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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION BROCK ADAMS, TO THE EVERGREEN SAFETY COUNCIL, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, MARCH 27, 1979.

I read recently that the most important word in the language, as determined by scholastic research, is 'yes.' It is a word that can bring a great deal of joy. At my last speech, for example, my host asked me if I was finished speaking. I said "yes" and got a standing ovation.

The trick in Washington, I have found, is to get Congress to say yes. Last year we succeeded in getting a number of Administration programs approved, including a waterway user bill to help pay the costs of running and improving our inland waterways, a new highway/transit bill to get our Interstate system finished and our bridges repaired and transit systems going, and an airline deregulation bill that's cutting the costs of air travel for the American people.

The President is doing pretty well in foreign affairs, too. He has persuaded the leaders of two countries that have long been antagonists to say yes to peace.

But there is also a time to say no. And we have to say no today to wasted energy and wasted lives. We have to put a stop to bad energy practices that have sent U.S. oil consumption to a record 21 million barrels a day, and careless safety habits that sent traffic fatalities over the 50,000 mark again in 1978.

It is time for a new national discipline in the way we build and operate our automobiles, if we are to protect the nation's mobility and safeguard the lives of our people.

These two issues -- energy conservation and safety -- must concern any Secretary of Transportation. They occupy the highest priority in my administration. I am especially pleased, therefore, to have a part in your program tonight. I have listened with great interest to the Council's plan for a Safety Training and Research Center. It is the kind of worthwhile project that government and the private sector should support.

If we are going to make a dent in highway fatalities we must do more in three areas:

1. Better safety training, in our schools and through the programs of the National Safety Council and our National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
2. Stronger enforcement of the 55 mile per hour speed limit. Fatalities are up again, both here in Washington and nationally. The increase in deaths coincides with an increase in highway speeds and, ironically, with the attempt by some Western states to overrule the established speed limit. I believe 55 is a proven life-saver and fuel-saver and should be enforced in the public interest. I am grateful to your Council's opposition to any change in the speed limit in this state.
3. Better cars, designed from the ground up to protect their occupants against death and serious injury.

We accept on our highways what we would never tolerate in the air. Our Federal Aviation Administration has embarked on a major program to increase radar surveillance at the nation's air carrier airports, to further reduce the risk of in-flight collisions. Yet airline travel is one of the safest means of transportation. The U.S. airlines last year carried 280 million passengers with only 163 fatalities. By comparison more than 50,000 people died in traffic accidents last year, nearly five percent above 1977, and yet only a small percentage of motorists wear their seat-belts, and safety -- as Marv Christman and others in your organization have pointed out -- is a product generally in low demand.

We're going to change that. For all that it means to us, the automobile is the sixth leading cause of death (the number one killer of young people) and a majorcrippler in our society. We cannot be complacent in the face of such statistics. I think a transportation system that costs us \$40 billion a year in accidents and casualties deserves our indignation, not our indulgence.

The point is, the car itself is not always the culprit in a crash --driver error is still the primary cause of most accidents, a problem your efforts are trying to correct -- but in an accident situation driver and passengers deserve the best protection automotive design and technology can effectively provide.

For some time now the Department has been engaged in an experimental program to design, build and demonstrate prototype passenger cars with safety levels well beyond those of conventional production cars.

We are now in the second generation of that program. Under our Large Research Safety Vehicle program we are testing a six passenger, 2900 pound car based on the Chevrolet Impala which has (1) air bags to protect occupants in frontal crashes up to 40 mph, (2) a plastic front bumper to reduce low-speed crash damage, and (3) meets 1985 standards for fuel economy.

The Calspan Corporation has developed a smaller car, based on a Chrysler Simca, with occupant protection in frontal impacts up to 45 mph and side impacts at 40 mph.

The latest in this series of research safety vehicles is the car on display in the lobby of this hotel. Developed by Minicars, Inc., the car weighs 2400 pounds, accommodates four adults in comfort, carries luggage for four, and can be equipped with popular options such as air conditioning and stereo radio.

