

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ALAN S. BOYD, BEFORE THE AMERICAN TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
AT THE SHOREHAM HOTEL ON TUESDAY, JULY 23, 1968, 12:00 NOON
IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

It's good to be here, I think. And I hesitate because of your letter of invitation, which was pleasant and persuasive - until I got to the bottom. There, in bold blue print was the motto of the American Trial Lawyers Association: "One good law is worth a thousand speeches."

Every lawyer - no matter what his specialty - has a sneaking admiration for the trial lawyer. I am no different. Yours is, after all, the real stuff of the law. I am indebted to one trial lawyer for advice that I have always found useful when doing business in Washington. It's Henry Clay's advice to an anxious client:

"I cannot, at this juncture, clearly foretell the outcome," he said, "but I counsel you to cultivate calmness of mind and prepare for the worst."

Our newest assignment in the Department of Transportation - the comprehensive study of automobile insurance - is of special interest to trial lawyers. Our purpose will be to seek a fair and efficient means of compensating victims of automobile accidents. And we shall need your help.

President Johnson requested the study because the subject is of immediate concern to almost every American family. This concern was made evident in thousands of letters received by the White House, the Congress, and the Department of Transportation.

We are beginning the study with no predisposed opinions. Our aim is to gather facts, analyze them, and make necessary recommendations. The two-year program will be conducted by a core of government staff experts and non-government specialists. To work with them, I shall appoint an advisory group of representatives from the insurance industry, from the bar, from state insurance commissions and from consumer organizations. Our success will depend on the full cooperation of all interested parties. We shall be calling on your association and on your individual members for help. And I know we will be able to count on you.

Of all transportation problems, those of the urban area are most perplexing. The pattern is familiar - congestion in the central business district, rush hour traffic jams, not enough parking space, deteriorating mass transit systems and the conflict between freeways and city residences and parks. One fact underlines the meaning of these problems. In many urban areas, vehicle travel miles are increasing at more than double the rate that the population is increasing.

The city and its transportation problems are, then, our number one priority.

We have begun work on each of these problems.

For several months we have been working with a number of cities to see whether we could break up congestion and traffic jams without costly new expressway systems.

Under a program known as TOPICS - Traffic Operations Program to Increase Capacity and Safety - we have been experimenting with a number of relatively minor adjustments in street systems.

We are working with these cities to improve traffic signals. We are adding left turn lanes. We are looking into building overpasses and creating special turn-out areas where trucks can load and unload.

We are helping cities create special lanes for busses so that they can load and unload passengers without blocking the movement of cars; and so they can keep moving along the streets without getting caught in the automobile traffic.

All of these steps are based on the theory that our city streets can be used more efficiently than they now are.

So far, the tests show that with relatively inexpensive improvements in the street system, the capacity of the streets can be increased by 15 to 25 percent.

We are persuaded that this improvement program will pay dividends and we were successful in our bid to the Congress for matching funds to aid cities in carrying out these improvements. The principle was accepted by both sides of the Congress and the amount to be authorized - somewhere between \$125 million and \$250 million - is now being discussed in a joint conference committee.

We were successful, again, in our request to the Congress for Federal funds to build public parking spaces outside the central business district.

Until now, the Federal government has offered no help to cities that find more and more cars heading downtown and less space for parking them.

In our bill, we asked for funds to help pay the cost of fringe parking if it is built to tie in with a mass transit system that will cover the downtown area. Again, both sides of the Congress accepted the measure and the amount to be allocated is in conference committee.

But in our biggest cities, all the programs for improving downtown traffic will be of little value without a healthy growing mass transit system. We have been continually emphasizing in the Department of Transportation the necessity to look at transportation problems from a systems approach - from the viewpoint of the total job to be done and what function each of the component parts can serve. From this angle, it is apparent there is no substitute for mass transit.

Yet, most of these mass transit systems are in difficulty. They are losing passengers. Rail rapid transit lines had 700 million fewer passengers in 1966 than they had in 1940.

Mass transit is just able to make ends meet. In the same period these same rapid transit lines saw their net revenues decline by over 50%.

Mass transit is not growing. In 1945, the total trackage of our rapid rail transit system was 1222 miles. Today it is 1255 miles.

The same story of stagnation is true of most other urban mass transit systems. In the greatest era of urban growth, they have been losing ground - losing passengers to the family car.

Yet their value is incalculable. President Johnson said it best. "In the next 40 years, we must completely renew our cities. The alternative is disaster. Gaping needs must be met in health, in education, in job opportunities, in housing. And not a single one of these needs can be fully met until we rebuild our mass transportation systems."

These local subways and bus companies must be helped. This is the task of the newest member of the Department of Transportation - the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. Our assistance begins with grants and loans to help develop or expand local mass transit facilities. We are also doing research to reduce downtown congestion and sponsoring advanced city transportation studies. The Administration also helps train transit officials and technicians. There is no more important priority.

