

Guns Kill

A policeman is seriously injured in a gunfight that apparently started as part of a family argument. A deranged sniper fires at passing traffic. A 16-year-old boy attempts to hijack an airliner at gun point.

The list could be extended indefinitely, from reports in newspapers across the country. Most such incidents have in common the charge, "possession of a dangerous weapon"; but few of the stories explain how that weapon could so easily have found its way into the hands of the accused. For example, how did the teen-ager who hijacked an airliner have such ready access to a gun?

The answer is that archaic or nonexistent laws often make it easier to own and use firearms than to buy and operate an automobile. Since every major and petty criminal, every burglar and street-corner mugger, is for good reason suspected of being armed, the police in turn are understandably tempted to rely excessively on guns.

Despite its much-publicized concern over crime in the streets, the Justice Department continues to hide behind the fiction that the matter is primarily one for local and state regulation. Evidence points in the opposite direction—that only nationwide controls can eliminate local abuse. New York City Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy believes that control of hand guns "on a national scale" is the only answer. Senator Edward M. Kennedy has introduced a bill to require the registration and licensing of all gun owners and ban the sale, importation and possession of the kind of hand gun generally

It is time to laugh out of court the gun lobby's idiotic cliché that people, and not guns, kill people. People without guns cannot pull the trigger.