

Gun Laws

Every time someone is conspicuously shot in America, every time some maniac starts splattering people with a rifle or machine gun, various propagandists move in to whip up hysteria and call for severe government restrictions on the purchase or possession of guns. Never mind that such laws and ordinances are clearly unconstitutional, for the Constitution clearly and flatly guarantees the right of the people to bear arms. This right has always been considered crucial to the liberties of the people from government oppression; for if all the guns are surrendered to one organized group — the government — the freedoms of all are in jeopardy from those who have acquired a monopoly of the weapons of violence. For, as in the classical query, “Who is to guard our guardians?” The Sullivan and other laws were the first chink in the dike; the excuse for these patently unconstitutional and despotic laws was that there was something uniquely sinister about “concealed” weapons that deserves restriction. Now this is to be extended to unconcealed weaponry.

The theory is that if private guns are restricted or outlawed, crimes of violence using guns would be eliminated. What a silly doctrine! One would think that we had learned the lesson of Prohibition: outlawry of liquor did not end the use of liquor, nor has outlawry of narcotics ended their widespread use. The upshot of these restrictions and prohibitions is that the honest person, the innocent citizen, the non-alcoholic or non-

addict, is prevented from buying or using guns or alcohol. The addict, the alcoholic, or the criminal are not deterred by the law. They have their sources, and they are always able to get their supply. No criminal, no Mafia member, has been stopped from getting revolvers because of the Sullivan or other such laws. The result is that while criminals continue to be plentifully supplied with guns, the non-criminal, the man who wants to buy a gun to defend himself from crime, is prevented from doing so: so the law renders him helpless in the face of crime.

Such is typically the result of “do-gooding” legislation, where actions or purchases are outlawed for somebody’s “own good.” The result is that, for his “own good,” he’s left at the criminal’s mercy.

The revolver used to be called “the equalizer,” and so it is. Without such a weapon the weak, the frail, the elderly, and women, can not compete with the muscles and clubs of strong-arm criminals, even if the latter do not have guns. But women and the frail and the aged *can* shoot straight, and this gives them much more of a chance in the jungles that many of our cities have become. If he knows that his victim may be armed, the mugger or the rapist will think twice before attacking; now it is open season.

There is, finally, no sense in outlawing a particular weapon such as a gun. There are lots of things which can be used and have been used as weapons. Where are we to stop? Shall we outlaw knives, sticks, bricks, or what? When will we realize that crime lies, not in the *object*, but in the way in which that or any object may be used?