

Reason on Guns

"To me, calling for the confiscation of handguns jibes with the overreaction to hijackers."

". . . Why should a decent sport like this, engaged in by people almost 100 per cent law-abiding, have to be crippled by gun registration?"

"A loaded gun is no more dangerous than an automobile with the motor idling."

These are the words of pistol enthusiasts quoted in a report in The New York Times Sunday Magazine yesterday on the widespread opposition to gun controls. They are typical expressions of people who are for the most part undoubtedly law-abiding. They are also nonsense.

Fact: Effective Federal gun-control legislation, which would include registration of all handguns and meaningful identification of the purchasers and owners, bears absolutely no relation to confiscation—except of illegally held or obtained weapons. This would presumably be a blow, not to sportsmen or guardians of their homestead, but to potential criminals.

Fact: Rather than representing "overreaction" to hijackers, even the still far too lax and sporadic surveillance at the boarding gates has already led to extensive discovery of gun-toting passengers, thus probably reducing the actual cases of air piracy.

Fact: Whether or not a loaded gun is as harmless as an idling automobile, the registration of cars and licensing of drivers (despite the continued unfortunate differences in state laws) affords a strong and rational precedent for gun registration and user licensing. Such regulation would no more "cripple" legitimate sport than it now cripples legitimate automobile use.

There is little hope that Congress will gather up enough courage to take effective action until the myths and the sophistry are stripped away from the issue, and it is at last realized that the supporters of rational gun controls are not spoilsports but protectors of public safety.