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What Shall We Do  
About Traffic?



By WILLIAM BUTTERWORTH

*President, Chamber of Commerce of the United State.*



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By WILLIAM BUTTERWORTH  
*President, Chamber of Commerce of the  
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**A**S PRESIDENT of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States and in answer to the earnest and persistent demand of business men of the country as evidenced by strong resolutions passed at our annual meeting, I am taking a serious interest in the traffic problem. But I do not have to rely solely upon the judgment of those members that I should be interested in this great problem. I see it all too clearly as an individual using the streets and highways for personal

travel and utilizing motor transport in the conduct of my business

As a human being I cannot but be impressed and depressed by the annual accident toll on our streets and highways—25,000 killed and 600,000 seriously injured. As a business man, if I could steel myself to ignoring these human casualties, I could still not ignore the annual money loss estimated at 600 million dollars due directly to accidents, or the loss, estimated at two billion dollars, due to congestion and delay resulting from inadequate facilities and improper use of those available.

In the unlikely event that I myself, my family and my close friends can keep off the casualty list, I cannot possibly avoid contributing my share of this two billion dollars, a sum equal to nearly 20 per cent of our total tax bill—federal, state and local.

Well, what can I do about it? One thing I might do is what a ninety-year-old friend of mine has done. When asked how he attained such an age he said that he lived 75 years before the arrival of the automobile and since then he had not been out of the house.

This solution will not quite answer for a business man. And fortunately a more constructive course is available. The National Conference on Street and Highway Safety, organized four years ago and from the beginning actively participated in by the Chamber of Com-

merce of the United States, has developed a comprehensive program. This program, if carried out, I am satisfied will cut the accident toll in half and then cut it in half again despite the constant increase in the number of motor vehicles and in the use of those vehicles.

President-elect Hoover was one of the prime movers of this Conference and has been its chairman continuously. His work through this Conference has been not the least of his services to the American people.

Knowing that the American public, when it fully realizes that it has a problem before it, can solve that problem far better by voluntary effort than by coercion, Mr. Hoover said at the close of the second general session of the Conference:

"It is not our purpose to create here an additional organization for safety, but rather to secure cooperation between the many agencies that are working throughout the country to that end. I have conceived this Conference and the conferences that will flow from it of this character, as perhaps a new step, or a part in a new step in the varied conception of government, not government from a central authority, but government by stimulation of the local community to intelligent action."

Thus to stimulate the local community to this intelligent action is a function of the local chamber of commerce. There are other local organizations which will

be interested, particularly motor clubs and safety councils where they exist. In these cases there is need for local cooperation such as exists among the corresponding national bodies. By and large, however, commercial organizations, representing every nature of business interest in the community and having a keen understanding of the economic aspects affecting the entire population, are in position to carry the main burden of this movement for safer and better traffic.

What are the main objectives of this safety program so carefully worked out by the best minds on the subject? All are important, and others might group them in a different order, but they come to my mind as follows:

First, uniform laws and regulations. We cannot possibly have 25 million motor vehicles moving on our streets and highways without confusion and accident unless their operators conform to rules. Furthermore, driving today presents such complexity that even the minimum of necessary rules are difficult for the average operator to master. What, then, if he learns and obeys the rules in his own community only to find that as soon as he drives outside of his bailiwick the rules are wholly different? He may drive squarely into an accident or add to the confusion and congestion of streets and highways. With good roads everywhere and motor vehicles wiping out townships,

county and state lines, it is certain that we need uniform laws and regulations

Second, discipline The day has gone by when we can safely say to any man, woman or child who can contrive to get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle, "The highways are yours Use them as you please" The motor vehicle, which has fairly revolutionized American life, in the hands of the incompetent or the reckless is an instrument of destruction We must therefore guard against destructive use of these vehicles Having these uniform laws, we must enforce them Back of all that we must limit the privilege of operating motor vehicles to those who prove their ability to operate them with reasonable safety Discipline therefore divides itself into the licensing of drivers on the basis of examination, and impartial enforcement of traffic laws and regulations

Third, traffic control In the cities primarily, but wherever there is possibility of conflict in the use of street and highway facilities, we must control and direct that use Signs, signals and pavement markings come under this category, also traffic police The establishment of traffic control measures clearly should be based upon careful engineering study

Fourth, better facilities and planning Our engineers and city planners constantly tell us what we can readily enough see, that our existing street fa-

cilities were designed for a bygone age and, even when put to the best possible use by intelligent control, are inadequate for the demands put upon them. Therefore we must have intelligent planning of new facilities along with the study of the best use of existing facilities.

