Congressmen about her action. Coincidentally, Potts was one of the FBI's chief planners of the April 19, 1993 Waco fiasco.

Conservative Republicans have traditionally been strong supporters of law enforcement agencies. That day is past. ATF and FBI appropriations should be reduced to where they only have enough money and personnel to investigate real criminals, and if they fail to prosecute the wrongdoers of the Ruby Ridge outrages and the subsequent coverup, the agencies should be abolished as incompatible with a free society.