

Majority at Hearing in Chicago Urges Congress to Ban Pistols

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CHICAGO, April 15—Sheriffs, doctors, businessmen, politicians, judges and representatives of civil rights and citizens groups urged a Congressional subcommittee yesterday and today to pass legislation banning the manufacture, sale and possession of pistols by civilians.

Witnesses opposed to the proliferation of handguns, whose number nationwide is estimated at 40 million, brought charges from those opposing restrictions that the hearings—held by the House Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Crime—were "extremely loaded."

The purpose of the gun control hearings, according to Representative John Conyers Jr., Democrat of Michigan, is to seek suggestions on how to remedy the failure of the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968 to curb the flood of cheap pistols, known as Saturday night specials. That act forbids the interstate mail-order sale of pistols, their sale to felons and narcotics addicts and their sale to those under 21 years of age.

Familiar Arguments

Many of the arguments for and against Federal strictures on pistols were the familiar ones that emerge whenever the subject of gun control comes up.

Proponents, citing spiraling urban crime rates, called for a drying up of the handgun traffic because so many deaths and accidents are caused by them.

Opponents of Federal laws banning pistols said that they violated the constitutional right to bear arms, would be unen-

forceable and would create an underworld market for them, much as Prohibition spawned bootlegging.

Most of the more than 40 witnesses during the hearings, which ended here today, advocated a national ban on pistols.

Mayor Richard J. Daley told the subcommittee, consisting of Mr. Conyers, Representative Robert McClory, Republican of Illinois, and Representative John M. Ashbrook, Republican of Ohio, that Congress had delayed "too long" in controlling pistols.

"We're not talking here about rifles and shotguns, or about taking these away from the farmers," Mr. Daley said. "We're talking about handguns, which are intended to kill human beings."

The Mayor conceded that Chicago's registration law for guns tended to be vitiated by the fact that communities on the fringe of the city had no such requirements.

Several supporters of pistol controls said that a new Federal law would probably have no immediate impact on the crime rate because so many pistols were already in existence. But Bernard Carey, Cook County State's Attorney, said a law was needed "to protect us in the future."

Opponents of Federal control over pistols maintained that attributing high crime rates to the existence of handguns was specious and that the real fault lay with "our let's-make-a-deal court system" that permitted offenders to return to the streets.

James Valentino, president of the Illinois State Rifle Association, called the hearings "one-sided."