

ness as well as environmental protection. Examples of crash avoidance standards are those related to steering, braking and vision. Crashworthiness standards are related to interior padding, bumpers, side-door strength, roof-crashing resistance and, of course, seat belts and their availability. The placement of seat belts throughout automobiles and similar vehicles has, I am sure, contributed to the diminution of injuries and deaths in accidents.

Since the proclamation of the act on January 1, 1971, the number of motor vehicles registered in Canada has grown from 8.5 million to 12.5 million, an increase of almost 50 per cent, which means that traffic density has greatly increased on our roads. Notwithstanding this, I am pleased to say that over the same period of time the number of deaths per 100 million vehicle miles has fallen from 6.7 to an estimated 4.7, a decrease of 30 per cent. I believe that activity under the act accounts for a significant portion of this welcome improvement. I have in mind steps such as the following: 76 new safety regulations and amendments were issued and implemented; 3.7 million vehicles were recalled to correct safety-related deficiencies; 4,545 public complaints on possible safety-related defects were investigated and resolved; 3,500 audit inspections of manufacturers and imports were performed; and 9,800 tests of vehicles and their components were carried out to determine whether federal safety standards had been complied with.

● (1500)

In the amending bill we propose to make improvements and provide clarification to make the legislation even more effective. I refer to matters which have become apparent during the six years of the administration of the act. The specific objectives of the present bill are to remove doubts as to whom the act addresses, to require the retention of records, to make the notice of defect requirements more effective, to provide exemptions from some requirements in order to permit technological development without inhibition, and to make the penalty for violating the notice of defect requirements consistent with other penalties under the act and in similar federal statutes.

I can assure hon. members that the co-operative attitude existing between the provinces and the federal government will continue. I think many members will welcome the improvement in relation to seat belts and their general use. While there will be differences of opinion about whether mandatory legislation in this field is the desired route to take—and the provinces have gone both ways in this regard—there is unanimous agreement about the desire for education and encouragement, and our recent campaigns, advertising and encouragement of the use of seat belts, have had their part to play, I think.

I therefore commend the bill at second reading to the House, and I believe there is general agreement that the bill be referred to the committee of the whole so that we may complete that stage in this House at this time as well.

Mr. Heward Grafftey (Brome-Missisquoi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to thank the minister most heartily for his remarks

Motor Vehicle Safety

and let him know that what he has already said is correct, that the bill has the general approval of those of us on this side of the House. Before we pass it at this stage I should like to make some fairly important comments, in my view, on the main principles and thrusts of the original legislation and this amending bill as it passes through the House of Commons.

On September 13, 1899, a certain H. H. Bliss, a real estate agent broker in Central Park West, New York City, stepped down from what was then called a horse drawn tramway. He was struck down and killed by what was referred to in the *New York Times* the next day as a "horseless carriage". As far as we know, Mr. Speaker, his was the first recorded automobile death in North American history.

Since 1899 there have been more victims killed on the roads of North America in or by motor vehicles than there were in all the wars in history. It is a world-wide epidemic. Dr. Wilder Penfield and his successors at the Montreal Neurological Institute called the epidemic of highway motor vehicle deaths and injuries "an uncontrolled world-wide epidemic." We are talking about the number one killer of our young people under 35. After cancer and heart disease we are talking about the number three killer in the entire population.

Suffice it to say that at one time or another we all attempt to place blame for motor vehicle deaths or injuries sometimes on the driver, sometimes on the road, and sometimes on the vehicle. That is an easy thing to do. We are not so much interested in blame as we are in taking what most people term today the epidemiological approach to this world-wide, uncontrolled epidemic, treating the road and surroundings as the atmosphere in the epidemic, the driver as the agent, and the car as the microbe.

In terms of this world-wide epidemic we are dealing today more particularly with the automobile, and I would commend the minister for a very progressive step forward. When man took to the air there was no question whatever that aircraft were manufactured, altered, and inspected under the strictest rules of law at all levels. The same is true of rolling stock on railways. From the very beginning all over the world you could not build, alter or touch a piece of rolling stock on a railway without the highest degree of regulation in terms of building, inspection, and alteration.

Somehow or other—and there is no use analysing it too profoundly today—the automobile per se, at least until very recent history, in terms of its manufacture, alteration, and inspection has been outside the rule of law and public regulation. As I say, I want to move away from the notion of who is to blame, whether a disinterested public, an inactive governmental authority or an irresponsible industry. I have been talking about that for years. Today I think we are going to make progress by co-operation.

In these days of contemporary consumerism we realize that we have the right to expect from government and the automobile industry production of the safest and best possible motor vehicles that science and technology and industry can produce. It is all very well to say that the consumer should know. To a great extent, with a high degree of public information the