

*A Study of the Road  
Deaths Problem*

# *Murder Most Foul...*

*by*

*J. S. DEAN*

*Murder most foul, as in the best it is;  
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.*

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### AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some of the information used in the following pages has appeared in the News Letter of the Pedestrians' Association, and the writer desires to thank the Committee, of which he has the honour to be Chairman, and the Secretary, Mr. T. C. Foley, for their permission to him to make use of it. In general, the views set out in the following pages are those of the Pedestrians' Association, but the degrees of emphasis and the modes of expression are, of course, the writer's own. Section 3, III.F. "Safe-Driving Competition" - in substantially the form given here - was circulated among local authorities by the Pedestrians' Association in October last in the form of a pamphlet. In this connection attention is drawn to the footnote on page 64.

## INTRODUCTION

It is common ground that the motor slaughter ought to be stopped; it is also common round that it can be stopped, or, at least, greatly reduced. It has been greatly reduced in other countries. It is realised that the killing or maiming every year of about a quarter of a million persons and the yearly loss of between £50,000,000 and £100,000,000 are not items that any country can afford to ignore, still less a country like our own with a birthrate problem and (relatively) a greatly diminished income. It is also realised, if less clearly, that the motor slaughter leaves behind it an ever-widening trail of private misery- bereavement, poverty resulting from the death of the breadwinner, crippledom, and the rest- and that this, too, ought to be stopped. Finally it is realised, if again it is less clearly, that the motor slaughter is bad in itself: that it is bad that human beings should kill and maim other human beings- citizens kill and maim fellow citizens -in this cold-blooded way : worst of all, that, as happens in a very large proportion of the cases, vigorous adults should kill or maim children and elderly and infirm persons and then criminally and meanly put the blame on their victims : that, in short, it is not only the lives and well-being of about a quarter of a million persons and the material loss every year that are at stake, but, to a high degree, the standards of decency and the moral health of the nation. Never before in the history of civilisation has it been so easy to kill and maim without incurring punishment or even censure. Never before in all history has it been a common custom to kill and maim people because they get in your way when you are in a hurry, or even when you are not in a hurry but merely wish to feel you are. It is a fantastic and unprecedented situation; a fit prelude to race extermination and Belsen. Murder, indeed, most foul, strange and unnatural.

But there is a further side to the motor slaughter. As will be found below, among the Great Powers, before the war, the worst road records those of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, with Britain third. This is not just another "road accident." Nor is it an accident that in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany leaders of the motor interests were among the most prominent supporters of the regime ; that in various other countries, including our own, leaders of the motor interests over many years expressed feelings of the most tender regard for Hitler and Mussolini and supported movements that were, or later became, openly Fascist; and that in the invaded countries leaders of the motor interests were among the most ardent collaborators. Nor, finally, are accidents the other close similarities between the motor slaughter and the political activities of Fascism that are noted below. For there is, in fact, a close Parallel between the two and in their respective spheres - on the one hand, the roads, and on the other, politics - a certain similarity in outlook between those engaged in them. Scratch a road hog and you'll find a Fascist. Indeed, in actual practice, the motor slaughter often exceeds the atrocities of the Fascists in brutality; for even the Fascists did not single out children and elderly and infirm persons as their principal victims. Whether then it is seen broadly as a dangerous example of contempt for the rights of the individual and callous indifference to the weak, or, more precisely, as a dangerous example of practical Fascism and therefore, inevitably, as a breeding ground for Fascist ideas, the motor slaughter is something that no country can afford to ignore for long without harming and perhaps eventually undermining its political integrity. It must not be forgotten that the danger of a revival of Fascism is by no means ended: the snake is scotched but not dead; and Britain is still not entirely outside the sphere of danger.

If it can be assumed that the more obvious, at least of these considerations have not been absent from the minds of our Governments during the past thirty odd years, so that the real question to be asked about the motor slaughter is why, consistent with their real powers and terms of office, none of these Governments took any genuine action to end it, or, at least, to reduce it substantially. What is the mysterious influence that has restrained these Governments from carrying out the most elementary of all their duties: the protection of the lives and limbs of the ordinary citizens and the protection of children and elderly and infirm persons? Why have these Governments permitted the ordinary standards of conduct and conditions of life to be brought to an end on the roads ? But first, what are the facts? What are the causes of the motor slaughter ? What degrees of blame are to be attached to the different classes of road-users ? What is the truth about "the suicidal jay-walkers," "the undisciplined cyclists" and "the careful and considerate drivers?" What part is played by the roads? What is "road safety education" and what are its real aims? What is the administrative record of the Governments? And, finally, what is the current official policy ? These, and related subsidiary questions, must be answered first, so that, with a clearer understanding of the position, we may discern the influences that have brought it about and so discover the real remedy.

## I. THE FACTS

### I. THE FASCIST RECORD

Following are the latest comparative statistics of the motor slaughter in the Great Powers before the war. They were compiled by the U. S. Census Bureau and are for deaths per one hundred thousand vehicles (excluding motor cycles) in 1934:

ITALY	...	...	...	54.5
GERMANY	...	...	...	50.2
ENGLAND & WALES			...	31.7
FRANCE	...	...	...	17.2
UNITED STATES			...	12.3

Switzerland (50.0), Holland (44.0) and Belgium (36.5) also had bad records. but here the totals of casualties were so much smaller that no real comparison can be made. Other figures were: Eire, 24.8; Australia, 13.8; Canada, 9.1; New Zealand, 6.6.

Of course these figures are not conclusive. There are other factors to be taken into consideration, notably density of population and car mileage, though, in at least one case, the U.S. as compared with England and Wales, these are probably mutually balancing.

Nevertheless, clearly, these statistics provide a certain basis of comparison, and, to this extent, their significance is unmistakable, for, if we take the foreign policy pursued by Britain in the decade before the war as the criterion for this country, we see that there was an almost direct ratio between the motor slaughter in the Great Powers and their respective sympathies with Fascism. In any case the general parallel is unmistakable.

The deplorable prominence of Britain may come as a surprise to many. It is indeed surprising and deplorable that this most easily detectable of crimes should be so prevalent in a country where in every other direction the police are the vigilant custodians of the national life. It is still more surprising and deplorable that this meanest and most callous of crimes should be so prevalent in a country that for so long has prided itself on its fair-mindedness, its record in protecting the weak and its detestation of cruelty.

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It may be a further surprise to many to learn that it was the common opinion among Dominion and foreign visitors to this country before the war that British drivers were among the worst, and the worst-mannered, in the world. Few who talked with these visitors can have failed to hear some such comment and few who travelled abroad can have failed to note the fact. The Motor Correspondent of the "Tatler" - a fashionable and therefore far from anti-motorist publication - once quoted a French observer as describing the English driver in a hurry as, "the biggest cad in Europe" (3.7.35), and English drivers were then, and still are, usually in a hurry.

### II. TOLL OF THE MOTORISTS

Now for the casualties in Britain: the absurdly styled "Toll of the Roads," but, of course, in fact, the toll of the motorists.

The figures quoted here are those issued by the Ministry of Transport. Those issued by the Registrar-General are higher, but substantially the totals are the same.\* The Ministry of Transport figures are quoted here because they are also used elsewhere with reference to details not included in the Registrar-Generals' Returns.

It must be noted further, that the Ministry figures are themselves incomplete: (a) The publication of road accident statistics was not begun until 1909. (b) The reporting of road accidents was not made compulsory until 1930. Moreover, as is known, it has never been properly carried out, the recent, war period having been marked by special slackness. (c) For the first five years (1909-12) accidents "attributed to cyclists" were not included in the statistics.

Included in the totals given below are estimated totals for two periods (a) the years up to 1926, fatal and non-fatal and (b) August 1939, non-fatal. (a) The compilation of road *casualty*, as distinct from road accident, totals was not begun until this date. The casualty totals

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For example: following are the totals of deaths for the five years before the war given respectively in (A) the Ministry of Transport Returns and (B) the Registrar General's Statistical Review for England and Wales and the Annual Report of the Registrar General for Scotland: 1934, 7343; 7461. 1935, 6502; 6600. 1936, 6561, 6699. 1937, 6633; 6738. 1938 6648; 6685 So far as the writer can trace the difference between the methods of computation has never been explained.

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here are estimated on the basis that this will be seen from an examination of the post-1926 statistics—there is a fairly constant ratio between the two groups, viz. fatal casualties are .2 p.c. and non-fatal casualties 15 p.c. higher than the corresponding accident totals. (b) The regular compilation of non-fatal casualty statistics was suspended during the period August 1939–April 1941. With the exception of the first month (August 1939) the figures were, however, made available later in a Ministry statement (5.5.44) giving the estimated total casualties for the period from the start of the war until May 1944 (total casualties, 588,742). The missing non-fatal casualty total for August 1939 has been estimated here through a comparison between fatal and nonfatal casualties in previous August's.

On this basis, then, the total road casualties in Britain up to the end of last year were:

*Period: 1909-1945*

<b>Killed</b>	<b>Injured</b>	<b>Total Casualties</b>
<b>181,438</b>	<b>4,524,083</b>	<b>4,705,521</b>

Or, to take the period from the end of the first world war, since it was then that the motor slaughter established itself unmistakably as a major problem, with a consequent responsibility devolving on the Government to take genuine action:

*Period: 1919-1945*

<b>Killed</b>	<b>Injured</b>	<b>Total Casualties</b>
<b>157,907</b>	<b>4,056,419</b>	<b>4,214,326</b>

For the first part of 1939 and the latter part of 1941 and again last year the Ministry of Transport subdivided the non-fatal casualties into "serious" and "slight," and in all three periods the ratio was roughly one to three. The figures last year were 32,537 and 100,505. On this basis, then, since 1919 more than 1,000,000 have been seriously injured in Britain. The Ministry has not explained the precise sense in which it has used the two terms, but presumably the term "serious" has not been used lightly. Nor are any official statistics available of the proportion of those who die subsequently from their injuries, or of those who suffer permanent disablement, but clearly the totals here must be very considerable.

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And here are detailed statistics for the ten years before the war showing the totals of pedestrian victims:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Killed</i>	<i>Total Injured</i>	<i>Pedestrians Killed</i>	<i>Pedestrians injured</i>
1929	6,696	170,917	3,523	70,056
1930	7,303	177,895	3,722	71,155
1931	6,691	202,199	3,467	81,462
1932	6,667	206,450	3,385	80,636
1933	7,202	216,328	3,504	80,238
1934	7,343	231,603	3,529	80,800
1935	6,502	221,726	3,073	74,709
1936	6,561	227,813	3,068	74,576
1937	6,633	226,402	3,002	72,647
1938	6,648	226,711	3,046	74,193

It will be seen that on an average about 50 per cent. of the killed and about 40 per cent. of the injured are pedestrians. The great majority of the remainder (killed) are motor cyclists (about 18 per cent.) pedal-cyclists (about 18. per cent.) and passengers and other nondrivers (about 10 per cent.).

