

REMARKS OF ALAN S. BOYD, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, PREPARED FOR DELIVERY AT WASHINGTON CONFERENCE FOR THE ADVERTISING COUNCIL, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA RED CROSS BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C., 12:00 NOON, MAY 24, 1967 (19)

The transportation problems of this country, in this generation, are the result of many fortunate circumstances.

Our civilization has made great advances. And as Chesterton reminds us, "Progress is the mother of problems."

In considering transportation problems, such as congestion, and air pollution, and safety, I think we should have the grace to acknowledge one essential fact. Those problems arise from things which all of us--in the past, at least--have accounted as blessings.

I refer to the general prosperity of our nation. To our gains in technology. To the increasing health and size of our families. To social mobility which permits most of our citizens to live wherever they can afford to. And certainly not least in importance, I refer to our freedom of personal choice in the marketplace.

Withdraw just a few of these circumstances and it's quite possible that our nation would not be so deeply concerned about crowded highways and airports.

But along with the very widespread abundance of life in America, the public perception of transportation-related problems has grown very acute.

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We see declining central cities and uncoordinated suburban growth, we see lagging regional economies and expanding slums, and we assign transportation its share of responsibility.

Even minor irritations of the past have reached the threshold of pain. The man-made ugliness along our highways has become intolerable. And deeper injuries to community life caused by the haphazard planning of transport facilities are no longer to be accepted.

It has become increasingly apparent that in a society such as ours transportation is one of the great choice-mechanisms. Like the ballot box and the market place, it expresses popular desires.

By voting, by buying, by moving, we shape our communities and institutions. We do this quite deliberately in our political choices; far less so in our economic choices; and almost unconsciously in our transportation decisions.

No family moves to a suburban home with two-car garage as a destructive act. Yet the effect of a hundred thousand such decisions may be the relative decline of a downtown business district, congestion on urban highways, relocation of firms, disintegration of the central city's school system and innumerable other side-effects.

All transportation problems belong to a chain of cause and effect. They have long-lasting consequences which, for our future happiness and perhaps even survival, we had better learn how to anticipate.

Let me give an example.

The air pollution problem will have to be solved. And the way in which the problem is solved will undoubtedly cause some technological changes. And the results of those changes in technology are not altogether foreseeable but they will almost certainly include some alteration of existing social patterns and political institutions.

Consider this purely hypothetical sequence of events. First, there is the social requirement--the demand for clean, breathable air, air that is free of exhaust fumes.

Next, there is a buildup of pressure on our present technology, a pressure to eliminate the exhaust fumes.

Specifically, this may mean [not necessarily will mean] the rapid development of the electric car by the automotive industry.

Assume that it does mean this, and that the electric car is more or less perfected for use in urban areas. If, as a result of this, diesel and internal combustion engines are no longer permitted in metropolitan areas, then it logically follows that a great drop will occur in tax receipts from motor fuel.

Now, since these tax receipts are the funds we use to build and maintain our streets, roads and highways, you can see that a very big financial problem is going to have to be faced when and if the switch to electric cars takes place.

When people no longer buy motor fuel, how do we pay for the roads?

Right now, the local, State and Federal governments are spending about \$18 billion annually for this purpose.

I don't doubt that we will find a way to tax the electric

car. I am sure that some very ingenious and equitable system will be devised, depending, of course, on the technology involved.

I merely point to the fact that there will/^{likely}be some major changes in our present taxation policy as a result of controlling air pollution caused by transportation.

We need to do some re-thinking about transportation in this country.

We know a lot about the engineering and economic and efficiency aspects of transportation. We have certainly the greatest system of airlines, rail lines, pipelines, highways and waterways in the world.

But we don't have a very good understanding of the social effects of transportation. The human implications of our transport investment decisions are largely unexplored. We have barely begun to sound their depths, and there is great and universal frustration.

As usual, the hardest part of the problem is how to think about the problem. Popular expectations may indeed be unreasonable. But expert knowledge has its limitations as well. We must never permit our uninformed estimate of what is achievable dictate what is socially desirable.

What kind of a community do we want, and what kind are we willing to settle for? We have to set our own standards in this matter, dealing with reality in that light.

I'm reminded of the very wise and appropriate words of an eighteenth century philosopher, John Locke, who assures us that

"It is of great use to the sailor to know the length of his line, though he cannot fathom all the depths of the ocean. It is well he knows that it is long enough to reach the bottom at such places as are necessary to direct his voyage, and caution him against running upon shoals that may ruin him."

To me, the length of the sailor's line is the extent of the public interest.

We may not be able to anticipate, in our present state of knowledge, all of the consequences of our transport investment decisions. But this must not be used as an excuse for not making any investments at all.

There are always good judges to be found on the engineering and economic aspects. But you and I must insure that in all transportation proposals the social consequences are given adequate consideration.

If we can use the public interest as our consistent measure, though navigating in uncharted waters, we may feel assured of an outcome beneficial to our nation.