

Supply—Transport

measure. In ten years 35,031 persons have been killed and 949,000 have been injured in automobile accidents. The number of traffic deaths is increasing year by year. By 1964, the latest year for which figures are available, traffic injuries had increased from 2,586 to 4,655 persons per hundred thousand over a ten year period and traffic accidents increased to the extent that there has been an economic loss of \$3,200,000.

To translate these terrible statistics into understandable form, they mean that there is one traffic accident in Canada every 90 seconds, one person injured every four minutes and one person killed every two hours. The toll is mounting. I see that this matter was discussed in the British House of Commons last year. It was pointed out that unless action was taken 1 per cent of the population would suffer death or injury every year in consequence of automobile accidents.

We have the Canadian Highway Safety Council. We have seen the commendable efforts of the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi who has conducted a one-man crusade. The Canadian Highway Safety Council has done much. There is also a contribution made by all governments. The hon. gentleman says he is not concerned. Well, there is a federal contribution about which he apparently knew nothing. The Canadian Highway Safety Council receives contributions for 62 per cent of its budget from industry and 38 per cent from governments. He says this is no concern of the federal government. The federal government provides an equal share of the 38 per cent in order to bring about in this nation the reduction or elimination of the traffic accidents.

I ask for action on a national basis to bring about a national conference on highway safety. I should like to see a high level national meeting convened by the Department of Transport with representatives of federal and provincial governments, industry and national organizations, with a view to setting up a national action council to cope with this most serious toll on our highways. The minister says the federal parliament has no responsibility.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, I know the right hon. gentleman—

Mr. Diefenbaker: If the hon. gentleman will allow me—

Mr. Pickersgill: I just wanted to make a factual correction. I do not think the right hon. gentleman wants to misrepresent what I

[Mr. Diefenbaker.]

said. I said it was not part of my administrative responsibility. I think it is of the utmost concern to every Canadian.

Mr. Diefenbaker: It is often said, Mr. Chairman, that a speech in parliament has no influence but the sudden conversion of the minister shows that the contrary is true.

Mr. Pickersgill: I just like to keep the record straight.

• (4:30 p.m.)

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am not going to belabour the subject. I ask him to do something to meet a problem that is mounting in seriousness, a problem that merits the consideration of all Canadians. It is stated in the *London Times* of February 12 that in the United States in 1964 the number killed totalled 49,000 and 2,000,000 were injured. Yet in the Viet Nam war last year the total number of United States dead was 1,100. This is something that I impress on the minister. I ask him to do something and do it immediately to bring together the provinces so that a decision may be made on a course that will be helpful and beneficial.

The first thing which could be done before a conference is called is to provide for greater assistance to the Canadian Highways Safety Council, composed of men who devote themselves to public service and who are kept from doing everything they might be able to do because of the lack of finances. When we find ourselves this year spending extra billions of dollars we should be able to provide an amount to the Highway Safety Council which would give them new opportunities, through research and otherwise, to help reduce these terrible losses.

Now I come to another matter, which has to do with transportation. I am not going to repeat the arguments that have been advanced and strongly advanced against closures of railway facilities and the reduction of available facilities. A problem faced by every nation today in the western world is that of trying to maintain a transportation system while meeting the changes that research requires and demands. I suggest the setting up in the federal Department of Transport of a division of research and development. I believe this is necessary if we are to have an efficient high speed ground transportation system, which is most vitally needed for our national economy. I think provision should be made for research by private firms as well. Such a research and development division would discover in what way,