### III. "ATTRIBUTED TO "

The official view of the " responsibilities " or respective shares of blame of the different classes of road-users for the motor slaughter is based on the statistics in the 1933, '35 and '37 Ministry of Transport Reports and the Reports of Chief Constables in which the accidents are "attributed to" the different. classes of road-users. Actually these are less favourable to the drivers than is commonly supposed. (Nothing has a higher casualty rate in the motor world than simple facts). Here are the percentages of fatal and non-fatal accidents attributed to the three main classes of road-users in the 1937 Ministry Report on Fatal and Non-Fatal Accidents. (The percentages in the 1933 and 1935 Reports on Fatal Accidents are roughly. the same):

	<b>Fatal</b>	<b>Non-fatal</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Drivers</b>	34.9	38.3	38.2
<b>Pedestrians</b>	38.0	27.4	27.7
<b>Pedal Cyclists</b>	16.3	21.1	20.9

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The latest available "attributed to" percentages for the London area are in the Report of the Commissioner of Police for 1938. They are:

<b>Drivers</b>	<b>40.3</b>
<b>Pedestrians</b>	<b>29.5</b>
<b>Pedal Cyclists</b>	<b>19.2</b>

When we take into account that there are upwards of forty million pedestrians and less than three million drivers it will be seen' that even by this reckoning the drivers' share is not small.

But, in fact, these statistics are entirely worthless as a guide to the blame-worthiness of the different classes of road users and interesting merely as showing, the growing, and now almost complete, control of the road safety situation by the motor interests.

In the first place, it must be realised that so far as the pedestrians (and, to a large extent, the cyclists) were concerned, the investigations were purely empirical. With the drivers there was some guidance from the existing statutory offences, but with the pedestrians the alleged offences were merely created for the occasion, and created without any previous investigation. In the event\* they were of a character to make inevitable the attribution of blame to the pedestrians, in at least a very large proportion of the accidents in which they were involved. For example, two of the main charges were "heedless of traffic" and "walking or running out in front of or behind a vehicle or object which masked his or her movement." But to be "heedless of traffic" is a vague and meaningless charge that can be brought almost against anyone crossing a busy street, while at least "to walk," if not "to run," "out in front of or behind a vehicle or object which masks his or her movement" is often a condition of crossing a street at all. Yet these account for 64.7 per cent of the fatal and 57.4 per cent of the non-fatal accidents attributed to pedestrians (1937 Report). Again, with regard to children under seven the only questions asked were: "Acting in such a way as to render the accident unavoidable" and "Lack of adequate supervision by an older person, or escaping from supervision of older person," and these account for 20.8 per cent. of the fatal and 24.1 per cent. of the non-fatal accidents attributed to pedestrians, making totals, with the previous two classes,

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\* For the Questionnaire on which the enquiries were conducted, see 1937 Report, pp64-73.

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of 85.5 per cent. of the fatal and 81.5 per cent of the non-fatal accidents attributed to pedestrians. (It was no doubt from a feeling of embarrassment that the compilers of the 1937 Report substituted elsewhere "child under seven unaccompanied" for "child under seven acting in such a way as to render the accident unavoidable").\* Moreover, there were no parallel questions for the drivers e.g. "Approaching vehicles or objects which masked the movements of pedestrians at excessive speed or dangerously," "heedless of pedestrians" or "driving in such a way as to render an accident with a child under seven unavoidable." The only specific references to pedestrians in the questions regarding the drivers were "forcing way through persons boarding or alighting from tramcar" and "failing to stop or afford free passage to pedestrians at pedestrian crossing-places," and these accounted for 2.1 per cent. of the fatal and 2.4 per cent. of the nonfatal accidents attributed to the drivers: a sufficient comment in itself on the value of these statistics as a guide to the road situation.+

Still worse were the methods employed in the investigations. Even the most primitive machinery of enquiry was lacking. The investigations were carried out solely by the police, and without the police being invested with any additional powers. Their difficulties in this direction are illustrated in a bizarre way by the reference in the 1933 and '35 Reports to drivers who were "unaware" whether or not they had been previously convicted. It is necessary only to think of the investigations in these terms, of a police officer enquiring from a driver whether he had been previously convicted and the driver

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\* The other questions were: "Playing in carriageway"; "walking or running in carriageway, not crossing"; "boarding vehicles without due care"; "sudden illness"; "committing suicide"; "under the influence of drink or drugs"; "holding on to vehicle"; error of judgment or negligence other than those above (particulars to be specified)".

+ The other questions asked regarding drivers were: "Fatigued, due to driving, details of hours to be given if available; Fatigue from other causes; Asleep; Ill; Under the influence of drink or drugs; Physically defective, particulars to be specified; Inexperienced with type of vehicle in use at the time; Proceeding at excessive speed having regard to conditions; Cutting in; Overtaking improperly; Swerving; Skidding; Reversing negligently; Failing to comply with traffic sign or signal; Failing to signal or giving indistinct or incorrect signal; Failing to keep to near side or proper traffic lane; Inattentive or attention diverted; Hampered by passenger, dog, or luggage in or on vehicle; Turning right without due care (after emerging from another road or residential or business premises, etc.); Ditto turning left; Pedal cyclists holding on to another vehicle; Losing control (particulars); Dazzled by lights of another vehicle; Other apparent error of judgment or negligence, e.g. pulling up suddenly, misjudgment of clearance (particulars)." Pedal cyclists were dealt with by means of the same questions. (Ministry of Transport 1937 Report, page 68).

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replying that he was unaware whether he had or not, to appreciate their real value. The police were not even reinforced for the task. This huge task of investigating nearly a quarter of a



million of accidents within a year with such thoroughness as to make, possible the determination of the respective shares of blame of the different classes of road-users was given the police to carry out in the course of their ordinary duties. The cases in which a prosecution was contemplated would, of course, be investigated with the usual police thoroughness. But with the majority of the accidents the enquiries can have been little more than the ordinary police enquiries on these occasions. With a large number of the accidents they can have consisted of no more than the limited enquiries of a single police officer, and these limited enquiries were also the verdicts. To a large extent, then, this attribution of blame to the different classes of road users on the national level rested on the limited enquiries and unaided judgment of individual police officers. Never in all history can an enquiry of so vital a character have been carried out in so absurd and haphazard a fashion.

Indeed, the 1933 and 1935 Ministry Reports and the Reports of the Metropolitan Commissioner of Police themselves contain the most explicit and detailed warnings necessary on the complete unreliability of these statistics: against attaching to the results any serious significance, or any significance at all. Here are examples: *General*: "The results must be regarded as in many respects tentative and such as might be open to many corrections if the full facts had been ascertainable": (1933 Ministry Report). "It is admittedly dangerous to place too much reliance on statistics of the apparent cause of accidents." (1937 Report of the Metropolitan Commissioner of Police). *Pedestrians*: "Only a small proportion of accidents are witnessed by the Police and the motorist's account may be the only one available." (1936 Report Metropolitan Commissioner of Police). "It will be observed that no fewer than 1005 accidents attributed to pedestrians (41 per cent of the total) are ascribed to 'apparent' inattention on the part of pedestrians. In the absence of evidence to the contrary such inattention has no doubt been assumed in a large proportion of cases in which pedestrians were killed while crossing or walking in the carriageway. In some of the 1005 accidents ascribed in the table to hesitation of pedestrians when crossing the carriageway the speed of the traffic or the manner in which vehicles were being driven may have caused the pedestrians to hesitate." (1933 Ministry

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Report). In connection with the one-sided nature of the "evidence" against dead pedestrians the difference between the figures of fatal and non-fatal accidents "attributed to" pedestrians- 38.0 per cent and 27.4 per cent- is of interest. But it must be realised that the same condition obtains to a high degree also in the majority of the non-fatal accidents, since most of the accidents are to children and elderly and infirm persons and the tendency is always to accept the evidence of the "responsible adult driver." Moreover, the injured pedestrian is often rendered unconscious or otherwise incapable of giving a "convincing" account of what occurred.

But, finally decisive, is the revelation that in their most important aspect- the determination of the speeds of the vehicles involved in the accidents- the enquiries broke down altogether. The 1933 Ministry Report uttered the following preliminary warning: this is of interest also, as will be found, in relation to the propaganda of the motor interests: "Attention was drawn in the preliminary Report to the difficulty of obtaining trustworthy evidence as to the speed of a vehicle immediately before an accident and when the emergency first arose. This rather than the speed at the moment of the collision is the crucial factor. Usually the driver himself can only give an estimate and he is not likely to err on the side of excess ... Taking the figures as they stand the table would suggest that in the 6,657 cases-where an estimate of speed was given 1,300 of the motor vehicles involved were proceeding at speeds not exceeding 10 miles per hour and 2,818 more :at speeds not exceeding 20 miles per hour. Thus, if the figures were correct, nearly 62 per cent of the fatal accidents would have occurred when the vehicle involved was not travelling at more than 20, miles per hour, while even in areas which are not built up (Ie. not subject to a speed limit) the corresponding figure would be not far short of 50 per cent. Such a result is alone sufficient to indicate the greatest need for caution in interpreting these figures." And this was followed by the revelation in the 1935 Report that the police had, in fact, abandoned the attempt to estimate the speeds, viz: "In view of the opinion expressed by the Chief Constables that reliable estimates of the 'Speeds of vehicles immediately before the occurrence of accidents cannot be furnished, it has been decided to omit any corresponding table from the Report."

In these circumstances, it is not surprising to find that *the general result of the investigations was merely to place on record the view that if a person is killed or maimed on the roads it is more or less his or her own fault and that,*

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*therefore, there is nothing much that can be done about it.* In the anomalous role of judge the police took refuge in a vague and general diffusion of blame. This will be seen from the following "attributed to" percentages for the different classes of road-users in respect of their own casualties (1937 Report).

	<i>Killed</i>	<i>Injured</i>
<b>Motor cyclists</b>	<b>83.5</b>	<b>74.9</b>
<b>Drivers</b>	<b>79.9</b>	<b>77.8</b>
<b>Pedestrians</b>	<b>79.8</b>	<b>77.5</b>
<b>Pedal Cyclists'</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>61.2</b>

But, of course, the mischief has not ended here. The reasoning has been as follows: Pedestrians are usually to blame when they are killed or injured. More pedestrians are killed and injured than any other class. Therefore, pedestrians are more careless than any other class. Therefore- and this is conclusive- this proves that pedestrians are, nearly always to blame when they are killed or injured. It is an old method of reasoning, but it can seldom have been employed so completely. The proof of its success is that the figures just quoted have themselves been almost entirely overlooked, as have those of the general "attributed to" percentages quoted above. The single impression created by these investigations is that "the pedestrians are to blame": an impression that, in fact, has as little validity as the "estimated speeds" of drivers that the Chief Constables themselves rejected.

