

# Bill Would Bar Pistols For All but Authorities

By NANCY HICKS

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Today, one day after the second attempt in three weeks to shoot at President Ford, the chairman of a House subcommittee studying gun control introduced a bill that would ban the manufacture, sale, importation and possession of handguns and handgun ammunition, except for police and military purposes.

For Representative John Conyers Jr., Michigan Democrat who is chairman of the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on crime, the bill represents a much stronger position that he was prepared to take when he began hearings on the issue seven months ago.

"Short of an outright ban on the possession of handguns, there appears to be no way to legally or effectively prevent the acquisition of these weapons by criminals and by generally law-abiding persons who may be driven to use them in an assault, which too often results in unintended homicide," he said in a statement.

Mr. Conyers's bill is not the only one of the 120 or so gun control measures pending before his committee that calls for a complete ban on handguns, nor does he expect it to gain the approval of the House.

## Matter of Relevancy

But he said it would be "hypocritical" to push legislation that "will not deal with the problem."

In March, a month after his hearings began, Mr. Conyers said, "we're not working on the definitive law now." To do so, he said, would be "like knockin' ga home run our first time at bat."

Today, however, he said that the movement toward banning the handgun in American society had to begin now.

"I realized before that we are not going to solve this problem in 1975," he said at a news conference, "but the American people will ultimately be the catalytic agent to remove the handgun from American society."

The discussion this year had previously centered on crime figures of the Federal Bureau of Investigation that show that over the last six years, four of every five crime-related murders, three of every four family killings and the same number of nonfamily killings were caused by handguns. In 1973, handguns were said to be responsible for 10,000 deaths.

"People get very upset at an attempt to assassinate a President, but people are dying every day in our society," Senator Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, said.

Mr. Bayh heads a Senate subcommittee that is studying gun control. He led the fight for a law to ban cheap handguns that was approved by the Senate in 1972 following the attempt on the life of Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama. The House failed to act on that bill.

The nation's present gun control law, passed in 1968, grew out of public reaction to the assassinations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

It prohibits mail-order sales of firearms and the importation of cheap handguns, called Saturday Night specials. The law also seeks to keep dangerous persons and convicted felons from buying guns.

Other than this, there is a crazy quilt of state laws that determine who can have a gun and under what conditions.

House Speaker Carl Albert said today that he doubted that gun control laws, especially one requiring registration of gun owners, would have prevented the two episodes in which President Ford was threatened.

"I don't think anybody with a gun crazy enough to try to kill the President would go and register the gun," he said.

While conceding that his gun control bill would not eliminate guns from American society, Mr. Conyers said, "I believe by taking this approach we will be doing most of what is possible to do by the legislative process."

He praised Mr. Ford for including gun control in his crime program—although the Administration is proposing a far more limited bill—but he asked the President to stay closer to home and work for more stringent laws.

## Big Toll Despite Law

By STEVEN RATTNER

New York City has the toughest gun laws in the country, but the proliferation of firearms has grown to such proportions that on an average day, guns will still be responsible for two murders, 60 robberies and 22 assaults.

Under state law, private ownership of handguns, both cheap Saturday night specials and quality pistols, requires a permit issued by local police departments. In most cases, the applicant must show "proper cause," which local police departments have interpreted differently.

The New York City police say they apply "rigorous requirements" because "this is an urban area." They estimate that there are about 30,000 registered guns in the city, of which "99 per cent are good quality handguns, including collectors' pieces." But estimates of illegal guns, all of

them unofficial and uninformal, range up to one million more.

As for "long guns"—rifles and shotguns—there is no state licensing requirement, though New York City does demand a \$10 permit.

A spokesman for the Firearms Control Board, which dispenses the permits, said that an applicant did not need to show a special need, but that certain classes of people, including felons, drug addicts and the mentally or physically incapacitated, were generally turned down. But, he added, "we are not as rigorous as the police department."

Despite the strict laws, the police freely admit that there is still a serious gun problem in the city. At a news conference yesterday, Police Commissioner Michael J. Codd noted that about half of the city's homicides, 769 in 1974, were committed with firearms. In 1960, it was 19 per cent.

The problem, according to the Commissioner, is the lack of uniform Federal regulation.

"What I have been speaking about," he said, "is the need that exists for effective legislation both on the local and on the national level to effectively regulate the manufacture, distribution, sale and possession by individuals of handguns."

Mayor Beame has also repeatedly endorsed national controls.

The assassination attempts, Commissioner Codd added, "only reinforce the need for such controls."

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