I recently completed an inspection tour of the transportation systems of eight of our larger cities and I was again impressed with the need for transit improvement. I learned, too, that a major share of aid money in the big cities must come from the State or Federal Government. The cities are having trouble just meeting payrolls, improving schools and providing health services. There's very little left for the vast capital outlay modern transportation requires.

I also learned that big massive projects aren't necessarily the answer in every case. Soap and water would cure some of the rapid transit problems I saw. I remember, too, the people who seemed to be enjoying themselves most weren't riding on anything. They were walking. It seems to me that our goal should be to plan cities so that you need a minimum of transportation in central business districts and a maximum of good, fast, clean transportation everywhere else.

There is a phase of our work that must be clearly understood. We are aiding cities. We are helping them solve their transportation problems. But we can do no more than aid.

Our urban areas must decide for themselves what kind of transportation system they need. And before they can do that they must decide what kind of cities they want to be - how they want to grow and what shape they want to take.

We are encouraging them to make these decisions. We are supporting them in their efforts to develop systems that suit their total needs and serve their people. Our community approach to the location of proposed urban highways is a case in point. In four cities - Baltimore, Chicago, Phoenix and New York - we are sponsoring design concept teams that will work with the communities involved. These teams of engineers, economists, architects, sociologists and other experts are meeting with local political and community leaders and individuals to get local views - to find out where local people think highways should be located. We in the Department have no intention of forcing local decisions. Our policy is to make it possible for these cities to develop their own local priorities, make their own decisions and determine their own transportation destinies.

There is a special urgency to these city transportation problems. A few facts will emphasize this urgency.

In the technological revolution that has been changing the nation during the past two decades, three million American farms disappeared.

Twenty million rural Americans migrated to the cities.

In the past 15 years alone, 5 million Negroes left the rural South for the cities of the North. This resulted in a doubling of the non white population in the central cities. Often more than double. At the same time, the growing enrichment of our people enabled the white middle class to buy new houses in the suburbs. While the population of the central core of our large cities remained the same, or declined, the suburban population was increasing in many cities by as much as 600 percent.

Thus - the birth of the ghetto.

The difficulties and frustrations of the ghetto are many. Transportation is one of them.

In the nation as a whole, 80 percent of all American families owned an automobile in 1966. The proportion is slightly higher today. Yet, half of all Negro households own no car at all. And more than half of these Negro households have two or more wage earners. The Negro worker, then, is dependent on mass transit - and it is not serving him well. For a resident of New York's Harlem to commute by public transportation to an aircraft job in Farmingdale, Long Island costs \$40 a month. South Central Los Angeles is only 16 miles distant from the employment center of Santa Monica. To make the trip by public transportation, however, takes an hour and 50 minutes each way, requires three transfers and costs \$33 a month.

Such are the frustrations of the ghetto.

It is not only the Negro who suffers in our society from poverty. But, as one observer has pointedly put it: "No one is poor in America because he is white. Many people are poor because they are black."

In today's world we can isolate neither problems nor people from each other - neither private nor public decisions.

If we could see no other way, we could see by the flames that lit the skies over many American cities in recent months that we cannot separate the future of white America from the fate of black America.

Leveling stores and homes in the ghettos with a torch is not the answer. Nor is leveling the blame. And the one sure way to fail to find the answer is to hang out signs that say, "Business as usual."

Let us all condemn riots; let us never condone violence.

But, above all, let us understand. Let us insist on law and order. But let us be equally insistent for equal justice.

Stanley Baldwin, in a moment of obvious frustration, told the House of Commons 30 years ago that "one of the weaknesses of a democracy is that until it is right up against it, it will never face the truth."

I believe that our democracy and everything for which it stands is right up against it today. But I believe also that we now have a chance to demonstrate the strength that matches Mr. Baldwin's finding of weakness. And that is that once the people of a democracy face the truth, their decisions go deep and last long.

The truth is that we have for too long expected the people in our ghettos to match the achievements of other Americans without extending to them the opportunities that the rest of us take for granted.

The truth is that this must change in order for the United States to prosper morally or materially.

It must change in the schools. It must change in the hiring halls. It must change in the way we plan transportation; a way which too often ignores the needs of the poor. It must change in such basic ways as the recognition of the rights of others - not just in court; or in a textbook on civics; but on the job and on the sidewalk.

It must be a change that goes deeper than law, although the law is an essential part of it. President Johnson has said: "Wherever the Federal Government is involved, it must not be even a silent partner in perpetuating unequal treatment." That is a good place to start.

But the change I am talking about is the change that will come from facing the truth as we are facing it in this country today.

And the truth is that the source of America's strength and the basis of its power is simple human justice - man to man.

Thank you.

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