

Highway Traffic Accidents

something more could be done to protect the public from these individuals whose records in the field of driving are anything but satisfactory. A licence to drive a vehicle is a privilege, not a right. Every licence, whatever its nature, is a privilege granted under certain conditions and revokable under others. This, I think, is an important fact which must be taught to the general public. The privilege of possessing a licence to operate a motor vehicle is only that, a privilege which can be conferred or withdrawn in accordance with the rules and regulations spelled out in law.

Every person who applies for a licence to operate a beverage room, for example, or a hotel does not necessarily receive the licence. In fact, these licences are very difficult to obtain and are very easy to lose because of the stringent regulations which are applicable. In the case of the professions again, licences are issued when the licensing bodies are satisfied that the individuals concerned are competent. However, if there is cause to believe otherwise these licences, which are privileges in the first place, are rescinded.

It should be no different in so far as motor vehicles are concerned. If a person is not able to fulfil his obligations in connection with this privilege, then he should have no more right to maintain a licence than has any other licensee in any other field who has failed to measure up to the requirements of his particular sphere.

A royal commission might want to consider also the problem of driving while impaired. It is realized that this expression instinctively gives the impression of an automobile being driven by someone under the influence of alcohol. Medical science has shown that the term "impaired driving" covers many other conditions, such as emotional stress, fatigue, nervous tension, excessive eating, smoking and self-medication. It is essential that the driving public be made fully aware of the dangers inherent in driving under these conditions, and of the penalty that will be exacted.

A great many accidents are blamed on the consumption of alcoholic beverages. No doubt this is true, but just as many are caused by negligence when one of the previously mentioned factors is involved. Extensive research made into the cause of traffic accidents has shown that, almost without exception, each and every one of the drivers involved in a fatal accident has had an unstable personality. This is just another way of saying they are not fit persons to operate vehicles. Are we going to allow these people to drive on our roads? It is my opinion that if we take

[Mr. Kucherepa.]

these individuals from behind the wheels of vehicles the number of fatal accidents would be greatly reduced.

In order to achieve this goal, it would be necessary that some form of control be instituted. It is realized that every person in Canada presently holding a driver's licence could not be given that degree of medical and driving examination which is desirable in a short period of time. But it is felt that an agency of government could do much to weed out drivers who, because of their accident records and emotional instability, are unsuitable persons to hold the privilege of operating motor vehicles.

In the future, all holders of licences should be as thoroughly examined from the standpoint of physical and emotional defects as were, say, those who sought admission into the armed forces during the last world war. These tests made it possible to assess not only the degree of physical incapacity but also the degree of emotional instability. The result of this kind of testing was such that those who were lacking in the proper qualifications were weeded out at the beginning so that they were not a danger to their fellowmen in the forces and also were spared the onerous injurious effects which service undoubtedly would have had upon them.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to raise for the consideration of the hon. member and the house the question of whether licensing is not a matter exclusively under the jurisdiction of the provinces and not an appropriate subject for debate or for study by a royal commission appointed by this government.

Mr. Kucherepa: I thank you for your advice, Mr. Speaker. I was suggesting that as one method which might be considered by a royal commission. As I said in my previous remarks, licences have been issued in other fields which were not only matters of provincial responsibility but also federal responsibility. What I had in mind more than anything else was to cover this aspect of interprovincial and international licences rather than those which fall specifically within the domain of the provinces today.

It would then follow, from what I have said that representations could be made to the manufacturers of automobiles to make them safer to drive. Innovations in our motor vehicles, such as the recent use of tinted glass in windshields, should be thoroughly investigated. It may be that the use of such glass cuts down the driver's vision and constitutes a real hazard in night driving. I believe in California the use of such tinted glass prorates insurance premiums on vehicles