Very different conclusions have been reached in other countries. For example, pre-war enquiries conducted in the following countries attributed the following percentages of accidents to the, drivers:

<b>France (on the eight most important roads)</b>		<b>80 per cent</b>
<b>Holland</b> ...    ...    ...    ...	<b>79</b>	<b>" "</b>
<b>Eire</b> ...    ...    ...    ...	<b>83</b>	<b>" "</b>
<b>New South Wales</b> ...    ...    ...	<b>80</b>	<b>" "</b>

Similarly, the Travellers' Insurance Co., of Hartford, Connecticut, U.S.A., which before the war conducted a yearly investigation into road accidents, attributed 75 per cent of the accidents in the U. S. to the drivers. Moreover, the 80 per cent in New South Wales were attributed not merely to the drivers but specifically to excessive speed on their part,

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Incidentally, it will be appreciated that as the faults attributed to the pedestrians, and, to a large extent, to the cyclists, have no existence in law, the extent to which these statistics have influenced the police in the prosecution of offending drivers and the magistrates in their verdicts and penalties- and there can be no doubt this has been very considerable- has constituted a direct contravention of the decisions of Parliament and a direct encouragement to law-breaking by the drivers.

As was stated, the only real interest attaching to these "attributed to" statistics is the light they throw on the ever-increasing control of the road safety policy of the Ministry of Transport by the motor interests. It is indeed impossible to believe that the police accepted the task of carrying out the investigations or the Ministry officials the responsibility of publishing the results with anything except the most extreme reluctance or (what follows) that the investigations and the methods by which they were carried out were not in fact suggested by the motor interests for the deliberate purpose of trying to shift the responsibility for the accidents from the drivers to the non-drivers. In the 1933 and '35 Ministry Reports the statistics were given a position subordinate to the factual statistics and were accompanied by the comments

and warnings quoted, the two Reports thus at least approximating the high standards of impartiality and judgment normally found in official British publications. In the 1937 Report they are given first place and the comments and warnings are omitted. Moreover, despite the disclosure in the 1935 Report that the Chief Constables had abandoned the attempt to ascertain the estimated speeds of the drivers, the 1937 report, without warning or reservation, published percentage statistics of speed as a factor in accidents. (It is not surprising to find that among the accidents attributed to the drivers, only 22.5 per cent of the fatal and 20 per cent of the non-fatal were attributed to "excessive speed"; it is not explained that these figures are, in fact, based on non-existent information). Finally the 1937 Report omitted the statistics printed in the 1933 and '35 Reports of the "previous convictions" of drivers: the feeble yet sincere attempt to include in the national survey of the road situation at least some reference to its most important factor. It is thus impossible not to conclude that these progressive steps have been the result of increasing pressure on the Ministry by the motor interests; that for the time they were resisted by the responsible Ministry staff; and that this resistance has now finally been overcome.

So much then for prejudice. now for some more facts.

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#### IV. THE MOVABLE X

In respect of the main cause of the motor slaughter and the real responsibilities or respective shares of blame of the different classes of road-users, the most reliable evidence is provided by the factual statistics contained in the three Ministry of Transport Reports (1933, '35 and '37)- they are given most clearly and fully in the first two, where, as stated, they are also given the premier position- and in certain of the Reports by the Chief Constables. Indeed, the use of this impartial medium is unavoidable since it seems impossible for the different classes of road-users to agree on what they see on the roads or for the drivers to agree among themselves on what they see (a) when they are driving and (b) when they are walking, or even for individual drivers to agree with themselves about the two conditions. Here then are the main factual statistics, the latest available figure being given in each category:

(a) *60.5 per cent of fatal accidents and 52.6 per cent of non-fatal accidents occurred on straight roads or open road bends (1937, page 13). The 1935 Report (p. 6) -total 61.8 per cent fatal accidents - added the words ' with good sight lines.'*

*Only 4.2 per cent of the fatal accidents and 3.1 per cent of the non-fatal accidents occurred at "blind bends." (1933, p. 38). Only 3.3 per cent of the fatal and 2.3 per cent of the non-fatal accidents occurred on "steep hills." (idem).*

*89.7 per cent of accidents at roadjunctions were at uncontrolled crossings. (idem).*

(b) *In less than .3 per cent of fatal accidents was the road excessively cambered. (1933, p.4).*

(c) *21.1 per cent of fatal and non-fatal accidents occurred on roads less than 20 feet in width. (1937, p. 13).*

(d) *59.4 per cent of fatal accidents occurred in " very light traffic," 38.3 per cent in moderate traffic and 3.5 per cent in dense traffic (1935, p. 6), "when" the report adds "speed would of necessity be greatly reduced."*

(e) *60.2 per cent of the fatal accidents to cyclists occurred in light traffic conditions and only "a very small proportion where traffic was dense" (1933, p.8).*

(f) *"By far the greatest number off fatal accidents to pedestrians while crossing the roadway occurred when traffic was either very light or moderate." (1933, p. 9).*

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(g) 82.7 per cent off fatal accidents and non-fatal accidents occurred in clear weather; 14 per cent in rain and hail; and 2.2 per cent in fog or mist. (1937, p. 13).

"This (frequency of accidents in clear weather) confirms the impression... that conditions of low visibility, in which traffic itself is, of course, often reduced in volume, brings home to users of the highway the necessity for caution and for reducing speed." (1935, p. 5).

(h) 72.0 per cent of the fatal accidents in built-up areas during the hours of dark occurred where the lighting was good. (1935, p. 5).

In short, the great majority of Accidents occur in circumstances that encourage speeding: that encourage drivers to indulge in bursts of speed in the belief that they have a "clear road."

More generally it will be seen that everything that is supposed to produce more danger in fact produces more safety and that everything that is supposed to produce more safety produces more danger. (The first thing that has to be learned about the motor slaughter is that, practically everything in it is exactly the opposite to what is commonly supposed.) Better roads, better sight lines, fewer bends and blind corners, less traffic, better lighting, better visibility, better weather conditions -all these that are supposed to make for greater safety, in fact, make for greater danger. Worse roads, worse surfaces, worse sight lines, more bends and blind corners, dense traffic, worse lighting, worse visibility - all these that are supposed to make for greater danger, in fact, make for greater safety. And, as will be found, this is true of all "non-restrictive" safety measures, including even technically better driving, and this is, of course, because every "nonrestrictive" safety measure, however admirable in itself, is treated by the drivers as an opportunity for more speeding, so, that the net amount of danger is increased and the latter state is worse than the first. We drive out the one devil of a particular danger and let in the seven devils of speeding. In trying to end the motor slaughter we are perpetually chasing a factor we never catch. It is a problem we cannot solve because X changes with every attempt at a solution.

It is regrettable that statistics of mileage and traffic volumes are not available since it is clear that these would emphasise the conclusion still more strongly. For example, "straight roads," "open roads" and "good sight lines" are less frequent than "blind corners" and "road bends" that "obscure" the driver's view: the infrequency

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of the former and the frequency of the latter constitute, in fact, one of the main complaints of the drivers; yet it is the former and not the latter that produce not relatively but absolutely the more accidents, Again, taking into account all the streets and lanes of our towns and villages, there are without doubt no more-indeed there are perhaps fewer- roads of more than 20 feet in width than roads less than 20 feet in width; yet the former produce four times the more accidents.

For any who still feel any doubts as to the part played by speed in the motor slaughter i.e. not the abstraction "speed" about which the drivers often. ask, Pontius, Pilate-like', "What is speed?", but the speed now commonly travelled by the drivers, the following views of Chief Constables may be of value:

*Perth*: As to the principal causes of accidents I have no hesitation in stating that it is speed. I believe that 90 per cent of accidents are due, more or less directly, to this cause." (1935). *Wallasey*: "I venture to suggest that speed is the danger element in the majority of accidents." (1935). *Birkenhead*: "We appear to have produced a speed complex." (1935). *Kendal*: "The town's immunity from road deaths is attributable mainly to its winding, old-fashioned streets which compel motorists to drive cautiously." (1935). *Metropolitan Area* (Assistant Commissioner Sir Alker Tripp): "The speed of motor traffic is shewn by its effects to be a deadly and persistent danger . . . The matter of vehicle speed is the decisive factor." (1935). *Southampton*: "No matter what precautions are taken, until motorists are content to slow down considerably, there will be no substantial decrease in the number of Accidents." (1937). *Somerset*: "The majority of accidents in the blackout are due to the vehicles being driven at too great a speed

for the limited vision of the driver." (1940) *Leamington*: "Excessive speed is at the, root of the majority of road accidents." (1941). On the other hand, no Chief Constable or any other police official in this or any other country has ever said or in the slightest degree suggested that speed is not the main danger on the roads and the root cause of the majority of the accidents.

But the best way of reaching this conclusion is to note one's sensations and reactions when there is approaching (a) a fast-driven car and (b) a slowly-driven car, or a fast or slowly-projected object of any kind. It is to risk unpopularity to say so; but it is the fact that the advent of the motor car has not altered the fundamental laws of nature.

## V. FOUR POINTS ABOUT THE DRIVERS

There are four more outstanding points in these Reports: all concerned with the drivers:

(1). *In the speed-limit areas there were 3,999 fatal accidents and 154,440 non-fatal accidents: a ratio of 1 to 38.6. In the non-speed limit areas there were 2,338 fatal accidents and 42,324 non-fatal accidents: a ratio of 1 to 18.1 (1937 Report, pp. 30-31).*

All other statistics in this connection are in agreement. For example, the 1943 Report of the Commissioner of Police (p. 24, Table D) gives the ratios of deaths to injuries as follows:

<i>Class of Road-Users</i>	<i>Speed Limit Areas</i>	<i>Non-Speed Limit Areas</i>
<b>Pedestrians</b>	<b>1:23.2</b>	<b>1:4.6</b>
<b>Pedal Cyclists</b>	<b>1:76.6</b>	<b>1:25.7</b>
<b>Motor Cyclists</b>	<b>1:47.2</b>	<b>1:18.1</b>
<b>Other road-users</b>	<b>1:97.9</b>	<b>1:22.3</b>

The Police Report commented: "These figures indicate very clearly indeed what an important factor speed is in the seriousness of accidents .... It stands to reason, of course, that a fast-moving vehicle will do more damage to anything it hits than a slow-moving vehicle. This has always been the case, but it has become increasingly noticeable since the reduction in the number of vehicles on the roads has increased the opportunities for fast-driving."

It does indeed stand to reason that fast-moving objects should inflict more damage than slow-moving, objects, and future times will wonder at the imbecility of an age that needed to point it out. But, unfortunately, this is necessary because the motor propagandists throw doubts on it and even deny it. In other circumstances this would be comic. With the lives and safety of millions at stake it is tragic- and criminal.

(2) *Private cars were involved in 33.2 per cent of the total accidents; public conveyances in 6.8 per cent; and commercial motor vehicles in 14.3 per cent. (1937 Report).*

*In 1937 there were on the roads approximately 1,800,000 private cars; 95,000 public service vehicles; and 480,000 commercial vehicles. The respective average yearly mileages of these classes of vehicles have been estimated*

*as follows : Private cars, 8,000; public service vehicles, 32,000; commercial vehicles, 16,000. \* Converting these into car-miles we get the approximate ratio of 14.40 - 3.04 - 7.18.*

On this basis, then, it will be seen that private cars have the worst accident record, and when we take into account the much greater extent to which public service and commercial vehicles operate in the built-up areas, this becomes even more marked. But this is not surprising. The private driver is the least disciplined, the least trained when he is trained at all, and the least responsible, in that, as often as not, he is on the roads only for pleasure; he has the least to lose in the event of an accident, in that his livelihood is seldom threatened; and he is the most strongly influenced by the sense of ownership, of his car, and, as he often believes, of the road as well. It is "his" car to do with as he pleases, and, as he often believes, it is "his" road

too, and the other road-users are merely intruders who are there at their own peril.

