

America's Homes!

IN these unsettled times when some courts seem to pamper criminals, when too many Americans revel in all sorts of law-breaking from speeding to head-smashing, and when law enforcement officers are popular only on television, the best police on earth, alone, cannot stem the kind of mob violence that has swept many American cities.

Mob action on a scale unprecedented in the modern United States has ravaged community after community in recent years. Chicago, Cleveland, Omaha, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Rochester, N. Y., Birmingham, Ala., Newport, R. I., Daytona Beach, Fla., and many others have felt the lash of mass fury and rioting.

What happens when community disorder gets out of hand and local police call for help in the crisis? State police usually are available only in limited numbers for a relatively short time. The brunt of the crisis is likely to fall on the National Guard.

Last July, some 6,700 National Guardsmen of 3 States were summoned to quell riots and preserve order. Guardsmen went on duty in Omaha July 4-5, Chicago July 15-19, and Cleveland July 19-31.

The previous August, homefront policing by the National Guard reached an all-time high with the Watts rioting in Los Angeles. Some 8,674 citizen soldiers spent a week on active duty there.

Within a month of the Watts crisis, 2,200 National Guardsmen were called out at Springfield, Mass., and 600 at Natchez, Miss., in civil rights disturbances.

While battling on the homefront increased in frequency and intensity in the past several years, it is nothing new. Since World War II, the National Guard has been summoned in strength at least 50 times.

During educational integration crises in the South, 13,000 U. S. Army Regulars were ordered to special duty. U. S. Marines helped to quell one 'teen-age' riot in New England.

But the main reliance of local authorities in sudden blazeps of civic disorder has been the National Guard. Fortunately, it has been available for homefront duty.

Which brings us to a question:

What if the National Guard were overseas in a major war, as it has been repeatedly in this century?

Who then supports the police? Who then guards the doors of American homes from senseless savagery and pillaging?

Under any full war mobilization, the National Guard and our Armed Forces reservists would find themselves away on active duty. Some cities maintain home guard and auxiliary police organizations but others do not. In at least one Midwestern community, an auxiliary unit dating from World War II recently was abandoned under pressure.

With homefront safeguards spotty and uncertain, the armed citizen represents a potential community stabilizer. His support of law and order, whether as a civilian member of the *posse comitatus* or as one of the unorganized militia, defined as the "whole body of able-bodied male citizens," could prove essential. Realistic appraisals attest that there is a widespread practice and belief in keeping firearms for home protection.

The President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (19 commissioners, only one a law officer; 63 staffers, 175 consultants) reported recently that "slightly more than one-third (of all Americans) say they keep firearms in the house for protection against criminals."

Keeping firearms at home for protection is going to be increasingly difficult under proposed new laws. In New York under the Sullivan Law, which the President wishes to see copied in all other States, police have cut down steadily on the number of protection arms. They have denied permits with little or no real reason time and again. New York State, by increasing the annual handgun license fee from nothing at first to \$20 at present, tends to tax pistol ownership out of existence.

Experience suggests that an extension of the Sullivan Law with its arbitrary administrative attitudes is a sure way to disarm law-abiding citizens.

From undisputed facts in New York City and elsewhere, it appears that a program like the one that would be initiated under the Dodd-Celler Bills would seriously reduce possession and availability of firearms for home protection.

Most of the current crop of firearms "control" bills, in fact, are the kind that discourage home ownership of protection guns. There is little indication that their sponsors have given any thought to the fate of citizens who may be trapped and beleaguered by howling mobs that brush aside police.

To guard a disarmed America under such conditions might require the most enormous "standing army" of police ever seen in the free world. New York City has increased its police force from 15,000 to 28,000—about the size of 2 U. S. Army divisions—in the past 22 years although its population remains the same. It now spends more than \$1,000,000 a day on policing, yet its crime rate rockets. There, it is very nearly left entirely up to the cops to shoot it out with the robbers.

If the U. S. civilian population were generally disarmed—we speak now, naturally, of the law-abiding ones who would comply with anti-gun laws—how many policemen would the nation need? And at what cost? Do the supporters of the Dodd-Celler Bills have a figure?