

DODD CRITICIZES HANDGUNS PLAN

Says Public Is Not Ready
for Confiscation Proposal

30 Jul 69

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 29 — Senator Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, a leading advocate of more rigid gun controls, looked coldly today on a plan to take away from most Americans the right to own a handgun.

Mr. Dodd said in an interview that he saw no chance of Congress's adopting the proposal, made yesterday by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence.

The commission urged a Federal-state program that would limit handgun ownership to those Americans who could show reasonable need for such a weapon. In effect, the plan would take out of circulation some 90 per cent of the estimated total of 24 million handguns owned by citizens, with the Government paying as much as \$500-million in compensation.

"I don't think the American people are ready to go that far, and therefore I don't think we can go that far," Mr. Dodd said after a hearing of his Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Delinquency.

'Miser's Malady'

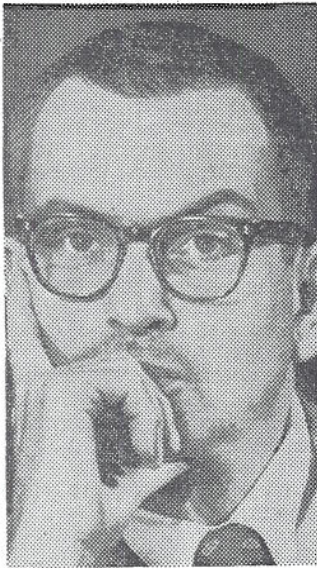
During the hearing two commission researchers explained the commission's proposal and ascribed to the Nixon Administration "a new disease, a successor to Portnoy's complaint, which can be called miser's malady."

George D. Newton Jr., director, and Franklin E. Zimring, research director, of the commission task force on firearms and violence, emphasized they spoke for themselves and not for the commission.

They offered this diagnosis of the Administration's attitude on new gun control laws:

"On the one hand, the patient fears crime and violence, calling it our number one national problem. On the other hand, the patient, though wealthy, refuses to pay for his cure."

Originally, it was learned, their testimony was to have been more directly critical of the Administration position that nationwide registration of guns—as advocated by Mr. Dodd—



United Press International

CRITICAL: George D. Newton Jr., aide to National Commission on Causes and Prevention of Violence, assailed the Administration's attitude on gun control.

would be too costly.

Phrase Is Altered

The final page of the formal statement made by Mr. Newton and Mr. Zimring was altered overnight to substitute "miser's malady" for the words "Mitchell's Malady."

The reference was to have been to Attorney General John N. Mitchell, the leading Administration architect of law-and-order strategy.

Asked about the original draft, Mr. Zimring said he would have to "flatly disavow" it as "in grossly bad taste." He did not dispute the fact the earlier text had been in circulation.

Though Senator Dodd did not endorse the plan to confiscate pistols, he said that publicity about the proposal could help push his registration bill through Congress. His measure would require the owners of any type of gun to get a certificate indicating they could be trusted with a firearm.

Unless some form of gun registration is adopted, Mr. Dodd said, "then down the road are more drastic measures such as proposed by the commission."

The National Rifle Association, meantime, attacked the commission plan. A statement issued by Franklin L. Orth, executive vice president of the association, said the commission had come up with "a highly dubious experiment to reduce the use of handguns in crime by drying up the supply owned by law-abiding citizens."

Curbing the Handgun 30 Jul 69

President Nixon now has a splendid opportunity to undo the harm caused by the two spokesmen for his Administration who only last week told Congress there was no need for gun-control legislation at this session.

They took their position without awaiting the report on this subject just issued by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, of which Milton S. Eisenhower is chairman. Now, only four days later, the commission has made clear, with massive documentation and irrefutable logic, how astonishingly wrong they were.

The rising tide of firearms violence in this country calls for legislative action now. The commission recommends establishment of a nationwide control system that would result in elimination of 90 per cent of the 24 million handguns now privately owned, with compensation for the owners of weapons that had been legitimately acquired.

Handguns account for about half of all homicides and three-quarters of all firearms homicides, the commission found. It debunked the argument that a handgun in the home is a useful weapon of defense against burglars. In the great majority of cases, a householder has no warning and no chance to arm himself against an intruder.

But the presence of a handgun in the home is a dangerous investment for the householder. A substantial number of the 23,000 annual firearms accidents occur in the home, and many of the 8,000 annual firearms homicides also take place there.

The need for action now is emphasized by the fact that the sales of handguns have quadrupled since 1963. As the commission points out, handguns are not sporting guns and are seldom used for hunting or sport.

This report should convince the President and the Congress alike of the necessity for gun-control legislation during the present session. "The heart of any effective national firearms policy" is, as the commission says, "restrictive licensing of the handgun."