This belief (it is of interest to note) has its origin in the vicious and anti-social proposition, embodied for a time in the Road Fund and since sustained by the motor and road propagandists, that the motorists have a right to demand that the motor taxes should be devoted exclusively to the construction and "improvement" of roads, i.e. as experience has shown, to the construction and "improvement" of roads with special or exclusive reference to the convenience of the drivers and with a general disregard of the convenience and safety of the other road-users. Of course, one might as well say that the drink taxes ought to be devoted to the construction and improvement of public houses or the duties on cosmetics to the establishment of beauty parlours.

(C). *In 1937, out of a total of 6,633 persons killed on the roads 215 were drivers. (In 1935, out of 302 drivers killed, 175 were private drivers).*

That is to say, by far the safest, because the most protected, class on the roads are the drivers. Enclosed within his car, sunk in a comfortable padded seat, removed, sometimes far removed, from the road, hardly conscious, except through observation, even of movement, much less of speed, the average driver, without doubt, usually feels safer than he actually is, and this sometimes leads to his

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\* Ministry of Transport, Road Vehicles, Great Britain, No. 109A., and Motor Industry of Britain (published by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, 1939), p. 94.

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own undoing. But mainly the illusion of safety is at the expense of others. The drivers kill and maim others but are safe themselves. There are few more contemptible figures on earth than the motorist who boasts of his "fast driving" when practically the only danger he encounters is the danger he creates for others, and these mainly children and elderly and infirm persons. There are few more criminal figures on earth than the motorists who kill or maim innocent persons while indulging in "fast driving" and then run whining to the authorities that it was their victims who were to blame, or than the motor interests who help them. It might indeed well be asked why these "devotees of speed" content themselves with the 60, 70, 80 and 90 m.p.h. they sometimes reach on the roads and do not drive on the race and record tracks where speeds worthy the name can be reached. Compulsory driving under these conditions for these criminal exhibitionists would be both instructive and helpful.

(4). *"About 4 per cent of the drivers involved (in accidents) were women. From figures taken in six representative areas it would appear that about 12 per cent of all persons holding driving licenses are women."* (1933 Report, p. 7).

In short, the "women drivers" joke, when not merely old fashioned "male superiority," is simply another mean attempt by the men drivers to put the responsibility for the motor slaughter on to others. Women drivers are, of course, generally technically inferior to men, but so far as safety is concerned they more than repair the deficiency by showing greater consideration for the other road-users or, at anyrate, more caution, and this is why the men drivers object to them, not because they are dangerous but because they are (relatively) safe, and are therefore an "inconvenience."

The same situation appears to exist between "experienced" and "inexperienced" drivers. In 1933, out of 7,821 drivers of mechanically propelled vehicles involved in fatal accidents, only 346 had been licensed less than six months and only 58 were inexperienced with the type of vehicle they were driving. The 1935 Report observes: "In the absence of information as to the total number of inexperienced drivers on the roads during the year, it is difficult to draw definite conclusions, from these figures," (p. 7). Yet in view of the constantly increasing number of vehicles then being put on the roads it is difficult not to conclude that the ratio of inexperienced drivers was not greater -perhaps much greater. At any rate, it is clear from these figures that

"inexperience" does not constitute any' special menace; in other words, that the experienced drivers are no safer than the inexperienced, and this is because they make their "experience" an excuse for more speeding.

In this connection may also be noted the different standard of conduct frequently- and, in some degree, always- applied to the pedestrian in contrast from the drivers. For despite the statistics just quoted- to say nothing of the lessons of ordinary observation- we continue to be told that what is really required in the drivers is, " skill." So long as a driver is "skilful," so we are assured, he can be trusted to go as fast as he likes: 100 mp.h- 200 m.p.h.- at super-sonic speeds presumably: so long as he is "skilful" no one need get hurt, or, if they do, it will be their own fault. But with the pedestrian it is different. What is needed here is "care": "care" and ever more "care": "care" carried to the point with old persons and children of staying away from the roads altogether and living lives of permanent immobility in their own homes. The pedestrian must continually "pause " and "wait" and "watch": everything about him must be "deliberate": he must never exceed "a measured pace." He is a "menace," and no matter how "skilful" he may be he must never, in any circumstances, no matter how safe they may be, proceed at speeds of four or five m.p.h.

## VI. THE PEDESTRIANS

It is the same with the pedestrians. Practically everything is exactly the opposite to what is commonly supposed. In place of the "suicidal jay-walkers, stepping off pavements without looking," "wandering about in the traffic" and "refusing to be educated," we find young children and elderly and infirm persons who are killed or maimed because they are unable to escape the dangers to which they are subjected. Indeed, in this connection even the term pedestrian is misleading, though perhaps its real significance will come to be realised. Here are details:

Out of the total of 3,057 pedestrians killed in 1937 the figures

<b>Children under 15</b>	...	<b>866</b>	<b>or</b>	<b>28.4 per cent</b>
<b>Persons over 60</b>	...	<b>1,282</b>	<b>or</b>	<b>41,9 per cent</b>
				<b>Total 70.3 per cent</b>

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The 1933 Report, which gave more detailed percentage figures, showed that nearly 78 per cent (2,739 out of 3,517) of the pedestrians killed were under 15 or over 55.

Finally, about 18 per cent of the total were reported as having been ill or afflicted with physical defects (1935, p. 10). Probably, of course, the actual percentage was greater, since many persons suffer from minor defects which they ignore, and these may adversely affect the sufferer's ability to meet a sudden emergency. Nor does the percentage take into account cases of sudden indisposition, dizziness, faintness etc.

But the Ministry statistics prove more than the general helplessness of the great majority of the pedestrian victims. Here, from the 1933 and 1935 Reports (they are omitted from the 1937 Report) are the numbers of pedestrians killed per 100,00 in each age group:

			<b>1935</b>	<b>1933</b>
<b>Under 5 Years</b>			<u>9.7</u>	<b>11.5</b>
<b>5 years and under</b>	<b>7</b>		20.8	
	"	"	11	
	7	"	9.4	
	11	"	2.4	7.8*
	18			
<b>Total under</b>	<b>18</b>		7.8	
<b>18 years &amp; under</b>	<b>20</b>		<u>1.4</u>	
<b>20 years</b>	"	<b>25</b>	1.4	<b>1.9</b>
<b>25</b>	"	"	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.2</b>
<b>30</b>	"	"	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.2</b>
<b>35</b>	"	"	<b>1.9</b>	<b>2.4</b>
<b>40</b>	"	"	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.4</b>
<b>45</b>	"	"	<b>3.6</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>50</b>	"	"	<b>5.6</b>	<b>6.5</b>
<b>55</b>	"	"	<b>8.4</b>	<b>9.4</b>
<b>Total 18 years &amp; under</b>	<b>60</b>		<b>2.9</b>	
<b>60 years and under</b>	<b>65</b>		<b>12.2</b>	<b>14.9</b>
<b>65</b>	"	"	<b>19.4</b>	<b>21.1</b>
<b>70</b>	"	"	<b>27.8</b>	<b>30.8</b>
<b>75</b>	"	"	<b>42.1</b>	<b>41.0</b>
<b>80</b>	"	"	<b>52.1</b>	<b>59.4</b>
<b>85</b>	"	"	<b>40.7</b>	<b>47.8</b>
<b>Total 60 years and over</b>		<b>over</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>25.3</b>

Thus, to the most precise degree possible, pedestrians suffer on the roads in inverse ratio to their physical and sensory capacity, i.e. in direct ratio to their lack of ability to escape the dangers. The age groups of the greatest physical and sensory capacity (the age groups on which the fighting services depend for the most active duties) 18-30, are the safest, and from either side the casualties rise steadily and in an unbroken line

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\* The comparable figure for 1935 was 6.4.

through the age groups of weakening capacity, with, naturally, some final reduction at the extreme ends, in the "under 5" and "over 85." groups, because of the relatively little use of the roads by these classes.

Of course these statistics do not finally establish the "responsibility" of "pedestrians" as a "class," but no fair-minded person will deny that they present a convincing picture of overall danger in which pedestrians are killed and maimed, not because they are "suicidal" or "careless" or "wander about in the traffic" etc. etc., but because they are subjected to dangers from which they are unable to escape. Or, to put the point in another way: in view of the obvious dangers of the roads, the relative immunity of adult pedestrians at least suggests a high degree of care on their part, and we can assume the same degree of care in the other classes, but in their case it is progressively handicapped by weakening physical and sensory capacities. In any case, will anyone, i.e. anyone outside the motor world, seriously argue that children and elderly and infirm persons should be treated on the same basis as alert and responsible adults.?

Exactly the opposite as with the pedestrians, the most dangerous age for drivers is also the age of their greatest physical and sensory capacity, 20-40 (1937 Report, pp. 52-53): a further proof that speeding is the main cause of accidents since it is at these ages that drivers speed most. *The "road problem" may thus be described as mainly the problem of preventing adult drivers from killing and maiming children and elderly and infirm persons.*



"But," the drivers will object probably with some warmth, "you are not arguing, are you, that pedestrians never make mistakes, even some of your 'safe' adult class? Of course not, though, to put the point very mildly, far fewer than you drivers imagine or try- to make out, and far, very far, fewer than you make yourselves. Who doesn't in sudden danger? That is the effect sudden danger usually produces. Anyhow, are you arguing that people deserve to be killed or maimed because they make 'mistakes' in crossing the road, and are you drivers really willing to be their executioners ? Moreover, this still leaves untouched the position of the children and elderly and infirm persons."

It also leaves untouched the question whether the individual driver is always serving a useful purpose in being on the road at all.

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## 2. ABOUT SPEED LIMITS

### I. " HOLIDAY FROM DEATH "

So far as speed limits are concerned, the only practical question is the levels at which they should be placed and the roads to which the different levels should be applied, since on even the best constructed roads, past a certain point, the drivers will themselves demand a limit for their own protection. (It is important to realise that a speed limit of, say, 100 or 120 m.p.h. on such a road provides more protection for the drivers than a limit of, say, 30 m.p.h. provides for pedestrians in an average traffic area). So far no attempt has been made to deal with the question scientifically- to calculate even approximate ratios between different speeds and safety in varying traffic conditions. The figure of 30 m.p.h. for the speed limit in built-up areas was decided on merely as a compromise with the motor interests, who contended successfully, but without producing the slightest scrap of reliable evidence in support, that the drivers would refuse to "co-operate" with any lower limit, and, moreover, as will be seen, exacted concessions even for this, in a Government undertaking that large numbers of speed-limit roads would be de-restricted.

