

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1968

PAGE A20

The Shooting of Senator Kennedy

As the hospital bulletins grew more grave and Senator Kennedy struggled for life through yesterday's interminable hours, it was safer and more sensible to think about the man than about the meaning of his shooting, which had no meaning by itself. It was safer and more sensible to dwell upon his performance and his bright promise than to search in this senseless act for some pattern, some lesson, some dark insight into our society and our times. There may well be some meaning in it all—in the tragedy that has dogged his life and in the violence which has visited itself with such caprice upon the country. Or there may, as Shakespeare said, be none. "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods. They kill us for their sport."

In any case, the meaning surely is not that the United States is in anarchy, or that the world has gone mad. This is the stuff of public comment forced upon leading figures while they are still in shock. The wisest among them will think better of it. And they must, for a nation perilously close to hysteria cannot deal rationally with a crisis of crime and violence which cries out for reason and restraint.

If the shooting of Senator Kennedy should bring sensible gun laws, so much the better; the need for them however does not stand on one, or three or three hundred homicides by firearm; it stands on the record in every American city, every night. If the shooting of Senator Kennedy should bring more common sense and less emotion to deliberations on a Crime Bill, so much the better, but the need for such a bill was plain enough before Senator Kennedy was shot. If, indeed, it should force upon the whole Nation, those who govern and those who are governed, a fundamental reassessment of the crime problem in all its complexity, again so much the better, for the need here is to be found in things as innocent as the relish with which the

most garish crime fare is served up to delighted audiences by movie houses, television and the press.

In short, if the tragedy in Los Angeles should be the cause, in whatever degree, of a great national awakening to the evils of extremism and violence on the campus or on the street, of a national resolution to plumb the depth of this problem and to deal with it, so much the better. For there can be no denying that there is abroad in this land a nameless virulence which feeds upon itself.

In this sense the crime in Los Angeles and the lawlessness that afflicts the whole Nation are of a piece. But only in a sense. For the tragedy in Los Angeles does not tell us anything we did not know about the wider malady. It tells us once again to act. But the Nation's first response also warns us not to be too quick to lacerate ourselves with cries of anarchy or too ready to delude ourselves with empty promises of law and order at any cost. Senator Kennedy would scorn such easy answers. Still less would he draw the simpler lesson that he should have somehow been more careful for he has ever been the zestful warrior, and a fatalist.

Later will be time enough to sort out all the consequences of this tragedy. For now, it is enough to remember that the best of him—the subtle humor, the quiet courage, the sense of dedication, and the warmth—was rarely more evident than on Tuesday night when he had won, as he had always to win to be at peace with himself.

For now, it is enough to pray that this Nation will not lose a man who stirred such strong passions in large part because his own passion to move and improve his country and the world was so strong.

The Vote To Kill

A BILL TO STOP MAIL-ORDER TRAFFIC IN FIREARMS "would save hundreds of lives in this country and spare thousands of families all across this land the grief and heartbreak that may come from the loss of a husband, a son, a brother or a friend.

It is time that we wipe this stain of violence from our land."

— SEN. ROBERT F. KENNEDY

VOTE TO KILL SEN. TED KENNEDY'S PROPOSAL TO BAN INTERSTATE MAILORDER SALES OF ALL GUNS

May 16, 1968:

ALLOTT (Colo.)	HANSEN (Wyo.)
ANDERSON (N.M.)	HATFIELD (Ore.)
BAKER (Tenn.)	HICKENLOOPER
BARTLETT (Alaska)	(Iowa)
BAYH (Ind.)	HOLLINGS (S.C.)
BENNETT (Utah)	HRUSKA (Neb.)
BOGGS (Del.)	JORDAN (Idaho)
CANNON (Nev.)	MILLER (Iowa)
CARLSON (Kan.)	MORSE (Ore.)
CHURCH (Idaho)	MOSS (Utah)
COTTON (N.H.)	MUNDT (S.D.)
CURTIS (Neb.)	MURPHY (Calif.)
DIRKSEN (Ill.)	SCOTT (Pa.)
DOMINICK (Colo.)	THURMOND
EASTLAND	(S.C.)
(Miss)	TOWER (Tex.)
FANNIN (Ariz.)	YOUNG (N.D.)



©1968 HERBLOCK
THE WASHINGTON POST