

I see it is now five o'clock, Mr. Speaker, so may I call it five o'clock and continue after the supper adjournment.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Victoria (Mr. McKinnon)—Veterans Affairs—Victoria, B.C.—Possible transfer of hospital from federal authority—Request for consideration of views of veterans; the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) Veterans Affairs—Inquiry as to increases in war veterans' allowances; the hon. member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Roche)—Health—Request for assistance to Alliance for Life.

● (1700)

It being five o'clock p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper, namely, public bills.

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I believe there has been agreement to take the bill standing in the name of the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Mather).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed that the House proceed to consideration of Bill C-35, An Act to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act (seat belts) standing in the name of the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE FOR MANDATORY EQUIPPING OF VEHICLES WITH SEAT BELTS

Mr. Barry Mather (Surrey-White Rock) moved that Bill C-35, to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act (Seat belts), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to amend the Motor Vehicle Safety Act in such a way as to include a change which would make mandatory the equipping of all commercial motor vehicles, notably trucks and buses, with safety restraint seat belts, and further would make mandatory the use of such seat belts by the operators of commercial vehicles. Similar legislation is now in effect in

Vehicular Seat Belts

the United States and is saving lives on that country's highways. My contention is that the passage of this bill, or the furthering of what is proposed in it, would also have a good effect in Canada.

In Canada 5,000 people are killed, 190,000 people are injured—many of them for life—and \$1 billion is the economic toll taken by traffic accidents every 12 months. To put it another way, in each and every week in Canada 1,000 Canadians are killed, 3,500 are injured, and the dollar loss is multimillion. If you consider this toll on the order of a war in which people are slaughtered, the economic loss is immense. We can calculate the cost of this road war for, say, a four year period. In the last four years 20,000 Canadians have been killed, 750,000 others have been injured, and no less than \$4 billion have been lost, all through traffic accidents.

This is a toll comparable with that in a major war. I consider it demands more attention and more action on the part of the federal government and the provincial governments than have been given to it so far. We cannot hope to end this type of war, but I submit that with proper consideration we can hope to bring about a reduction in the toll that it takes, and perhaps produce an armistice during which we can have time to consider and put life saving legislation into effect. The three main features of motor vehicle accidents concern the driver, the vehicle, and the road or driving conditions. My proposal has to do with two of these elements.

In the United States commercial vehicle accidents involving the vehicles covered by my bill claim 10,000 lives a year, with 124,000 persons disabled. In our terms, if we take the usual one-tenth standard with regard to the difference in population between the United States and Canada, this would mean that approximately 1,000 Canadians are killed every year and approximately 12,000 are injured in bus and truck accidents.

Towards reducing this loss the United States department of transport, the federal highways administration, in 1970 introduced regulations providing that seat belts for the drivers of buses and the drivers and co-drivers of trucks and truck tractors had to be installed in all motor vehicles used in inter-state or foreign commerce built on or after July 1, 1971. Older vehicles manufactured after January 1, 1965, had to be fitted with seat belts by July 1, 1972. In the news release which was issued with respect to this legislation it was stated that a landmark provision of the new regulations is the requirement that a motor vehicle, which has a seat belt assembly installed at the driver's seat, shall not be driven unless the driver has properly restrained himself with the seat belt assembly.

This is exactly what my bill seeks to achieve in Canada, the mandatory use of safety seat belts in commercial vehicles. I think it is clear to anyone who considers the situation that the drivers of commercial vehicles, notably buses or trucks, have many lives other than their own in their hands when they are driving such vehicles. It is obvious that if an accident occurs and the driver of a commercial vehicle, a bus or a truck, is not wearing a seat belt and is hurled forward, or into the roof of the vehicle, or ejected from the vehicle, the vehicle would be out of control, and very likely would be involved in the destruc-