

It was opened up by Mr. Tobriner in his suggestion, and I have no objection at all to any questions being asked now on it.

Mr. ACHESON. I am available now.

Senator DOMINICK. I will just ask a couple of questions on that then.

There are a great number of people who have pistols and sidearms of one kind or another, either as souvenirs from the wars or just because they want to use them for target practice or for shooting gophers or whatever it may be, and obviously this is going to put a lot of these people to a substantial—what would you say—irritation of some kind, at least, in getting licenses and getting them all registered and doing all that.

My concern about this has been based largely on the fact that whether this really does anything either by way of stopping crime or by assisting in discovering who has done a crime, because at least in the evidence that we produced during similar types of hearings in my own State, it became apparent that if you put a law of this kind in, that the people who are committing these crimes, with intent to commit a crime, would simply knock in the front door of a sporting goods store, swipe what they needed, and go off, or they obtain it through the underground and file the license number off.

So it really has not done any good.

Now, what is your general attitude on this? I do not mean to tie you down completely, but are these legitimate questions to raise?

Mr. ACHESON. Yes; I will be glad to deal with them, Senator.

I cannot say with certainty whether a registration statute for firearms would help stamp out crimes committed with firearms, but let's deal with probabilities now.

We do know that a great many firearms are in the hands of people who are likely to commit crimes.

We know that because in the average 6-month period the police confiscate about 300 or 350.

The CHAIRMAN. Over what period of time is that?

Mr. ACHESON. The average 6-month period, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. They confiscated 300?

Mr. ACHESON. They confiscated about 300 to 350 handguns in connection with arrests made for various felony crimes.

This suggests, of course, that there is a larger part of the iceberg that you do not see, that there are a large number of people who would use a handgun unlawfully if an opportunity arose to use it.

Now, it is obviously difficult to find a person who has a handgun, if he does not use it unlawfully.

But if a statute were passed, that required registration, the very least that we would accomplish would be that we would have the basis of a criminal charge against someone who has it unlawfully, and if the police, by breaking up a Saturday night fight in someone's home, discovered that there is a handgun in the home that is not registered, there is a basis there for a criminal charge against someone who is probably an irresponsible possessor of a handgun.

Now, the big problem in such a statute is to set up a standard which distinguishes between responsible citizens, who use them and know how to use them for sporting purposes, and the irresponsible citizens, principally teenagers or young people, who do not use them to shoot