

DEBATE OVER GUNS TO REOPEN TODAY

Capital Hearings Center on
Curbs Proposed by Bayh

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 12 —

The gun-law reformers in Congress begin a new campaign tomorrow to rid the country of the millions of cheap pistols that are being used to kill ever increasing numbers of Americans.

Two years ago, the reformers thought that, with the Gun Control Act of 1968, they had stopped the flow of the poorly made .22-caliber and .25-caliber handguns, which are manufactured abroad and sold here for from \$9.95 to \$20. The act supposedly prohibited such imports, chiefly from Germany, Italy, Spain and Brazil. Because no weapons could be made so cheaply in the United States, their proliferation was thought to have been halted.

The reformers were wrong then and the odds again seem clearly to be against the anti-gun group in this Congress. The Nixon Administration, its officials say, is certainly not for a flat prohibition on the sale of cheap pistols.

And, the firearms lobby which has shown itself capable of rousing fierce opposition to control legislation among the constituents back home, is ready to do battle. Administration spokesmen acknowledge that officials here are sympathetically listening to the critics of gun control.

The scene of the new gun control debate will be Room 2228 of the New Senate Office Building. At 10 A.M. tomorrow, Senator Birch Bayh's Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency, which has been the focus of all important efforts to enact firearms control legislation in recent years, opens two days of hearings on the Indiana Democrat's proposed antigun amendment to the Gun Control Act.

Among the scheduled witnesses expected to support the Bayh amendment are Mayor Lindsay of New York and his Police Commissioner, Patrick V. Murphy; police officials from Detroit and Cleveland, and a representative of the Fraternal Order of Police. Until recently, when policemen began to rank among the chief victims of cheap handguns, many police

groups had not supported stringent gun controls.

Change in Tactics

Senator Bayh, a possible candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination next year, would prohibit with his amendment the sale or delivery to any person anywhere in the United States of cheap revolvers and automatic pistols, which gun users say have no sporting or target value but which are being used in thousands of killings and holdups each year.

The 1968 act was intended to have this effect. It forbade the importation into the United States of all handguns that the Secretary of the Treasury ruled were of no potential use to sportsmen.

The strict guidelines subsequently drawn up might have blocked their importation. But there is a brisk market in the United States for such guns, particularly in large cities. Estimates are that from 630,000 to 1.5 million of them are sold in the United States every year, at markups to manufacturers of 50 to 100 per cent.

According to the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms Division of the Internal Revenue Service, the Treasury Department's gun enforcement office, the former importers of foreign-made "Saturday night specials" simply stopped buying their pistol frames overseas.

Crudely made barrels, triggers, grips, firing pins, hammers, cylinders and springs still come in legally from abroad by the hundredweight. They are fitted by semiskilled workers to American frames at factories on Long Island and Miami, Nashville, Kinston, N.C., Los Angeles, and here in Washington.

Avoiding a Showdown

The six-shot, .22-short-caliber product can be sold within the law to anyone with \$9.95 who swears he is over 21 years of age, not a felon or a detective, and a resident of the state in which the purchase is made.

Such guns can no longer be bought by mail, as they were before the 1968 act. But, unlike larger, heavier and better-made American sidearms, which sell for \$60 and up, the cheap weapons are available to millions of people for one-third the price of a pair of dress shoes.

The Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee will be told this week that in more than 1,640 handgun killings in 1970—20 per cent of the 8,221 pistol murders—the weapon used was such a gun.

Some Government officials make it clear that the Treasury Department's position on the cheap guns has been calculated to avoid a confrontation with the nation's organized gun clubs, headed by the National Rifle Association.

The N.R.A. has been showing interest in what may be the Treasury Department's answer to Senator Bayh's proposal.