To date, the most valuable experiment carried out is that in the United States (Rhode Island) town of Providence, where, through the proper enforcement of a 25 m.p.h. speed limit, road deaths were eliminated for a period of 125 days; the highway death-rate in the city was maintained at 4.7 compared with an average of 14.9 in other United States cities of the same size, for a period of six months (the first six months of 1938); and during the same six months non-fatal accidents were reduced from 679 to 267. In 1939 the city's highway death rate was 4.2. Providence has a population of more than a quarter of a million, and is the shopping centre of another half million people. It is described as "the most congested area in the most densely populated State in the United States."\* To meet the objections of drivers the superintendent of police sent two cars across the

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\* "Holiday from Death" (Reprinted by the Pedestrians Association from The Rotarian "for October 1938, and" The Reader's Digest.")

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city, one with instructions to speed throughout and to use every speeding method possible, including "beating the lights," and the other to drive well under 25 miles an hour and to observe every rule of the roads. They arrived at their destination within two minutes of each other. The writers quoted add: "The police were polite but emphatic; they didn't waste time asking if you were going to a fire or if you thought it was a speedway- they merely told you that under no circumstances could you go faster than 25 miles an hour, sometimes adding the friendly advice that you'd really save time by observing the law because you'd be stopped every five minutes ... For a while it was irritating and your impulse was to pull out of line and pass everything in sight. But after a while you got reconciled to it and even 15 miles an hour did not seem too slow." The means employed were "propaganda, police and prosecutions." But then it was, propaganda directed to a specific purpose and to the persons primarily concerned, i.e. the drivers, and it was backed by sanctions.

In this connection it is interesting to recall that the late Sir Arthur Griffiths Boscawen, the Chairman of the 1929 Traffic Commission which recommended the abolition of all speed limits for private cars, afterwards recanted and thenceforward advocated a 25 m.p.h. speed limit in built-up areas. It is also interesting and essential to take note of the viciousness of the Ministry of Transport, as well as of the motor interests', propaganda: the continuing effort to discredit speed limits through the presentation of the casualty figures in the terms of the two classes of areas and the consequent emphasis given in this way to the smaller totals in the "non-speed limit" areas: as if- with their different densities of population and traffic- given even the, most scientifically ascertained and most rigorously enforced speed limit- there were any real standard of comparison between the two. This is also leaving aside the fact that a number of vehicles are subject to speed limits in the "non-speed limit" areas. But this propaganda is merely another example of the general dishonesty and absurdity surrounding the road situation here given special official endorsement. It is probably the first time in history that significance has been found in the fact that very few persons are killed or maimed from any cause in uninhabited areas.

Another valuable, if indirect, road safety experiment was carried out in America during the war through the imposition of certain economy measures: an aspect of the road situation to which we ourselves still cannot be indifferent in our present straitened circum

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stances.. In 1942 the following steps were taken: March 14: Appeal by the President for the voluntary observance of a 40 m.p.h. speed limit to conserve tyres; October 1; a general 35 m.p.h. limit established; December 1: petrol rationing introduced. Compared with the previous year road deaths in 1942 fell by more than 11,000-from 39,969 to 28,309, the result, of course, mainly, of the limitation of speed. The following year vehicles engaged in transporting important war shipments were exempted from the limit (March 1). There was also a slight deterioration in the enforcement of the 35 m.p.h. speed limit, the average speed,of vehicles increasing from 36.3 m.p.h. (October~December, 1942) to 38.3 m.p.h. (March-June, 1943). Nevertheless, the general average speed remained a very considerable improvement over the pre-March 1942 figure of 47.1 m.p.h. In addition, pleasure driving was banned (January 1). The overall result in 1943 was another, though, lesser reduction of 5,000 in the number of road deaths-from 28,309 to 23,300.

## II. INTOXICATION AND SADISM

As will be found, and as indeed is a matter of common experience, the majority- probably it is the great majority- of drivers are at least in principle in favour of the existing speed limits and, it can be assumed, would soon come to observe them were they properly enforced and sufficiently supported in our safety propaganda. Indeed, it can be assumed that the majority, probably the great majority, of the drivers would support and observe lower speed limits were these introduced and properly enforced and sufficiently supported in our safety propaganda. Nevertheless it would be to underestimate the speed menace not to recognise that the propaganda of the motor interests represents the views of a certain minority of the drivers and that it has a disturbing influence on many of the others. All drivers are not road hogs, but it is the road hogs who set the pace, and the other drivers make no effective protest. With this minority then and, to some extent, with the others as well, we are dealing with people suffering from the intoxication of speed, i.e. people who are as little responsible for their actions' and as little capable of driving a car safely as if they were drunk or drugged, and with every increase in the speed of the cars and every decrease in the enforcement of the law the number of these speed drunks or addicts and the degrees of their intoxication or stupefaction increase. The intoxication of

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speed on the roads is an even worse menace than the intoxication of alcohol because it is more widespread.

Another deadly, though little recognised, factor in the motor slaughter may be mentioned here: the element of sadism that at times appears in the behaviour, as it is not infrequently heard in the conversation, of certain of the drivers: the satisfaction these drivers find in the practice or the thought of intimidating the other road users. No one but a sentimentalist or a hypocrite would deny that in the present conditions on the roads some degree of sadism is inevitable in drivers with ill-balanced minds- and clearly these are not few- or that it inevitably becomes active in moments of stress or irritation. It is commonly said by drivers that driving a car induces in the driver "a sense of power," and, in these ill-balanced minds, this sense of power is extended and distorted to become a sense of power over the lives and safety of the other road-users. No one can have failed to see at some time on the roads some instance of deliberate bullying by a driver of other road-users- cyclists provide especially easy targets- and there have in-fact, been cases in which drivers have been convicted of this. Precisely how many "accidents"-have been directly or indirectly caused by a sudden sadistic impulse in the mind of a driver cannot be guessed, but it cannot be small. The powers of life and death inherent in a car are far too great to be allowed to anyone except under the strictest supervision and control, and they must not be allowed at all to persons with ill-balanced minds.

### III. SPEED AND DEMOCRACY

"But" shouts the indignant motor propagandist, amid no doubt encouraging cries from considerable numbers of drivers "you are missing the point, my pedestrian friend, with your talk about sadism, the intoxication of speed and all the rest of it. Why don't you look around you? We are living in an high-speed age. We must have speed and more speed." "Of course. That is the second, or, if you like, the first reason why speed must be controlled. In fact, when I look around me I find intolerable delays imposed on great numbers of people, including, probably, you yourself, by precisely this condition of uncontrolled speed. Certainly we live in an age of speed and more speed. But we also, live in an age of democracy and more democracy, and speed is much too valuable a commodity to be restricted to the few."

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In the first place, speeding is one of the major causes, perhaps the major cause, of traffic congestion. Experiments carried out by the American Road Builders' Association have shown that, after allowing adequate tail spacing, the maximum speed to permit the maximum number of vehicles to pass a given point is 23 m.p.h. The total at this speed in an hour was 2,600. At 40 m.p.h. this number was reduced to 1,760\*. In an average fairly busy street with numerous inevitable stoppages and obstacles, to say nothing of crossing pedestrians, a much lower speed is obviously necessary, and anything in excess of this leads to traffic jams. But, even more, speeding imposes intolerable delays on the rest of the community. Indeed, if some of the motor interests plans for " high speed traffic " were carried out the entire life of the community over big areas of the country would cease to exist. For example, the proposal has been put forward -as a suggested experiment- in the Interim Report of the Ministry of Transport Road Safety Committee, that pedestrians should be forbidden to cross roads of more than 40 feet in width within a hundred yards of a pedestrian crossing. (It is put forward without even any guarantee as to the siting of the crossings). Of course, in busy areas, the proposal could not be carried out, for the simple reason that the crossing pedestrians would form a continuous barrier in the traffic, or, if they were held up from time to time, would overflow into the roadway and soon create a still more formidable barrier. Nor could it be carried out in many other conditions, e.g. along tram routes, where the "stops" would necessarily be sited at other points in the roadway and where there would, therefore, be pedestrians crossing at other points. But even where it could be carried out, it would impose delays on the general life of the community far greater than anything resulting from the most rigid control of the speed of the vehicles, since the pedestrians would be forced to walk up to 200 yards each time they crossed the roads. This is to say nothing of the great hardships that would be imposed on certain classes of the pedestrians e.g. Infirm persons, mothers with children, or shopping baskets, etc. or of the losses that would be imposed in shopping areas on the shopkeepers. It is the final injustice of proposals of this kind that the life of local communities should be held up mainly for the sake of long-distance traffic. In a high speed age, at least as much as the motorist,

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\* "Accidents and Their Prevention," by H. M. Vernon (Cambridge University P., 1936), pl. 14-23.

the pedestrian must be given the greatest possible freedom from "wearisome and irritating delays."

### 3. THE MOTOR INTERESTS

#### I. LAW v. DRIVERS

##### A. THE AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION'

The trouble with the facts about the law-breaking of the motorists and the motor interests is that there are too many: it is difficult even to grasp them. In fact, the position has long since passed far beyond the limits of ordinary law-breaking and become an exhibition of national degeneracy.

The acceptance by the authorities- now stretching over many years- of the system under which the Automobile Association Scouts warn drivers of "police traps" alone justifies the description, for the system, while defended as a means of aiding the observance of the law, leads in practice to its constant evasion. Yet the Automobile Association has been accorded ever-increasing Government recognition as a semi-official road authority and adviser. Its late secretary was knighted. Its present secretary, Mr. Fryer, is secretary of the National Street Safety Committee of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, and until recently was a member of the Ministry Of Transport Road Safety Committee. The Government listens to people who, to quote a former Home Secretary "hamper the police in their duties," when it refuses to listen to the representatives of the most numerous class of victim, the pedestrians. It is the final stage of the scandal that the Government should have entrusted to the Automobile Association the main task of traffic sign-posting the roads, so that its name is exhibited everywhere as a symbol of road authority. When we add to this the drivers' successful opposition to the use of plain-clothes police officers on the roads because this led to convictions, their denunciation of police "traps" (the only other effective means in force of detecting speed offences) as "un-British" and their largely successful demands that breaking the speed limit (the main and fundamental road safety measure) shall be treated as a "technical offence," we reach a position (apart from the loss of life and limb involved) properly belonging to musical comedy. Fiction itself has never dared to imagine the open use of a private

and uniformed army to help people to defeat the law or a class of law breakers so tenderly treated that they dictated to the Government and the police how the law against them should be enforced. In real life, outside the, history of Fascism, there has never been anything like it.

