

mail up at the post office. There will be no deliveries for any of us on Saturday and for a great many of us no deliveries on Friday either.

This government will subsidize everything except the letter. The South is virtually a federal preserve with the money that flows in for the soil bank, for the dairyman, for the peanut farmer, for the cotton grower. A man who owns an oil well is excused from taxation by way of the oil depletion allowance. But our elected representatives are chary about appropriating the money so that we can get our mail.

Frenchmen enjoy four mail deliveries a day. Not to get his daily mail is inconceivable to a Romanian. Disturbed

cynics the world over write to the editor or the deputy or the commissar. Getting a letter is a kind of minor Christmas for the folks. It is true that bills also come in the mail, but the really bad news invariably arrives by telephone or telegraph.

The tragic aspect to the whole situation can be summed up by reminding the constituency that some of the towns that will have to surrender their post offices are Adamant, Vt.; New Russia, N.Y.; Seven Mills Ford, Va.; and Nine-points, Pa. Think of the postmarks that have surprised and delighted people the world over during the many years when the United States had what might be called a postal service.

Guns, Congress and the Networks

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Some of the best admen in the country have been putting their skills to work on a radio-TV-press campaign to stir up the public support needed to force a meaningful gun-control law out of Congress this session. These image makers, adroit at consumer persuasion, are having much less success convincing Congressmen that the United States needs a strong national firearms law or inducing the TV networks to sell them time.

All the polls, particularly those taken after this country's two 1968 assassinations, indicate that Americans by a large percentage want gun legislation, but Congress continues to talk of the citizen's constitutional right to arm himself, and is acutely aware of the sportsman's paranoia about having his rifle taken from him and of the danger of passing legislation in a time of high emotion.

Nor has the public outcry for closer supervision of guns much impressed the television networks. The broadcasters, operating "publicly owned" air waves, have been criticized for their willingness to make instant celebrities out of such raucous figures as Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown. They have been less eager to give a platform to spaceman John Glenn, the official spokesman for the Emergency Committee for Gun Control. This committee was organized by a group of prominent citizens, who think 6,500 gun killings a year are too many.

In New York, the firm of Papert, Koenig, Lois, which handles Piel's beer, Dash detergent and National Airlines, and which was the agency for Robert Kennedy's campaign in the primaries, is coordinating the drive for the emergency committee on a volunteer, public-service basis. The Columbia Broadcasting System, American Broadcasting Company, and the National Broadcasting Company have all turned down Papert's order for five minutes of paid time during which Colonel Glenn would present the case for gun control to the American people.

C.B.S. told the agency it does not sell time for controversial issues. A.B.C., which feared the National Rifle

Association might ask for equal time, held that the topic had already been covered adequately in talk and news shows. N.B.C. said it wouldn't sell less than fifteen minutes for a program of this nature. All the chains have taken similar positions before on matters of bitter controversy.

Papert, Koenig, Lois has been disappointed by the sparsity of free public-service spots devoted to the campaign by radio and TV. Nor have newspapers been liberal with free space. But the agency has had no trouble buying space in the press. Full pages have run or will run in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and in papers in Indiana, Missouri and Nebraska. Messages in the last three states are aimed at three of the most outspoken opponents of gun legislation—Sens. Roman Hruska, Edward Long and Birch Bayh. "You say you want stronger gun-control laws, but have you said it to Senator Bayh?" one headline asked.

As the lines of opposition hardened in Congress, the ads became more belligerent. On a day the House debated the Administration bill with its 100 amendments, a *Washington Post* ad signed by students warned of retaliation at the polls. "It's not now or never. It's now or November." Congressmen may have read it, but they weren't moved. The vote against licensing guns was by a 2-to-1 margin. The outlook is equally gloomy in the Senate where a strong Tydings bill was emasculated by amendments in committee. Nothing is hoped for now—except possibly the extension of the mail-order sales ban to cover long guns.

