

FROM: OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

REMARKS OF ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,  
PREPARED FOR DELIVERY TO 6TH ANNUAL EDITORIAL CONFERENCE,  
MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION AND AMERICAN SOCIETY OF  
MAGAZINE EDITORS, SHOREHAM HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D. C.,  
9:00 A.M., APRIL 3, 1967

The Constitution of the United States, which is always a good place to begin a discussion, contains a phrase that has had long-term significance for both the publishing and transportation industries. The line I refer to strongly suggests that there is a parallel--and indeed, a mutual affinity--between your field and mine.

It is the clause giving the Congress the power "To establish Post Offices and post roads."

Behind these plain words of 1787 was a national policy decision which I believe is still shaping the society in which we live.

There is a widespread feeling that our urban civilization has not advanced uniformly or equitably, that in some respects it may even be deteriorating.

You, of all professional groups, were among the first to recognize the fact that our cities were involved in a mobility crisis. Indeed, modern communications--especially the electronic media--have been holding an instant mirror of urban conditions before our eyes. Obviously, transportation is only one part of the picture. But we see, with chagrin, that the newer transportation modes are tending to become a destructive force in community life.

I think it would be impossible for me to say anything about the impact of metropolitan transportation on urban life that you've not already heard, and perhaps printed, a hundred times.

Air pollution, accidents, noise, congestion, ugliness...

It is a complex and unhappy situation, with multiple causes and many to share the blame throughout society.

The Department has broad responsibilities for overseeing safety conditions in air, ground and water transportation. I intend to use the full authority, prestige, persuasiveness, and leadership inherent in the Office of the Secretary to remove the hazards from mobility and preserve it as a constructive force in community life.

It was the idea that progress could be hastened by improved communications.

The Founders of this country believed it was in the national interest for goods and people and thoughts to circulate freely. An open society, in other words.

Out of this clause, during Lincoln's administration, emerged the great concept known as Second Class mail, which subsidized the flow of information and creative expression all over America. I surely don't have to explain to this group, in financial terms, what the Second Class permit has meant to periodical publishers.

From the same clause of the Constitution came the famous Rural Post Roads Act of 1916--the initial authority for our modern Federal-aid highway system.

It is always interesting to examine U. S. history from a transportation/communications point of view. In such a perspective, there appear to be three main stages in the evolution of our country. The nation's circulatory system has related to each phase in a different way.

Right after the adoption of the Constitution, transportation assumed what was largely a political role. And it moved mainly in one direction.

The major users were people dissatisfied with their prospects in the original thirteen states. By migrating westward, it was possible--but only possible--that citizens

could better their personal fortunes. On the other hand, it was almost certain they would be helping to extend the authority of the national government.

As our ancestors scattered across the continent in the early nineteenth century, communications provided the cement of political unity. And transportation was primarily a device for exploring, conquering and colonizing that immense territory.

Commerce naturally followed. All during the first two-thirds of that century [because of a Constitution that prohibited the Old World barriers to commerce] this nation was creating the preconditions for the world's first great mass market.

And at some unobserved point, our transportation system entered upon its second major role, that of intensive economic development.

I believe that this actually occurred about the time of the Civil War. There was a very rapid amassment of capital, a tremendous focusing of industrial effort. Railroad empires were consolidated. The prototype of the modern giant corporation appeared.

At the same time, people by the millions said goodbye to the farm. Foreign immigrants swarmed in, in even greater numbers. And the American city grew beyond anyone's comprehension.

I understand that there are publications making money on newsstand sales. The equivalent in transportation are the airlines and intercity bus companies, which do indeed show a profit on passenger fares.

Unfortunately, this analogy breaks down in one of the most important areas of transportation.

Let me ask you editors and publishers a rhetorical question. What would you do with a magazine that couldn't cover its full costs from the combined revenues of advertising plus copies purchased by readers? In other words, a losing proposition.

Before you give the obvious answer, allow me to complicate the situation. Try imagining that your readers had the power to insist that this publication of yours must remain in business, on the grounds that its editorial contents were vital to the community.

Unlikely situation? Transportation has a category that fits the description. It's called urban transit.

The third stage in America's evolution, following political development and economic development, could be described as the age of social development. But I use the term "social" in the broadest sense that implies the culture of a society. We have arrived at this state very recently through a judgment our citizens have made regarding the quality of their urban way of life.

Then mass transportation was created, and the opportunities of mass consumption began to be perceived. And industry learned mass production methods. And those, in turn, were sustained and perhaps even made financially feasible by a new refinement in mass communication--advertising!

Mass transportation, mass consumption, mass production, mass communication. These elements, together with political freedom, have provided the basis of America's unique standard of living.

I hasten to add that this brief review is not intended as a formal interpretation of U. S. history. Obviously, it oversimplifies. I rather doubt that it's original.

But I do think it's a valid way of looking at our respective industries, and the broader purposes they serve.

I might also observe that the marketing problems of publishing and transportation are surprisingly similar. I am told that most periodicals would go broke if they had to survive on subscriptions and newsstand sales.

Parts of the transportation industry have the same difficulty. Most U. S. railroads would fold up if they had to depend on passenger fares alone. So would our ocean liners.

You can make the following generalization: What advertising revenue means to the magazine business, freight revenue represents to the older transportation modes.

But, to paraphrase a famous utterance, I have not been appointed the first Secretary of Transportation by President Johnson in order to pistol-whip the transportation industry.

Certainly some highway construction has disrupted some of our older neighborhoods, but it has also helped to create newer and more comfortable places to live.

Aircraft make a lot of noise flying over our cities, but there aren't many airports being abandoned these days.

Automobiles add to the pollution of our air, but they also make us the most mobile society in the history of the world and add greatly to our social and economic progress.