There may be given here also an example of the Automobile Association's "road safety" propaganda methods. It will be recalled that in the period between the two wars, more even than ordinary days, the Spring and Summer Bank Holidays were marked by exhibitions of atrocious driving and disgraceful totals of smashes and casualties: indeed so unrelievedly bad were they that it became the custom for the Minister of Transport on the eve of each holiday to issue a special appeal for "care," "consideration," etc. etc. on the roads, with usually a separate word to the drivers. It will also be recalled that invariably the smashes were continuous throughout the day but reached their peak in the "rush home" in the hours up to midnight. But every Bank Holiday, with unflinching regularity and effrontery, the Automobile Association sent to the newspapers and news agencies a statement saying they had received reports from their Scouts all over the country and that these showed that the driving during the day had been "careful," "considerate" etc. etc. and had shown a definite improvement over the previous Bank Holiday and that drivers everywhere had responded to the Minister's appeal, and they did this during the afternoons- before even the holiday was ended, to say nothing of before allowing any time for even a small number of reports to be received and analysed- for the purpose, of course,

of catching the late editions of the evening papers and being in ample time for the following morning papers and so of ensuring that the item should appear in the holiday news. It was an illustration of the unlimited credence then given to all motor propaganda and of the fantastic mental confusion that prevailed that these "careful," "considerate" etc. etc. driving reports often appeared in the news-papers in the same column as the long and gruesome reports of the day's smashes. In any case, what a spectacle was here suggested: of the Automobile Association's Scout pausing from time to time on a busy day from his duty of warning the drivers of a police trap ahead or giving them the "all-clear" to break the law with impunity to note down critical and impartial comments on the standards of the day's driving! The practice stopped shortly before the war, apparently because of letters of protest in the Press, but no doubt its resumption

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figures high in the Automobile Association's plans for post-war road safety. \*

To complete the picture, it must be realised that in its anti-speed limit activities and propaganda the Automobile Association is not even carrying out the wishes of its own members. In March, 1935 it issued a questionnaire to its members on (among other questions) the new 30 miles an hour speed limit in built-up areas. The result was announced inconspicuously in the Annual Report for that year (24.7.35) where it was described as "showing the diversity of opinion among motorists" on the subject. One hundred thousand replies had been received and it was admitted that there was a "majority" in favour of the speed limit.

#### B. "SOCIETY" AND M.P.S

Among the individual drivers, the law breakers are led by "Society," and M.Ps. and magistrates.

Here is a list taken from the national Press of well-known people convicted of road offences in the two years immediately preceding the war.

Helen, Viscountess Adare; Lady Alness; Hon. Michael Astor; Lord Avebury (five previous convictions); Lord Banbury; Lady Aline Barnett, of Sopwell, St. Albans (25 previous convictions); Sir John Bowen; Hon. John Patrick Bowes-Lyon; Hon. Mrs. Michael Bowes-Lyon; Mr. F. N. Chamberlain, son of the late Premier; Marchioness of Cholmondeley; Viscountess Cranborne; Earl of Craven; Lord Rhidian Crichton-Stuart; Lord Delamere; Air Vice Marshal W. Sholto Douglas; Lady Diana Duff Cooper (six previous convictions); Viscount Duncannon; the Master of Elphinstone; Lady Dorothy Fraser, of Church Langton, Market Harborough. Princess Kate Fazell, sister-in-law of the King of Egypt; Viscount Gormanston; Viscountess Hailsham; Hon. Quintin Hogg; Lieut. Colonel Charles Jarrott, founder and past Chairman of the Auto-

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\*Prophecy fulfilled. On the first Bank Holiday approximating normal, viz. Easter of the past year, the A.A. resumed the practice and the unfounded and dishonest statement received the usual wide publicity. In its enthusiasm, however, the A.A. contradicted its own speed propaganda, for, after declaring that there had been "very few accidents" the statement complained that the speed of traffic had been "much less than normal." "Average speed on arterial roads" it said "had been only 30-35 m.p.h. where 45-50 would have been reasonably safe."

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mobile Association; Earl Jellicoe; Viscountess Knutsford; Sir Curtis Lampson; Duke of Leinster; Earl of Listowel; Lady (Generis) Mainwaring; Lord May; Miss Unity Mitford; Marchioness of Queenberry (two previous convictions); Mrs. Diana Sandys; Viscount Selby; Lord Sempill; Sir J. Malcolm Stewart; Lord Strabolgi (three previous convictions); Viscountess Swinton; Lord Tollemache; Raymond Vincent de Trafford; Earl of Verulam.

And here, is a list of M.Ps. convicted of road offences in recent years (with their then constituencies):

Mr. Frank Anderson (Whitehaven); Major J. J. Astor (Dover); the late Captain Sir Wm. Brass (Clitheroe), three previous convictions; the late Dr. Leslie Burgin (Luton) Parliamentary Secretary Board of Trade, later Minister of Transport; Miss Thelma Cazalet (East Islington);

Mr. F. E. Clarke (Dartford), five previous convictions; Marquess of Clydesdale (Dungavel), two previous convictions; Mr. C. T. Culverwell (Bristol West); Mr. W. Craven Ellis (Southampton) - Viscountess Davidson (Hemel Hempstead); Lord Dunglass (Lanark); Mr. Robert Grant-Ferris (N. St. Pancras); Mr. E. L. Granville (Eye Division of Suffolk); Sir Cecil. Hanbury (North Dorset; Mr. Thomas Levy (Elland, Yorkshire); Mr. R. A. Pilkington (Widnes) - Mr. W. Roberts (North Cumberland); Sir C. E. R. Brocklebank (Fairfield); Sir D. Somervell (Crewe), former Solicitor General; Major P. Stapleton Shaw (Wavertree); Major the Hon. J. J. Stourton (South Salford); the late Capt. Euan Wallace (Hornsey), later Minister of Transport.

There have also been magistrates: sometimes convicted, though never really punished, in their own courts. When the Honourable Lady Norman, J.P., wife of Sit Henry Norman, of Chiddingfold, Surrey, was fined for a speed offence on November 2, 1938, it was her fourth conviction. When Major Lord Hesketh was fined for a speed offence on June 25th, 1941, he was unable to appear because he was presiding at the Towcester Police Court.

### C. INCOMPLETE STATISTICS

The latest Home Office Return (1936) gives the following totals of offences by drivers (in a year) in England and Wales:

Total offences and alleged offences	572,762
Written warnings by the police	134,814

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Prosecutions ... ..	437,948
Convictions ... ..	381,650

On these figures alone the motorists, are the most criminal class in the community, and probably the most criminal in history.\* But, of course, these were merely a fraction of the cases in which the police would have taken action if they could have secured the necessary evidence, or, having secured it, could have hoped to secure a conviction, and not merely a rebuff, from some pro-motorist, magistrate, and again, these were merely a minute fraction of the cases unnoticed or unseen by the police. The fact is that the law is broken by drivers on all the roads and in all the streets and lanes of the country every moment of the day and night. The number of offences is literally past count, and most of the offences mean that a human life has been endangered. This is a matter of ordinary observation, but let us again take a few recorded examples:

"Day after day they (plain clothes officers posted as observers on speed limit roads) reported to me that if no police patrol vehicles., with uniformed drivers, were visible practically all motorists were not only guilty of driving at speeds ranging from 35 to 60 m.p.h. but were deliberately racing and overtaking, sometimes three abreast. Drivers of certain goods vehicles, which are limited to a speed of 20 m.p.h., were equally glaring offenders in driving at speeds between 40 and 50 m.p.h." 1936 Report of the Chief Constable of Cardiff.

"During a period of 2.1 hours the behaviour of 900 motor vehicles, travelling along A580 and approaching the Worsley Road and Moorside Road (Swinton and Pendlebury, East Lancs) intersections was recorded as follows:

	<i>Percentage</i>
Reducing speed to safe limits	26
No marked diminution of speed	64
Turning Improperly	6
Overtaking dangerously near crossing	4

" For a period of two hours observation was kept on the pedestrian crossings at Moorside and Worsley Road (Swinton and Pendle

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\*Of the general situation, the former Lord Chancellor, the late Lord Buckmaster, observed in the House of Lords: " There is no branch of the law with which I am familiar or ever have been, which could show such a system of law breaking." (7.12.33).

bury, East Lancs) during which time 270 motor vehicles passed when a pedestrian was seeking to cross the road ... of these:

	<i>Percentage</i>
Those giving right of way to pedestrians represented	5
Those failing to give right of way	95

(Ministry of Transport Letter to the Town Clerk of Swinton and Pendlebury, 16.3.37).

But, of course, the evidence could be multiplied indefinitely, and so can the evidence of the law-breaking of the motor and transport interests and private drivers in other directions, e.g. the maintenance vehicles, commercial drivers' hours, overloading of commercial vehicles, schedules of journeys, etc. (In connection with the last item, the London 'busmen are to be congratulated on coming out on strike on a number of occasions against schedules they were unable to operate without undue strain on themselves \*- itself a source of danger to the public-or (they have maintained) without infractions of the speed limit.)

But in fact the most severe judgment on the drivers is their own, since to judge by their usual remarks while driving, about ninety-nine per cent of their number are unfit to be on the roads at all. For the sake of argument, let us take a more charitable figure and say one in eight or even ten. On the basis of the pre-war total of drivers, this meant that there were then about three hundred thousand killers on the roads, and it was to protect these and keep them on the roads and increase their number, just as much as for any other purpose, that the motor interests used every means they could invent, from hypocritical appeals to "British freedom" and "rights of the individual" to flagrant lying and conspiracy.

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\* "The busmen of Slough struck not because under the new schedules they would have to do more journeys per working day for the same pay, but because the schedules could not be carried out, since there is a physical as well as a legal limit to the speed at which 'buses can be driven along the roads. One day a man may be on from 7 a.m. till 2 p.m., the next from 7.30 till 4, the next from 3 till midnight and so on while, for the conductor, who, unlike the driver, is not protected by law, there is no limit to the number of hours that he may be on duty at a stretch. The 'spread-over' may still further disorganise the day and make every effort to provide good, freshly prepared meals at fixed times impossible for the harassed house-wife. The result I see in my surgery. At one time or Another I must have been consulted by every busman on my panel for digestive trouble. Several have chronic indigestion and two at least to my knowledge have ulcers due entirely to their enforced habits of eating." Panel Doctor in "New Statesman" (10.8.35).