Fifth, construction and maintenance of the motor vehicle. The automotive industry, spurred by the competition, has gone a long way in giving the public better brakes, proper headlights and various improvements and appliances to make the vehicle safe when it comes from the factory. Unfortunately the industry is not in control of the situation thereafter, and one of the things we need for safety is a more certain plan for keeping all motor vehicles using the highways in condition for safe operation.

Sixth, education. Throughout all of this program we see the need for education—education of motorist, of pedestrian, of children, of the general public, of the police. Motorists and pedestrians are far more likely to obey regulations if they understand the danger and confusion arising from failure to obey them. The police alone cannot fully enforce the regulations. They must be largely self-enforcing, and I have sufficient faith in mankind to believe that ultimately they will be self-enforcing when the general public comes to understand them and to realize that they are necessary to



the smooth, safe and expeditious moving of traffic

The motor car has brought home to us the need for new standards of responsibility to our fellow men. Probably the present generation is no more prone to run amuck than was that of 50 years ago, but it has vastly greater opportunities to bring harm to others in doing so. The motor vehicle is an outstanding illustration of that opportunity. With the blessings it has brought we must accept the greater responsibilities. In general our laws are only the codified expression of the best experience available, and this is certainly true with respect to the motor vehicle legislation recommended by the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety. Being representative of every conceivable point of view that has a legitimate interest in the subject, the Uniform Vehicle Code and the Model Municipal Traffic Ordinance have been worked out to meet the general need with a minimum of restriction upon any proper use.

The National Chamber by resolution of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting went on record as urging support by all for the program of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety. The importance of nation-wide uniformity in traffic laws was also specially emphasized.

The National Councillors of the Chamber at the meeting in Hot Springs

last October endorsed the Uniform Code and the Model Ordinance in the following terms:

*The Uniform Vehicle Code*—The record of motor accidents and the conditions surrounding motor traffic in the various states show clearly the necessity of uniform laws. The National Chamber has already approved uniform state motor-vehicle legislation. Substantial progress toward coordination has been made in the past two years through the enactment of legislation by a number of states, based on the Uniform Code, prepared by the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety, which the Chamber has actively supported.

With 44 legislatures meeting in 1929 there will be an opportunity for additional states to bring their laws into harmony with the Uniform Code. This meeting of National Councilors strongly urges all member organizations to lend their influence to secure the adoption of such legislation in their several states.

*Municipal Traffic Ordinances and Regulations*—The National Council notes with satisfaction the completion by the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety of a Model Municipal Traffic Ordinance based on the best experience of cities and towns throughout the country. This makes available a municipal code in harmony with the Uniform Code of state motor vehicle laws.

We urge upon member organizations consideration of the Model Municipal Traffic Ordinance and request the Board of Di-

ectors to take such action as will assist member organizations to this end

To date 15 states have adopted laws based on the Code or a substantial part of it or have revised their existing laws to bring them into closer harmony therewith. In the few months that the Ordinance has been available I am informed that Indianapolis and Providence, as well as a number of smaller cities, have adopted it, while such action is now pending in several other cities. The Ordinance has furthermore been put into virtually state-wide application in New Jersey through adoption by the legislature of a traffic law prescribing for all municipalities a major part of its features

### **Opportunity for Leadership**

**C**HAMBERS of commerce have a splendid opportunity for leadership in this humane and economic movement. It has been gratifying to see the evidences of increasing participation of business organizations and business men in the work. What the Chicago Association of Commerce has accomplished is a matter of pride to us all. Los Angeles, San Francisco, Cairo, Keokuk, Akron, Findlay, Sandusky, New Castle, Williamsport, Providence and Boston are but a few of the cities from which we have word of real effort on the part of the business men to help solve the traffic problem. In New York the formation of a representative business men's com-

mittee for this purpose has just been announced. The accomplishments to date in many cities are bringing results of direct interest to business. Reports from Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chicago indicate positive improvement in the situation with increases of from 25 to 50 per cent in the flow of traffic in business districts.

The National Conference headquarters informs me that bills based on the Uniform Vehicle Code will be up in many states during the present and coming sessions of the legislatures, while news comes frequently of additional communities which are taking action looking to revision of their local traffic ordinances.

It is not the function of the National Chamber to press these matters in individual communities or individual states. It is not the function of the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety to do this.

It lies within the province of the local organizations, including the state and local chambers of commerce, to take advantage of the work which has been done for them by the national organization and thus to provide the entire United States with uniform traffic laws and regulations.

It rests with them equally to take the initiative with other measures such as I have outlined which are needed to bring about satisfactory conditions on our streets and highways.