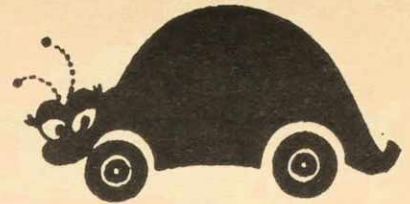




Wheelin' around



by Charlie Moore

This week I want to heartily applaud Britain's Minister of Transport, John Peyton, for his sound putdown of perennial loudmouth and self-styled safety expert Ralph Nader. Nader had criticized the British automobile industry for leaving some safety equipment, which is mandatory in the U.S.A., off the cars sold on the British home market.

In his rebuttal of Nader's charges, Peyton was quoted as saying, "Safety on the roads is not just an accessory to be bought from the manufacturer. Far more it is a matter of personal responsibility. It goes without saying that if British manufacturers sell to the United States or other foreign countries, they must comply with such regulations as are in force. It would be another thing for us to slavishly copy these regulations without being satisfied of their usefulness here. Moreover, the mere multiplying of regulations is not necessarily effective. It can add to the costs of travel without adding anything appreciable to safety. It is a disservice to road safety to suggest that the responsibility is always someone else's, NEVER one's own."

Other government officials added that the first class

suspension, braking, and steering of British and European cars did not happen through legislation, and American safety legislation had contributed little to accident avoidance.

Bravo, Mr. Peyton and friends. It's time someone put Crusading Ralphie in his place.

While on the subject of auto safety, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of the U.S. government has postponed the requirement for airbag passive restraint systems in passenger cars till 1976 (previously 1974). This reprieve was granted following an onslaught of objection to the proposed federal law.

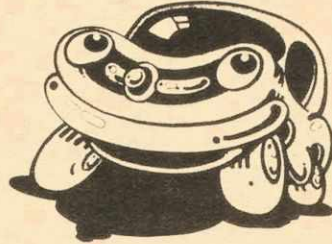
What is an airbag? Essentially, it is part of a system whereby a sensor located in the front of the car detects an abnormal rate of deceleration (such as a head-on collision) and inflates large plastic bags in front of the driver and passengers in order to cushion the impact of the crash. Possibly a worthwhile system provided the following circumstances apply:

1. The passengers are seated correctly and of average size and weight.

2. That the first impact is the only one (the airbag is ineffective in the case of a multiple

impact crash because the bag deflates as soon as it is fully inflated.

3. The collision is not sideways or a rollover as the airbag only offers protection in the case of frontal impact.



4. That the airbag system can be made fail-safe so that it will not deploy accidentally (no pun intended), and can be guaranteed to go off when required. Even the Apollo moon shots have had systems failures.

5. That some remedy can be found to the problem that the airbag going off causes such a change in air pressure inside the car that it bursts the passengers' eardrums and blows the windows out of the car.

After witnessing an airbag demonstration in Germany, J. R. Daniels of Britain's Autocar magazine writes: "We were shown the deployment of two airbags in a Mercedes 250 Coupe. It was done with the doors open since the technicians had no wish to shower us all with flying glass. The effect was shattering all the same. Red fire, debris, smoke, and more noise than I would have thought possible. Having said that, there is one thing I am going to

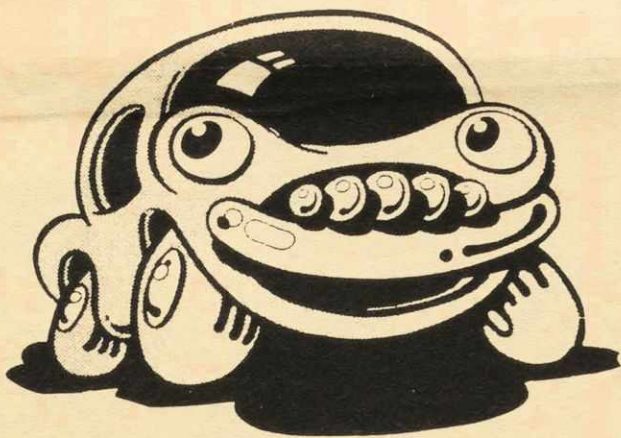
make clear. YOU ARE NEVER GOING TO GET ME IN A CAR WITH A LIVE AIRBAG!" (emphasis is his).

In the face of all these variables it would seem that the airbag system is an impractical, ineffective, and possibly dangerous approach to auto safety. Yet the U.S. government plans to have them installed in every passenger automobile sold in the states after Jan. 1, 1976, at a cost of over \$100 per car.

Instead of the costly, problematical airbags, why not encourage the use of seatbelts? They are still the most effective restraint system, and work in all manner of crash situations. Australia has recently made it illegal to drive without them, why not the U.S. and Canada?

Moving right along, here are some news notes. Ford has made an agreement to buy Wankel engines from Audi-NSU (a subsidiary of Volkswagen) of Germany. V.W. is working on a replacement for the ubiquitous Beetle. It will probably have a Wankel engine and front-wheel-drive, and will be smaller than the present V.W. Parnelli Jones won the Mexican 1000 off-road race in a much-modified Ford Bronco. British Leyland of Canada has finally introduced their Marina to these shores. It is offered as a competitor in the growing under 2 litre sport sedan market. Donald Healey is building a successor to the famous Austin-Healey 3000 sports car. The new Healey will have a front engine and rear wheel drive, and a two-seater

roadster body built by the British firm of Jensen. The engine will be a Lotus developed Vauxhall four cylinder with aluminum block and overhead cams. Production is expected to be 10,000 per year. Till next week, keep on wheelin'.



Dal radio hosting broadcasting meeting

This year's general meeting of the Atlantic Association of University Broadcasters (AAUB) is taking place in the Dalhousie Student Union Building. It is being held in co-operation with the Student Union and Dal radio.

The purpose of these meetings is to discuss the problems in university stations and to bring in speakers of interest. Professor Janish will be speaking about closed circuit broadcasting, Mr. Crompton about low power broadcasting as well as some local radio people.

The meeting this year will be held on Feb. 11 to Feb. 13, and includes the Atlantic region university radio stations.

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