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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE AMERICAN TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION, MIAMI, FLORIDA, THURSDAY, AUGUST 6, 1970.

Thank you very much for your introduction. It's wonderful to be with you. Here I am, surrounded by hundreds of lawyers -- and I am going to do all the talking.

But I feel very relaxed here tonight. When I received your invitation to speak, I wasn't sure how relaxed I'd be and I asked our General Counsel, Jim Washington, the former Dean of Howard University Law School -- if he would accompany me. He could not make it, but he did say: "The Trial Lawyers Association is a very decent bunch -- just don't sign your name to anything."

I am not a lawyer myself but I have been working with members of your profession most of my professional life. It was my great honor and privilege as Governor of Massachusetts to appoint a number of judges and we have, in Washington, of course, our own staff of transportation lawyers.

I am never very far from a lawyer. We have about 270 attorneys in positions of responsibility throughout the Department. Under the supervision of Jim Washington, we provide in-house counseling on contracts, international treaties and opinions on our legal authority. Our attorneys also supervise our safety regulation system and represent us in litigation. Jim and his staff are the ones who prepare our legislation and advise me on all matters having legal significance.

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Our attorneys in the field provide counsel on procurement, the administration of our federal grants and in personnel and budgetary matters.

Our Department covers all modes of transportation -- in the air, on the land and at sea. We have 100,000 employees scattered around the world and a daily production chart of their activities would read as follows:

Our Federal Aviation Administration helps build airports, operates our air navigation system and controls some 15,000 flights a day.

Our Urban Mass Transportation Administration is working with the cities and towns of America to improve and enlarge their local bus and rapid rail transit.

The experts of our Federal Highway Administration are supervising the completion of our great Interstate Highway System as well as improving thousands of miles of our primary, secondary and urban roads.

Our National Highway Safety Bureau -- among other things -- sets standards for building safety into the 8-million automobiles our people buy every year. But more on that later.

Our people at the Federal Railroad Administration are setting safety standards and preparing to set up a proposed new corporation if Congress approves, that will operate the passenger trains on the Nation's railroads. And we also operate a profitable 520-mile railroad up in Alaska. We are also trying to bolster a sagging industry by co-sponsoring the high speed Metroliner and Turbo trains in the Northeast and we are working with industry to find ways of relieving the boxcar shortage.

The officers and men of our United States Coast Guard are conducting about 50,000 search and rescue missions a year as well as conducting oceanographic research and protecting the marine environment.

Our Department, finally, administers the American side of the Saint Lawrence Seaway.

These activities represent our routine day-to-day activities. We are, in addition, conducting hundreds of special studies, research and development programs and demonstration projects. One of our special studies -- our two-year, two-million dollar Automobile Insurance and Compensation Study -- is of special interest to you here tonight.

We began our examination to learn how effectively our various compensation programs -- auto insurance, social security, workmen's compensation and other systems -- were performing. Most of our work is now done. Most of the research reports are out and the final report is being prepared. But two conclusions are already clearly evident. First of all, the economic losses of victims of automobile accidents is a national scandal and a tragedy.

Secondly, the various compensation systems -- we learned -- have real shortcomings. And society is going to have to correct these deficiencies.

These special projects -- as well as the routine production requirements -- keep us hopping. But the particularly challenging part of my job is the fact that every day our assignment gets bigger. We are adding more than 12,000 vehicles to our highways every day. Domestic airlines will triple their passenger miles in the decade of the 70's. During the same period, truck tonnage will increase by 50%. Our railroads are carrying 15-million additional ton miles every day.

Let me summarize this increase in one dramatic fact. To meet future transportation needs, we shall, in the next two decades have to double our total transportation capacity. We shall have to provide in these coming 20 years as much transportation capacity as was provided in the first 200 years of our nation's history.

I remind you, moreover, we are undertaking this job of fostering and promoting this transportation growth within boundaries imposed by a very vital constraint -- the all important matter of safety. And highway safety comes immediately to mind.

And here is where you can help.

The human and economic costs of highway crashes are appalling. The tragic highway death toll in 1969 alone was over 60,000.

The automobile is the leading cause of death among our young people from age 15 to 25.

