The Gun-Law Killers

Let no smokescreen of niceties hide the names of the Senators who are contemptuous of the American public that demands a gun-control law. Let the people who have written their legislators, have watched funerals of slain national leaders, have read of the parliamentary maneuvering in Congress to block an effective law, know what occurred behind the closed doors of the Senate Judiciary Committee this week.

An effort was made to allow the absent Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, whose brothers were killed by firearms, to vote by proxy in this committee of which he is a member. Every vote is essential, and it was known that he would side with Senator Tydings and others advocating a strong law.

But the gentleman from South Carolina, Senator Strom Thurmond, said no. He would not permit the vote of Senator Kennedy to be counted. Furthermore, he threatened a filibuster in the committee by pulling out three hundred pages of state regulations on firearms and said he was prepared to read them unless gun registration was removed from the Senate bill. His blackmail worked.

The Tydings bill providing for registration and licensing, which represents the views of President Johnson and Attorney General Clark, began to be shot to pieces. Senator Bayh of Indiana offered an amendment to exempt rifles and Senator Eastland of Mississippi proposed one to exempt shotguns. Both passed by votes of 8 to 7. The other Senators who killed the strong Tydings bill were Ervin of North Carolina, Long of Missouri, McClellan of Arkansas, Burdick of North Dakota, Hruska of Nebraska and, of course, Thurmond of South Carolina.

Only a few weeks are left before Congress adjourns for the conventions. Surely the Senators and Representatives must make a renewed effort to bring the strong features of registration and licensing to the floor for an open vote. If the President, the leading candidates for the Presidency, and the public fail to speak up with renewed vigor, the Strom Thurmonds will continue to rule and ruin.