

Post 7/5/67

Contempt for History

The Los Angeles *Times* had a three-column headline on its front page on June 23, 1967—just about 3½ years after a similar headline appeared on the front page of the *Dallas News*—announcing: "President Due in L. A. Today." The occasion was employed by some local citizens who disagree with the President's policies, reasonably and justifiably enough, of course—just as the occasion of the President's visit to Dallas was employed 3½ years ago—to give public expression to some dissenting views. In Los Angeles, this took the form of an Open Letter to the President denouncing the war in Vietnam, signed by 8000 registered Democrats of Southern California. It took three pages to list their names. On the back of the third page was a quarter page advertisement of the Eastern Firearms Corporation displaying an assortment of GUNS—several types of six-shooter, a couple of businesslike-looking automatics, an M-1 carbine in "perfect condition," a 30/06-cal. Springfield.

The gun advertisement is politically neutral. It plays no favorites. The guns are there, available alike to Republicans and Democrats, to supporters and dissenters, to the sage and the demented, to sportsmen and assassins. You can have a .38 special S&W Webley revolver for only \$29.95. No strings attached, no questions asked. What does a "sportsman" do with a Webley?

Within the span of a century, four American Presidents were assassinated—all by guns, of course. The recollection of the last of these assassinations is still raw. Yet its lesson has apparently not yet been learned. Three and a half years have gone by since the tragedy of Nov. 22, 1963, at Dallas. But neither chamber of the Congress of the United States has yet had brought before it for debate and action the simple legislation requisite to bringing the insane traffic in firearms under rational control. There is a kind of blasphemy in this criminal contempt for history.