More important, the car affords excellent crash protection --up to 50 mph, delivers 32 miles per gallon and meets emission requirements of the 1980's.

But what is most significant, this is a car that could be manufactured -- mass produced -- almost entirely from materials and components available today. It is new from the tires up, but it doesn't depend on any breakthrough in technology nor does it demand any compromise with fuel economy or emission standards.

The point is, we can have safer cars, but we have to demand them. The industry has made some progress in this area, but not enough. We cannot achieve, nor should we expect, absolute safety. But reasonable safety should be standard equipment, not an option.

Along with an accident-safe car we need an energy sane car.

I went to the auto industry last December with a proposition to design a car either substantially more fuel-efficient than today's vehicles, or one that uses an alternative fuel or both.

Our problem today is that we cling to an age that is no more - a time when oil was a U.S. export, not a costly import; when gasoline was 30 cents a gallon and the corner station offered premiums for a fill-up; when horsepower was in vogue and performance a major selling point; and when we as a people were less aware of the high environmental, economic and social costs of the automobile.

That time is past, but we are continuing our love affair with the automobile at a high cost. My concern today is that the ultimate price of our delay may be the loss of the very mobility we have come to depend on. The world is running out of what our motor vehicles run on, and we must find ways to conserve the supply or produce an alternative.

Our best approach, I believe, is a basic research program focused on post-1985 fuel economy levels in the 40 to 50 mpg range. Beginning with a major technical conference last month in Boston attended by 800 scientists and engineers from the auto industry, their suppliers, the academic community, and public interest groups and elsewhere, we have been developing a basic research agenda -- in engines, powertrains, fuel, structures and materials. We are following up with another conference in a month or two to discuss more precisely how to pursue the basic research programs discussed in Boston.

In challenging the industry to think beyond 1985, I have repeatedly made these three points:

1. The industry's initial response to the energy problem, a phased downsizing and weight-reduction program, is producing good results. Today's new cars deliver substantially improved gas mileage and customer acceptance has been good.
2. Tough as they may be, the fuel economy standards now posted will not suffice. Despite more efficient cars and our efforts at conservation, oil consumption in the United States continues to increase. Our projections indicate that demand will spurt again in the mid-1980's. At this point I am not confident that sufficient supplies of affordable fuel will be available. I do not think, therefore, that the automakers should view the 1985 standard of 27.5 mpg as an ultimate target. I am not insensitive to the costs involved, but I believe the urgency of the situation compels us to strive for compliance earlier, not later.

3. By the late 1990's we will have exhausted the potential for improvements in motor vehicle technologies based on the knowledge in hand. Beyond that time, further improvements could be severely limited unless we expand our basic knowledge, generate new ideas and encourage technical innovation.

In the meantime we must reduce oil consumption and curtail unnecessary driving. Conservation efforts so far have been only moderately successful. The generally slower highway speeds have saved us about 3½ billion gallons of gasoline a year, but universal observance of the speed limit would go much further. If everyone drove 55, we could save enough fuel in one year to operate all the cars in the state of Washington for three years.

The time has come, as I suggested earlier, to discipline our energy use. I am not sure that Sunday closings or reduced gasoline allocations are the best answer, and I am not advocating rationing. The plain truth is there are no cheap or easy answers to the problems we face. As long as we consume almost twice as much oil as we produce, we will have to accept the consequences: high prices today, higher prices to come, and the possibility that supplies could be interrupted at any time.

President Carter is wrestling with this problem right now. We spent last weekend at Camp David reviewing the possibilities for dealing with the situation in ways that will minimize the inflationary effects of fuel prices while protecting America's mobility and assuring a variety of transportation choices for the traveler. The President will bring his proposals to the people in a television address later this week.

It has been a pleasure to be with you. I admire the fine work the Council is doing, and I urge you to continue your crusade for greater highway safety.

Thank you.

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