#### D. CAREER OF EARL HOWE

Special interest attaches to the career of Earl Howe (until 1929 Viscount Curzon), whose regular appearances in the police courts for motor offences provided one of the features of British life in the '20s and to whose name now stands the possibly record total of more than 30 convictions, mostly for speed offences. Earl Howe is a driver of great skill and daring, as he has demonstrated over a long period on the motor racing track, where in spite of the motor propagandists contention that speed is not dangerous, the achievements of the drivers have always, and rightly, commanded the admiration of the public. Nor has Lord Howe shown himself indifferent to road safety, at least in theory, or in others. It is true that his pronouncements have been extraordinarily confused and contradictory. For example, on one occasion, he declared that only 5 per cent of accidents are caused by excessive speed (5.12.33) and on another that "speed may be-and very often is-an important factor in dangerous driving" (5.5.36). Of pedestrians he has observed that "their recklessness has to be seen to be believed." (21.5.37) and more recently in a House of Lords debate (21.11.45) he expressed the precise view that "the main section of the (road safety) problem is, unfortunately, the recklessness and heedlessness of pedestrians." Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt his sincerity. He opposed the complete abolition of the speed limit for private cars in 1924-25, and later pointed out the valuable psychological effect of speed limits generally; he was afraid, he said, of the psychological effects of the abolition of speed limits on inexperienced drivers. He has also faithfully contrasted driving in Britain with driving abroad. "One thing that strikes me," he said (2.12.34) " is the extraordinary amount of temper one meets with on British roads. Driving here is chiefly distinguished by the amount of selfishness and lack of imagination among drivers. The standard of driving in this country is not as high as abroad." But in spite of these good

intentions Earl Howe has a deplorable record of road mishaps. How many narrow escapes he has had on the roads only he himself knows, and, no doubt, even he far from fully. But here is a list of his mishaps as reported in the Press: 1925, July: Hit telegraph pole on the Hastings road: thrown out, with passenger. 1927, January: Bad smash on the Brighton road near Lewes, injured. 1928, January: Knocked down a cyclist at Camberley. 1930, August: Narrow escape in Ulster when a bird crashed through his driving

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screen. September: Car plunged down an embankment when pulling out to avoid a lorry. 1931, June: Narrow escape at Le Mans when three stray cows "got in his way." August: Knocked down a boy in Belfast. September: Car crashed down an embankment at Bagshot, 1932, July: Car left the road at a bend in the Ardennes forest. 1933: January: Ran into a horse and cart at Pesaro: peasant killed. April, Collided with and injured a cyclist on the Pesaro-Milan road. 1934. December: Car struck a road barrier and fell into a ditch at Bolney, Sussex. In addition, Earl Howe has been twice sued: unsuccessfully by a pedestrian whom he had, knocked down in the West End (the claim failing because of "negligence by both parties," 1925), and successfully, by a man who was injured when his car collided with a meat truck in West Kensington (1930). The lessons of all this are, of course, simple enough: they are that no driver, however skilful, can afford to ignore the safety laws, and especially the speed limit, without endangering others besides himself; that these laws must be rigorously enforced, without fear or favour; and finally, that there is an extraordinary gulf in the motoring mind between intention and action. What are we to do with these people with their split minds? As they kill and maim pedestrians they chatter: "We are all pedestrians."

## II. THE BIG LIE

### A. HITLER'S PREDECESSORS

When we turn to the propaganda of the motor interests we find ourselves in an opium-smokers' dream-world in which nothing is to be seen except colossal roads, so long and wide that even the super-cars using them are scarcely visible and the minute pedestrians merely enter. or emerge from subways, and then only in two's or three's or singly; in which, in fact, nothing exists except fast traffic and the entire life of the community is held up to allow it to pass; but in which (to get, as it were, to the heart or real meaning of the dream), whatever else happens, everyone goes on buying more and more cars.

The fact that the motor interests have never produced a definite road safety policy is, of course, a result of their not having one. Their general policy is to destroy the safety programmes produced by others. The main aim of their propaganda is to persuade the public that safety is to be found in allowing the drivers to drive as they please,

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and that whatever results from this is always the fault of the nondrivers, and especially of the pedestrians. They accept a few of the existing controls on the drivers- they call them "restrictions"- as inevitable, e.g. the speed limit on heavy vehicles, though equally they excuse and defend offences against them, and these (as has been seen) are beyond count. But generally their aim is to secure the removal or the non-enforcement of the existing controls on the drivers and to prevent the introduction' of new ones. Of course, these controls, and many others, are essential for the safety of the drivers themselves, but, as has been noted in the case of the Automobile Association, this is as much ignored as the safety of the non-drivers, the only difference being that the actual results are less. It is for this general reason that the motor interests have never pressed very strongly for the control of pedestrians: they are afraid it might lead to a demand for the better control of the drivers. Mainly their propaganda is directed against the control of speed and here they employ a very familiar technique.

"The broad masses of a nation ... more readily fall victim to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies in little matters, but would be ashamed to resort to large scale falsehood. It would never come into their heads to fabricate colossal untruths and



they would not believe that others would have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously. Even though the facts that prove this to be so may be brought clearly to their minds, they will still doubt and waver and will continue to think that there may be some other explanation. For the grossly impudent lie always leaves traces behind it even after it has been nailed down, a fact which is known to all expert liars in the world and to all who conspire together in the art of lying."

The words are, of course, those of the (presumably) late Adolf Hitler, and this expert is generally credited with this new-old theory, viz. that the best way to lie is to do so on so terrific a scale, to make the lie so complete and overwhelming, that short of forcibly suppressing the liar, nothing can be done about it, argument and reply being impossible. But this is an injustice. The British motor propagandists were first in the field. In their practical way, they did not formulate the theory, but they initiated the practice, not always directly, at any rate in print, but by constant suggestion and innuendo, and their Big Lie is that "Speed is not dangerous." Goebbels never invented anything more perfect. Accept this and you accept everything.

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The road hog becomes the safest driver on the roads, and with every increase of speeds the pedestrians, especially the children and elderly and infirm persons, become more to blame. Argument is impossible. One might invite the motor propagandists to submit to the simple experiment of trying to avoid a bullet, or, more suitably, a shell, discharged at close range. But when the Big Lie is sharply challenged in this way, or when some especially revolting result of it has disturbed public opinion, the motor propagandists, again following the Nazi technique, temporarily modify it, usually to "speed is dangerous only according to the circumstances"- incidentally, itself, past a certain point, an equally Big Lie- only when the challenge or the danger is past, to re-establish it again as their main theme, the idea being that even if it is not completely believed, it will always "leave traces" and cause ordinary people to "doubt" and "waver." At the same time- and this is again according to the best Nazi standards- this does not prevent their asserting, especially in the courts, that drivers never travel at more than "very moderate speeds," indeed usually at no more than about 10 or 15 miles an hour.

Of course, to lie in this way, one condition is necessary: the backing of irresistible force. But here again the parallel of Nazi-ism in the days of its triumph is complete, for the irresistible force exists in over-measure in the fast-driven car. First, the Big Lie that speed is not dangerous, and then the fast-driven car to prove it, with death or maiming as the penalty for dissent. A new flood of propaganda is released blaming the pedestrians, especially the children and elderly and infirm persons, for not getting out of the way quickly enough, and the process is complete: the Nazi technique in its complete form and even more successful than anything ever achieved in the political field. In these circumstances it is indeed not surprising that a number of pedestrians should have been "convinced" and at times should be found blaming themselves in accidents, when, in fact, they are entirely innocent, for self-respect is one of the first things to perish under tyranny. On their side, the motor propagandists are so confident or so self-deceived- for it is the usual fate of the liar to end by believing himself- that we find them using the Big Lie, as it were, offensively and putting forward as an argument in favour of unrestricted speed the fact that "sometimes even five miles an hour is dangerous."

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## B. CURIOUS STATISTICS

As an example of this "speed is not dangerous" propaganda may be taken the following statement by Colonel Mervyn O'Gorman, the well-known motoring writer and a prominent Royal Automobile Club representative. It has appeared in his pamphlets " Road Transport and the Traffic Plan " (1942) p. 24 and " The Political Route of Road Accidents " (1944) pp. 18-19 and in other statements published in the Press:

"In Greater London speeds not exceeding walking pace (say 5, m.p.h.) have a six times larger list (of fatal accidents) than all speeds above 20 m.p.h. In less than 41 per cent of these fatal accidents has the speed exceeded 20 m.p.h. In 25 per cent the vehicle speed has been less

than 5 m.p.h.; in 58 per cent less than 10 m.p.h.; in 80 per cent less than 15 m.p.h."

These figures are taken from an obscure report covering the period 1920-26 of the defunct and motorist-dominated London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee. No one seems to know what was the system of compilation, or if there was one. Colonel O'Gorman has never explained. No one except the motorist propagandists will own them. The London Police and the Ministry of Transport regard them as unworthy a moment's consideration. How far they are opposed to ordinary sanity need hardly be emphasised. In quoting them it is clearly Colonel O'Gorman's aim to prove not only that speed is not dangerous but that driving slowly is.

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The principle of speed limits is a constant target for the motor propagandists. As an example may be taken another statement by Colonel O'Gorman ("Road Transport and the National Plan," p. 24):

"During four years starting from 1930 speed limits (urban and general) were abolished. It became a test case. This was the first and only legislative act to be attended by a decline in the curve of fatal accidents in which motors were involved. The reduction was from 6,2122 to 5,628 in the first year of no-limits. During 1930-34 the number never exceeded 5,765 per annum. Yet the number of vehicles registered continued to increase by 50,000 each year during these four years."

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This paragraph is untrue as a whole and in every detail\*:

(A) The 1930 readjustment of speed limits was not a single "legislative Act.", Inter alia, the 1930 Act, established police patrols and created new driving offences, and, for a time, under the impact of the new Act these measures were operated with some degree of efficiency.

(B) All speed limits were not abolished-only those for private cars and motor cycles. Certain of the limits on commercial and, public service vehicles were raised, but others were lowered. Moreover, again under the impact of the new Act, these, for a time, were enforced with greater efficiency. In addition, the schedules of public service vehicles were put under the control of the newly created Traffic Commissioners. As a result of these measures there were immediate and substantial reductions in the number of deaths in these categories, e.g. motor buses and coaches: 1930- 938; 1931- 757. Goods vehicles: 1930- 1492; 1931- 1,421.

(C) As a result of the introduction of compulsory third party insurance (i.e. by the 1930 Act) 95,200 motor cycles disappeared from the roads in 1931, i.e. about one-seventh of, the total (698,900 to 603,700). The deaths in this category fell roughly by the same proportion, from 2,054 to 1,697. The next year, with more motor cycles on the roads again and with the speed limit abolition taking effect, they rose again to 1933.

(D) Here are the figures of persons killed by private cars during these years: 1930: 1,882; 1931, 1,877; 1932, 1,914; 1933,2,167; 1934, 2,266.

*In short, with the vehicles for which the speed limit was abolished the casualties increased, but these increases were more than counter-balanced by reductions in the casualties from vehicles on which the speed limit was retained. Moreover, it must be remembered that by 1930 the existing 20 m.p.h. speed limit on private cars and motor cycles, had become very widely disregarded. That it was "completely disregarded" was indeed one of the official reasons given for its abolition: an example of the*

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\* Even the figures are wrong: The 6,222 and 5,268 totals are not for fatal accidents, in which motors were "involved" but for fatal accidents "attributable to motor vehicles " or, as it became after 1937, in which motor vehicles were "primarily concerned." (See Home Office and Ministry of Transport Returns). Of course, motor vehicles were "involved" in a great number of the remaining fatal accidents, the totals of which were: 1930, 7074: 1931, 6499: and even these did not represent the total killed, viz. 1930, 7305: 1931, 6691.

success of the motorists' propaganda plus force technique. With large numbers of cars travelling without hindrance at 60 m.p.h. or more on the roads it is not surprising that the abolition of a 20 m.p.h. speed limit did not produce any very marked difference in the totals of casualties. \*

But to describe the "statistics" of the motor propagandists as inaccurate and misleading is to put an unfair strain on these terms. Here is another example also taken from Col. O'Gorman. ("Road Transport and the National Plan," p. 22):

"Analysis of fatal accident records showed that the drivers involved in accidents were, in 98 per cent of cases, persons who were not road hogs, i.e. they had never had any previous accident or conviction for any offence, technical or other, however small."