Some freeways are less than ideal examples of aesthetics, but we have embarked on a beautification program designed to do something about this.

A number of these projects have vocal critics but those same critics have local option. Any transportation project can be stopped dead in its tracks with determined local opposition. Unfortunately, such an approach does not lessen transportation demand and thereby solve the problem. It is important for local interests to appreciate that there must be expanding facilities. The object should be to create the most benefits at least cost, realizing there will be some of both.

Transportation, especially the air and highway modes, has been called upon to help humanize the urban environment. Undoubtedly, the transportation industry can make an important

contribution. I cannot say that all transportation people have embraced this difficult, emotional role with joy.

But I see good signs that the leaders in the field are turning to the task with their customary ingenuity, imagination and resourcefulness.

Nevertheless, it is the community and not the carriers and manufacturers which must set the standards of urban life. Society has its choice-mechanisms which are more powerful than the marketplace or the bureaucracy.

Here, of course, I should mention that the Department of Transportation is not the only Federal agency interested in urban transportation problems. President Johnson, in his 1966 transportation message, stated that the Department of Housing and Urban Development would bear the principal responsibility for a unified Federal approach to urban problems. However, HUD will have the counsel, the cooperation, and the fullest support of the Department on matters affecting intracity movement. And at the President's request, Secretary

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Weaver and I will soon commence a joint study leading to a recommendation of the means and procedures by which this cooperation can best be achieved.

And here I should also mention that although metropolitan transportation needs have perhaps the highest priority, there are other aspects of transportation--intercity and international--which are also beset by serious problems.

Most railroads, as I indicated earlier, are eager to get out of the long-haul passenger business. The competitive position of our merchant marine has declined. The natural gas pipelines present a potential safety problem. Many trucking operations are marginal. And the accelerating pace of technological development has given the nation's airlines a serious investment problem.

If there were any virtue in being long-winded on the subject of transportation problems, I could extend this list for quite some time. In fact, some of you who are editors or publishers of transportation books will know what I mean when I say there are transportation policy questions so emotionally charged that right now no one wants even to name them in public, much less debate their merits.

There are some observers of this field who keep insisting that if only we knew how to make the right decisions, if only those in power could exercise real ingenuity and wisdom and firmness, that all our transportation problems could be solved without hurting anyone.

This is a delusion.

The transportation field is composed of competing interests. There are no unoccupied areas in the transportation arena. Painless surgery doesn't exist here. You simply can't upgrade one sector without in some way downgrading another. The only thing you can do is try always to keep a clear view of the public interest.

Fortunately for the transportation field, there are wide areas of potential improvements to service which are not controversial, which hurt none and benefit all. The Department intends to work in these concensus areas as much as possible.

Not because we're afraid to get anybody mad at us.

And certainly not because this is the path of least resistance. The reason there is common agreement is because the problems in those areas are so large and obvious and frustrating to all.

I refer to the need for coordination of transportation service. It is generally at the transfer points that the most serious losses to efficiency occur. Whether in passenger travel or the movement of freight, the delays and rehandling between modes are costly to all concerned--the passenger, the shipper, the carrier. It is a burden to the consumer who must

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purchase goods at a higher price because of the unnecessary transportation costs. And it also affects total U. S. competitiveness in international trade.

So, one of the immediate major goals of the Department of Transportation--and one that will surely not make many big headlines--is to work for increased intermodal efficiency. We will do that through promotion of integrated systems, including strong support to the containerization efforts of the transportation industry.

Standard-size shipping containers that can be transferred without a lot of trouble from one mode to another may seem, to some, a trivial advance to be spending time on in the age of space exploration. But within existing constraints, I think it is one of the few quick and practical improvements of transportation service that does not require a heavy lump-sum investment.

And in export trade, there are great savings to be achieved in another mundane aspect of transportation, the shipping papers. I am told that the sheer paperwork associated with foreign commerce accounts for between 5 and 10 percent of the price tag on American goods sold in overseas markets. Standardized international documentation can appreciably cut those costs, and has the Department's wholehearted support.

There are glamorous projects, of course. The Department's role in the extension of newer technologies is currently

exemplified by the SST and by the High Speed Ground Transportation project connecting Boston and New York, and New York and Washington, by rapid rail.

Transportation, like publishing, is always concerned with the next issue. But as we look to the future of transportation, we must take care to remember its past.

Today, April Third, is a memorable day in the history of communication. On this day, one hundred and seven years ago, the Pony Express began.

I don't suppose there is a more romantic episode to be found in American transportation than that famous horseback relay between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California.

They cut travel time from the thirty or forty days required by stagecoaches, to fourteen days. It was an example of forced technology, of men pushing horsepower to the limits of its efficiency.

The Pony Express lasted only eighteen months. It was superseded by the transcontinental telegraph. And probably the managers of the Pony Express knew all along that that was going to happen. But they had customers who couldn't wait, who were willing to pay what it cost for a faster mail service.

To me, this episode illustrates the driving impatience of the American people for progress. The Clipper Ship, in the 1840's and '50's, is another good example of that. Steamboats were already in service, were already becoming competitive with sail, when the Clipper Ship enjoyed its brief ten or fifteen-year heyday. But Americans were unwilling to wait for the steamboat

to be perfected. They forced the sailing technology to its outermost limits.

We're doing the same thing today in the aerospace industry. We're building the SST. We already have a grasp of the technology that will supersede the SST, fifteen or twenty years from now. But Americans are not the kind of people who'll passively wait for new developments.

They're engaged now in pushing jet aviation technology to its practical limits.

I feel this is admirable. I believe this is one of the great and permanent characteristics of our nation.

One could wish that our citizens had a little more awareness of the past. But a people who make history may perhaps be forgiven for not reading it.