Part of the impetus for the use of advertising skills to help reduce the gun slaughter comes from *Advertising Age*, the biggest journal in the field, which has never before taken a position of leadership in an area outside advertising and merchandising. The paper obviously feels that domestic peace is essential to business health, and has called on the media of the country to join an all-out effort to make Congress act.

The newspaper has served as a clearinghouse for hard-hitting, shock-approach ads prepared by four volunteers from North Advertising in Chicago. Most of the ads include this tag line: "Write your Senator . . . while you still

have a Senator." More than 500 requests for the ads have come in from newspapers, radio stations, business papers, company house sheets, newsletters, universities and outdoor poster companies. Among the magazines expected to run some of the ads are *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Coronet*, *Teen Screen* and *Catholic Transcript*.

No backing came from the richest trade group in the field—The American Association of Advertising Agencies. Its president, John Crichton, said the organization had no official policy on guns and there were "other parts of the problem of violence where agencies might be more effective." Howard Bell, the new president of the American Advertising Federation, a grass-roots group with 40,000 members, urged ad clubs throughout the country to support the drive and individual members to write their Congressmen.

In a related development, the TV networks, their major sponsors and their ad agencies have been consulting one another on the matter of excessive violence on TV. When violence and slam-bang action comes under heavy criticism from Washington or elsewhere, telecasters perforce agree that there has been a heady dose of this type of fare, but they always insist that no one has proved any relationship between violence on the home screen and the increasing unrest in the streets, particularly among the young.

The first tangible evidence of their new concern was the rescheduling of shows considered unsuitable for viewing in the raw-nerved days following the murder of a murdered President's brother. A.B.C. postponed two assassination stories—one on the *Flying Nun* and the other on *Big Valley*—and an "unusually violent" episode of *The Avengers*. C.B.S. switched episodes of *Wild, Wild West*, *Gunsmoke* and *Cimarron Strip*, as did N.B.C. with *Get Smart*, *Mothers-In-Law*, *Tarzan*, *Bonanza*, *High Chaparral* and *The Champions*.

Advertisers advised their agencies to check scripts more closely for unnecessary physical violence and some scripts were revamped. In no case, however, did any advertiser attempt to cancel contracts for the blood-and-breakage strips set for fall; nor did the networks drop any of the violent series from their 1968-69 line-up. Hard-hitting action is still the single biggest ingredient in the new season's pot—with almost half the offerings at A.B.C. and N.B.C. falling into the crime-spy-space-Western-action-adventure category. Titles are not available for the seven weekly feature movies, but some of them are sure to develop violent conflict.

Long before the deaths of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Kennedy, many parents and video critics had protested the knock-'em, sock-'em Saturday morning network cartoon strips. Come fall, all the networks promise to move toward lighter stories stressing "more positive aspects of behavior," as one source put it. Off the network screen—but probably into local syndication—will go such combative heroes as Atom Ant, Secret Squirrel and Cool McCool, the secret agent.

Network censors are cracking down on shooting in commercials. Three of four gun close-up scenes were taken out of a Master Lock Company spot on C.B.S.-TV's Ed



Picha—The Special, Belgium

Sullivan show. In the one that was retained, the original film showed a gun being fired toward the screen and talked about the owner of the .45-caliber pistol. In the approved version, the gun fires into the lock to demonstrate how well it holds up under such a blast.

Faced with the growing tendency to associate television with the general American unrest, the National Association of Broadcasters, through its board, passed a resolution defending TV's handling of the riots: "Along with all media, TV must continue to present the world as it is, not as we might like it to be." The board reaffirmed its stated code policy against the "depiction of violence as a means to dramatic effect for family viewing," and ordered the code authority to intensify its surveillance of dramatic program content.

This order had a meaningless ring. The code authority, with its small staff, has traditionally confined its scrutiny primarily to commercials. It never has had and does not now have a procedure for pre-screening entertainment programs. When a former code director, who was concerned by the amount of blatant sex and violence on TV—particularly on some feature movies which were made for theatres—sought to check shows in advance, two of the three networks refused to cooperate with the boss of the industry group to which they all subscribe. If the mood of violence in time subsides, TV will be able to take little credit for the improved atmosphere.