

Highway Traffic Accidents

which have such accessories. We might say this about other items which are being introduced from time to time on our vehicles, some of them as ornaments and serving no useful function yet possessing lethal qualities. These are only a few suggestions but a royal commission would undoubtedly delve deeply into many other facets of this particular problem.

I have here an editorial from which I should like to quote a few paragraphs, Mr. Speaker. It is from the *Telegram* of Saturday, January 17, 1959. In summarizing this matter the editors say this with which I am in full agreement and will accept as my own:

There can be no relaxation in the search for safety on the roads and highways. Traffic accidents kill more people in Ontario than any but the top four groups of diseases, which include cancer and the diseases often associated with advanced age.

Legislators cannot move any faster than public opinion will permit. But public opinion is surely sufficiently aroused about the traffic death toll to accept swift and stringent measures to make the highways safe for travel.

I believe a royal commission would certainly come up with some answers to this enormous problem of traffic accidents.

From time to time in this house I have spoken on the question of elimination of railway-highway crossings in this country. In this regard we have seen progressive legislation introduced by this government by increasing grants to the railway grade crossing fund designed to achieve this purpose. Perhaps a royal commission might suggest greater emphasis in the speed with which we move in this particular field. In other words, perhaps this is a matter requiring a higher priority in our public works program. These answers undoubtedly would come forth from such a royal commission as I propose today.

Reports from Russia indicate that any person found guilty in that country of driving while impaired is summarily executed and his car confiscated by the state. Such a program no doubt gets fast results. This is the way of doing things in a totalitarian state, but we live in a democracy. We do not need to be quite so drastic, but definite measures must be taken to curb this needless injury and loss of life. Otherwise we shall continue to pay an appalling toll in loss of life, permanent disabilities and the loss of many millions of dollars in physical damages and non-production of those who have been involved in motor accidents.

Mr. D. M. Fisher (Port Arthur): Mr. Speaker, by one of those amazing coincidences I happen to have a great deal of material on automobile accidents and welcome this opportunity to make some remarks with regard to the hon. member's motion. I wish there had been more time available. I should like to see

the motion amended so as to have in place of the words "royal commission" the words "a committee of this House of Commons", in co-operation with some of the groups that at present are now interested in highway safety.

I do not think the hon. member mentioned this fact, at least when I was listening. The federal government at the present time has a certain financial stake in the investigation of highway safety through its contributions to the highway safety conference. As I understand it, the dominion government pays one third of the expenses, one third comes from the provinces while the other third comes from the Canadian good roads association.

The reason why I thought this might be a satisfactory field for a committee of this house rather than a royal commission is that first of all, while it is not the most important point, I think it would be cheaper. In the second place, I have been greatly impressed with the job that has been done by the United States house of representatives in this field. This pile of reports represents their advice in the last three years after investigating this particular field and they have had considerable results.

One of the difficulties mentioned by the hon. member was the relationship with the United States. When so many of our automobiles are manufactured or designed in the United States, that must be the focal point for one of the three parts of the highway safety problem which one needs to approach. As the hon. member said, the three elements are the driver, the vehicle and the road. He put the matter very clearly when he said that there are limits to what we can do with the driver. The driver also happens to be a responsibility in so far as licenses, legal control, and things like that are concerned, of the provincial government.

But in so far as the vehicle and the road are concerned, it seems to me that the part that should be played by the federal government is much larger, especially in connection with road design. There are quite a number of engineering studies that indicate that government standards can play a great part, if the government is subsidizing roads, in improving their worth from this point of view. The American academy of political and social science in their annals for 1958 have a number of very good articles on this theme of highway safety design and improved traffic control. In these the point is very well made that new design techniques are very much to the fore at the present time in engineers' thinking and that the experience that has been gained from the new toll roads, divided highways and the tremendous impetus to travelling and touring of all kinds, puts us in