

Highway Traffic Accidents

within the provincial field. I had thought that perhaps this might be a matter in which the standing committee on railways, canals and telegraph lines might make a request to find out just where the fields of jurisdiction lie and just how much scope the federal government should have in trying to take the lead in these safety campaigns. I know the provinces are co-operating through the Canadian good roads association and the highway safety conferences which are being held to get an over-all standard both for the design of highways and the general rules of the road. But I am wondering if this kind of leadership is enough.

The figures, as the hon. member pointed out, are staggering. In Ontario you have up to 125,000 people injured in one year in automobile accidents. In the last quarter for which I have the dominion bureau of statistics figures, which was the last quarter of 1958, \$22 million in that quarter alone was paid out in costs and automobile damages. This is one of the great drains upon our society, and when you add to it the tremendous amount of money which is tied up in insurance, it is indeed staggering.

It was very interesting earlier on when we had a motion to adjourn the debate of the previous resolution on the ground that a number of hon. members were not here and were kept from getting here. I imagine quite a number of them, perhaps like me, today, were kept from getting here for some hours because of their inability to move on the roads. The way that our whole society gets tied up when we have an unnatural disaster or storm of some kind underlines our great difficulties when we are without the automobile. It is so much a part of our lives that to consider doing without it makes life seem hopeless. Yet we are almost as hopeless as a society in our failures to handle this very serious need to cut down the accident rate.

I would like to think that we could have a longer discussion of the hon. member's motion and that we could get a number of our hon. members who are contributing to the debate to make an attempt to mark off just where we should go, and decide whether the idea of a royal commission is a good one. I reiterate that I think a parliamentary committee, or one of the parliamentary committees we now have, might better go into the subject in a preliminary way before we move along to the rather expensive step of a royal commission. The difficulty with a royal commission, it seems to me, would be that you would have to have representatives from each one of the provinces on the commission, and this almost immediately gives

you a commission of such size and scope that the expenses and the kind of hearings you would have to have become rather fantastic.

At the same time I think the hon. member is perfectly right; the urgency of the matter is very much to the fore. The evidence that has appeared in these United States committee reports indicates that all the medical associations, the motoring associations and almost all the engineering associations wish for very strong leadership in this field. In the main, the United States tendency seems to be to move toward a tougher and tougher regulation.

I might just mention that in the 1959 session of the United States congress there were five safety bills before it. One was a bill to require certain safety devices on motor vehicles sold, shipped or used in interstate commerce, and for other purposes. There was another bill to require certificates of fitness in the sale of automobiles, and for other purposes. There was a bill to amend title 15 of the United States code with respect to the operation of speedometers on motor vehicles, and for other purposes. There was another bill to require passenger-carrying motor vehicles purchased for use by the federal government to meet certain safety standards. Then there was a bill to prohibit the use in commerce of any motor vehicle which discharges substances in amounts which are found by the surgeon general of the public health service to be dangerous to human health.

This subcommittee of the committee on interstate and foreign commerce is obviously taking a very wide interest in this question of motor vehicle safety, and I think it is time we had something of this type in Canada. I would also think that a preliminary step is that we could consider going to the United States, or a select group from the committee could consider going to the United States, and get to know some of the work which has been done already by legislators there and by other people.

Last fall there was a meeting of the American automobile association in Atlantic City and at that time car makers were advised to give safety a priority. One of the speakers was Mr. L. L. Colbert, president of the Chrysler corporation and head of the automobile manufacturers association. A report in the *Globe and Mail* of September 24, 1959 reads:

Mr. Colbert discussed traffic safety, and put the onus for most accidents on "a handful of careless, bad drivers." He held to the industry's basic tenet that, consistent with keeping prices down, they were building more and more safety into cars.

He appealed for unity between car makers and motorists to advance traffic safety, contending that the groups had been partners for years. Several