

Shooting of Wallace Spurs a New Effort to Tighten Gun Controls

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The attempted assassination of Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama with an American-made, \$80 bargain revolver of a type that has been barred as an import since 1968 spurred anew here today the periodic and usually unsuccessful efforts of gun law reformers to tighten Federal firearms legislation.

A test vote was scheduled tomorrow in a Senate subcommittee on a proposal to prohibit the sale to anyone but law enforcement officers of snub-nosed, readily concealable weapons with little or no sporting value, such as the revolver used in the attack on Governor Wallace.

Treasury Department law enforcement aides said that the pistol used by Arthur Herman Bremer, the 21-year-old suspect who is accused of shooting four persons yesterday, was a .38-caliber snubnosed revolver manufactured by the Charter Arms Corporation of Bridgeport, Conn.

Wounded along with Governor Wallace were one of his Alabama State Police bodyguards, a Secret Service agent and a woman bystander.

It was learned today that this was the second Charter Arms so-called Under Cover 2 owned by Mr. Bremer.

Federal law enforcement of-

ficials said that the same model revolver caused Mr. Bremer's one known previous brush with the law, an arrest in the Milwaukee suburb of Fox Point, last November for carrying a concealed weapon.

The charge was later reduced to disorderly conduct, a misdemeanor, and he was convicted. Under normal police routine that gun was formally confiscated on Dec. 8, 1971.

Five weeks later he bought another.

Could Not Be Imported

In an interview today, Douglas S. McClanahan, the 39-year-old founder and board chairman of Charter Arms, acknowledged that under the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968 his company's five-shot revolver with a "two-inch barrel"—it is actually one and seven-eighths inches long, he said—could not be legally imported.

He noted that the same revolver with a 3-inch barrel, also manufactured by Charter Arms, would be a legal import under the Federal law.

The 1968 act was supposed to end the importation each year of 20,000 to 30,000 cheaply made "Saturday night special" handguns, and thus reduce the rapid rise in crimes of violence committed with "junk guns" selling for \$15 to \$30.

But it imposed no standards of concealability on American-made handguns, and a loophole in the law has permitted

the continued importation of unassembled foreign parts that are put together by 23 companies in this country for legal sale.

Both Government and private firearms specialists said in interviews today that Charter Arms's \$80 revolver could not be classified as a Saturday night special. The .38-caliber snub-nosed revolver is a standard law enforcement officer's sidearm. The Charter Arms version sells for \$12 to \$16 less than the similar but more widely known Smith & Wesson and Colt Revolvers.

But Mr. McClanahan said that on the advice of his lawyer he would not disclose what proportion of Charter Arms's sales of the snub-nose gun were to policemen.

"Our competitors would really like that information," he said. There seemed little doubt, however, that many sales were to civilians.

The Bremer revolver was purchased by the shooting suspect last Jan. 13 at Casanova Guns in Milwaukee, according to Treasury Spokesmen. Under the Gun Control Act of 1968, a revolver purchaser and the gun dealer must fill out a Form 4473—Firearms Transactions Record, listing the buyer's name, height, weight, race, address and date and place of birth.

The form, kept on file by the dealer, requires the buyer to swear that he is not under indictment for or convicted of a felony, that he is not a fugitive from justice, that he is not a drug addict or "adjudicated" as a mental incompetent, that he has not been dishonorably discharged from the armed forces and that he is not an illegal alien or a United States citizen who has renounced his citizenship.

Proof of Age Needed

The sale may then be legally completed if the purchaser can offer proof that he is over 21 years of age and is a resident of the state in which the gun is bought, the two other chief criteria in the 1968 act.

Martin Polner, the Treasury Department's Director of Law Enforcement, said today that detailed sales records, including weapons' serial numbers, required to be maintained under the act, had enabled Treasury agents to trace the revolver "within 10 to 15 minutes after we got the information on the gun."

Charter Arms was asked by telephone to whom it had wholesaled the weapon and the point of sale was traced, by phone to Casanova Guns in Milwaukee.

Mr. Polner would not say whether Mr. Bremer or the Milwaukee gun dealer were under investigation for possible violations of the 1968 act.

But critics of the act, including Senator Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, have contended that the mere recordation of such sales does nothing to control the distribution of "these vicious weapons which have no legitimate use" in civilian hands. Most sporting and target pistols, for ballistic reasons, have longer barrels — 5 to 6 inches in length.

Test Vote Scheduled

Mr. Bayh is chairman of the subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency of the Senate Judiciary Committee—a panel that has struggled to strengthen the Federal gun laws for years because no other committee would tackle the problem — and it is before his subcommittee that the test vote will come tomorrow.

Senator Bayh hoped that the eight-member panel would approve his proposed amendment to the 1968 act, which would ban the sale or transfer of any handgun to anyone but a law enforcement officer unless the Secretary of the Treasury determined, after tests, that the weapon was suitable for "lawful sporting purposes."

The effect of the Bayh Amendment would apparently be to forbid the general sale of almost all pocket sidearms — those with 2-inch and 3-inch barrels, or with an over-all length of 7 or 7 and one-half inches. The 1968 law already effectively prohibits the importation of most such weapons.