Nearly 500 persons are injured every hour of the day -- every day of the week -- as a result of highway crashes.

Total economic loss from those smash-ups -- an average of \$40-million a day.

Our attack against highway accidents takes three forms. We issue standards to be followed by the States in the operation of their individual safety programs. There are 16 of these standards and they cover such programs as driver education; motor cycle safety; periodic vehicle inspection and some 13 other programs. Yet some States have not adopted all these programs. Here is where you can help. Find out if your State has, and if not, start working to get them put into practice. These programs save lives.

I should like to speak very pointedly about a particular one of these State programs, and I begin with a terrifying fact: Half of all highway fatalities are alcohol related.

Let me emphasize one point. We are not after your next-door neighbor who might have a highball before dinner. The fellow we are after is the hard steady drinker -- the alcoholic -- the befuddled drunkard. We want to get him off the road -- for his own sake and for yours. He causes the accidents.

We need strong alcohol laws in every State. And we need informed judges, juries and prosecutors who are aware of the crime that is involved here. Our alcohol laws are significant -- but without strong community support to back their enforcement -- they will be of little avail.

Our second approach to highway safety is the series of safety standards that control the manufacture of automotive vehicles. These cover every component of the vehicle that affects safety -- brakes, windshields, tires, lights, wheels, and steering mechanisms and we are issuing new and stronger standards all the time.

Our third safety program is research and development of new products and new techniques that will put more safety into our automobiles and our highways.

The most exciting element of our current research program is the experimental safety car for which we signed contracts last month. This car will, in effect, be a mobile crash laboratory. It will be safe in any kind of a crash up to 50 miles per hour. It will be capable of crashing into a concrete barrier at 50 miles an hour with no injury to the occupants. It will be able to roll over at 70 miles per hour with the passenger compartment still intact.

We have already let contracts both in and out of the auto industry for building these cars and our programs call for us to have 14 of them by the end of 1972.

On an immediate basis, however, one of the best ways of reducing highway casualties, is through the so-called "passive restraint system". And the eye opener here is the air bag. This bag, encased in the dashboard and in the back of the front seat will open and be inflated almost simultaneously with a collision. It will pin the occupant to his seat and prevent him from flying through the windshield or crashing into the dashboard. And after it has done its job it will deflate immediately.

We are, consequently -- subject to a review of testimony we have taken -- considering making these air bags optional equipment for passenger cars produced after January 1, 1972. We want them to be required equipment for those cars manufactured in 1973.

But we need not wait till then to cut highway fatalities. The simple constant use of seat belts and shoulder harnesses can save lives now. If everybody who has the belts used them -- we could save 16,000 lives a year -- right now. So if you enjoy life, buckle up.

If there is any one program that I am determined will succeed, it is this battle to cut the tragic toll of highway deaths. We can cut these fatalities. We must reduce them. And I promise you here tonight we shall do it. We are doing it.

In fact, just before leaving Washington this noon I was going over a report from the Director of our National Highway Safety Bureau. Traffic fatalities nationwide for the first six months of this year are 550 less than they were during the first half of 1969. In percentage figures that's only a 2-percent decrease in a year's time; but look at it this way: that figure represents 550 people alive today, who -- statistically -- should be dead and buried.

That figure represents 550 people who are at home with their families, active in their communities, productive in our economy, and enjoying life as the Good Lord intended they should.

So you see, my friends, massive as this challenge may be we can get results. We will continue to get results, and we are pledged to wipe away this tragic blot on the American way of life.

I have tonight tried to give you a picture of the future as it looks to one sitting in the Office of the Secretary of Transportation. It may be that our challenges are not as grave as they appear...then, again, I am learning the power of Washington officials to solve them are not as strong as I thought they were.

About six months ago, I found myself waiting to take off in a Government plane -- eighteenth in line on the runway at Lagueardia Airport. I was late and I thought I might be able to pull a little rank. I asked the pilot to radio our FAA traffic controllers in the tower and tell them he had the Secretary of Transportation on board. Their answer came right back. "Tell the Secretary the Federal Aviation Administration is delighted to have this opportunity of serving him --- and he is still 18th in line."

Thank you for this chance to be with you. I have had a wonderful time and I hope we may meet again.

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