Again untrue as a whole and in every detail. The only available statistics on this point are those (referred to above) in the 1933 and 1935 Ministry Reports on "Previous Convictions of Drivers." (1) The total given is 96.3 per cent and this included the "unaware whether previously convicted": deducting this- 17.9 per cent- the total is 78.4 per cent. (2) The convictions cover only manslaughter or culpable homicide, driving under the influence of drink or drugs ditto, plus dangerous or careless driving and dangerous or careless driving (including convictions under the 1903 Act) i.e. they excluded the far more numerous offences of breaking the speed limit, ignoring pedestrian crossings etc. etc., etc., to say nothing of the numerous "technical," but often highly dangerous offences connected with the upkeep of the vehicle, parking, etc., etc.' (3) They make no reference of any kind to previous accidents;

Finally, here are two other brief extracts from Colonel O'Gorman's two pamphlets:

"The only known method by which safe traffic can be sought is . . . the principle that sailors call 'show your helm'".

"The human walker, being a vertical animal, is the only traffic unit that neither moves in the direction of his length or in the way he faces. He needs help more than any other unit."

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\*In his 1935 Report, the Metropolitan Commissioner of Police, Sir Philip Game, stated that in the speed limit section of the Metropolitan Area the 1934 30 m.p.h. speed limit had brought about a 50% reduction in the deaths caused by private cars. The figures for the Feb. 1940 blackout speed limit were equally impressive, and so were the re-increase figures when this limit was abolished.

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It is perhaps hardly necessary to add that the writer of this tom-foolery, instead of being laughed at as a mountebank, is everywhere accepted as a "great authority" on road safety and an "expert statistician," or that it was presumably on the strength of his achievements in this direction, that he appeared one night on the B.B.C. Brains Trust.

It may be added that Colonel O'Gorman's two pamphlets were issued by the British Road Federation. The then Chairman of the Federation was the late Mr. F. G. Bristow. Mr. Bristow was Chairman of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and a member of the Ministry of Transport Road Safety Committee.

### III. EDUCATION IN ROAD SAFETY

#### A. THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

But sooner or later, outside the motor world this blatant "speed is not dangerous" propaganda must have perished of its own mendacity and absurdity. For the main attack something was required at once more subtle and more "respectable"; something (if it were possible) more, outwardly, "British"; something in which could be used such terms as "moderate," "reasonable," "co-operation," "avoidance of panic and extreme measures," "pulling together," "seeing the other fellow's point of view," etc. etc.; even "sporting"; something, in fact, that is now complete humbug. The answer was "education": "education" in "road safety," or, to use that term that can be made to mean anything that suits the driver's convenience at the moment, "road sense." (It is characteristic of the acquisitive motor interests that they should

have appropriated the word "education" to their own use, when, at the best, they meant propaganda. But with their usual business shrewdness they recognised that "education" sounded much better and created the impression of profound and public-spirited aims. If, through its misuse, the real conception of education was lowered, why then, that was just another road "accident").

"Education" then, is based on the proposition that all that is required to end the motor slaughter are appeals to the road users to be "careful," "considerate," "courteous," etc. etc., i.e. that, in spite of the constantly increasing numbers and speeds of the cars,

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the safety laws can be diminished and their enforcement relaxed and that eventually, and, it can be hoped before very long, it will be possible to dispense with them altogether, except perhaps for a few regulations necessary for the convenience or safety of the drivers. Or, to put the proposition in another way, it is that "the responsibility for road safety should be placed equally on all classes of road users," i.e. that the same amount of responsibility should be placed on the youngest child and the oldest and most infirm person as on the adult driver of the 120 m.p.h. car or the 20 ton lorry or the owners of the largest fleets of motor vehicles. Thus, A buys a car and says to B: "Now you must be equally responsible with me in seeing that I don't kill or injure you, or, rather, since nearly all my attention will be taken up in driving the car and watching the other traffic, and since in any case it will be you who would get killed or injured, you had better be much more responsible," and this is applied to the youngest children and the oldest and most infirm persons. Above all, except at times in connection with accidents between drivers, the "education" campaign refuses to recognise the part played by speed in the motor slaughter and, indeed, for the most part, ignores the issue.

So far as the pedestrian is concerned, it may be said that "education" has two fundamental ideas. The first is that people cannot see and need to be told by posters, pamphlets, serious and humorous anecdotes, articles, advertisements, films, broadcasts and other means, that it is dangerous to cross the road. The second is that if this is done often enough the dangers will cease to exist. "Education" might thus be described as a return to the methods of incantation, without, however, the belief.

In the early days of motoring there was perhaps some justification for a belief in "education": for the hope that the "road problem" might be solved solely or mainly by means of propaganda; although of course, even then, it was clear that certain strictly enforced regulations were necessary if it were only to prevent traffic delays and confusion. It is the persistence in the belief and still more the determination to persist in it increasingly in the future that is to be condemned, and utterly condemned; for the real causes of the motor slaughter have long since become obvious, and so have the real effects of the "education campaign." If any doubts remained, they were finally removed in the first two years of the war, when the enforcement of the safety laws was almost entirely relaxed and almost complete reliance was placed on "education." The result was, of course,

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that in spite of the greatly reduced number of cars on the roads, the casualties quickly mounted to new records, the deaths totalling more than 10,000 in a single period of twelve months (August 1940-September 1941).\*

A vicious circle has been created. The more the drivers kill and maim the more right they become and the more right they become the more dangerously they drive. Or, to put the position from the opposite side, the more the non-drivers, and especially the pedestrians, are killed and maimed, the more this is proof of their carelessness and refusal to be "educated" and the more this is accepted the less care is taken by the drivers to avoid them, and this is applied to the youngest children and the oldest and most infirm persons. Moreover, there can be no doubt that the omission from the "education" propaganda of practically all reference to the safety laws or, except in relation to accidents between drivers, to speed as a factor in the accidents, has created increasingly among the drivers the belief that these laws and the control of speed are

unnecessary and tyrannical and therefore laws and controls that can and, indeed, ought to be evaded, and this too has taken its place in the vicious circle. As a nation we are placed in the grotesque position of being forced to listen to and practice the degrading gospel of "Safety First" merely for the purpose of increasing the danger. There is no end to the process and there can be no end. Thus, it was not enough that the "responsibility" for child accidents should be placed on the children: the attempt is now being made to place it on their absent parents and guardians: as if more than a fraction of the nation's children or practically any of those of the working class can be accompanied more than very rarely in the streets, and as if parents and guardians generally did not live in a condition of perpetual misery and anxiety because of the dangers to their children. The "education" campaign that refuses to rebuke the drivers for breaking the law rebukes the parents when their children are killed or maimed. The final infamy of the attempt is that it was begun in the war period when most of the parents and guardians of young children were in the Forces or on war work. It is almost

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\* In view of the still widespread misinterpretation of these figures, it should, perhaps, be pointed out that the rise in casualties was not "due to the blackout," since the daylight figures were even worse. Nor was it due to the service vehicles, since in the later stages of the war, the casualties diminished again. (1944: 6,400 road deaths). The big increase began immediately after the start of the war and was limited to the first two years, when civilian traffic, including much private motoring, predominated.

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interesting to speculate on whom the "education" campaign may try to blame next. The one thing certain is that it will not be the drivers.

## B. THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS

There is a fairly general misunderstanding of the character, as well as of the aims, of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents- the organisation formed to carry out "safety propaganda" and since largely employed by the Government for the purpose- and it is necessary first to say a word on this.

(1) The Royal Society was founded in 1916 by the late Sir Herbert Blain, General Manager of the London General Omnibus Co. and the Underground Group, now united in the London Passenger Transport Board. It was founded as the "London Safety First Council." The Royal title was granted early in the war, i.e. as has been shown, at a time when dependence on "education" was providing its worst exhibition so far of mischievous futility. The national "road safety" i.e. "educational" campaign was launched in 1925, but this was merely an extension of previous activities of the same kind. The Royal Society has also large industrial and domestic sections, and its role here similarly is to advocate voluntary as opposed to compulsory safeguards. (2) Key positions on the road safety side of the Royal Society, and indeed in the Society as a whole, are held generally by persons prominent in the motor world. Thus, in the period 1932-35 the President of the Society was the founder, the late Sir Herbert Blain, and he was succeeded for a period of two years by the motor salesman, Mr. Gordon Stewart, who previously had been Honorary Treasurer. The contemporary President is Lord McGowan, head of the I.C.I.. whose only discoverable comment on the motor slaughter made at the Society's 1943 annual meeting, is that "the problem of child deaths seems to be almost unsolvable."\* Similarly, for several years

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\* Viscount Brentford, an earlier president, wrote shortly before his death in 1932: "There really is no answer, and having regard to the years during which we have tried to deal with the question by courtesy and friendliness, and by seeking to make the motorist and the pedestrian more cognisant of one another's rights- a method which has completely failed- I have come to the quite definite conclusion that the State should intervene, that it is its duty to intervene, and that such a step should be taken as may prevent this holocaust of death and injury on the roads." ("Spectator," 14.5.32). But these words do not appear in the Royal Society's propaganda. Lord McGowan has recently been succeeded by the former Minister of Transport, Lord Llewellyn.

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until his death recently, Mr. F. G. Bristow, Secretary of the Commercial Road Users' Association, was Chairman of the Executive. His successor is Mr. Wallace Phillips, head of the Pyrene company, whose fire extinguishers find one of their chief markets among motorists. The

Chairman of the Road Safety Committee is Mr. Fryer, the Secretary of the Automobile Association (an appointment so preposterous as almost to defy description). The late Mr. Bristow and Mr. Fryer were two of the five "representatives" of the Society appointed to the Ministry of War Transport Road Safety Committee, the others being a cycling representative, the honorary solicitor, and the secretary, Lieut-Col. A. A. Pickard. (3) The constitution of the Society is labyrinthine and confusing. Indeed it is possible to ask persons who have held high office in the Society for a number of years to explain it and to receive the reply that they cannot. Nevertheless, it becomes sufficiently clear on examination: (A) The Society has no individual members. The members are various local councils and commercial and other bodies. and it is the "representatives" of these who constitute the actual membership. Since there is no contact between these various councils and bodies on this matter, these "representatives" are entirely unorganised and therefore entirely incapable of initiating or controlling policy, and the larger the Society becomes the more this becomes the case. In short, the members are neither individuals nor, effectively, representatives, so that it is not surprising that for the most part they subside into mere observers. Indeed this curious and stultifying confusion has official backing, the Society's five "representatives" appointed to the Ministry of Transport Road Safety Committee having been appointed as "individual members" of the Society, although (as already shown) in three cases, they are members of the Society as the representatives of big sectional interests. Moreover, as there was no general ballot, they cannot be said to represent the Society either. (B) Although only a proportion of the members attend the various Committees of which the Society is composed- for example, the London Council with a membership of about 260 has an average attendance of between 80 and 90- they remain entirely unwieldy bodies. They meet once a month or once in three months and the proceedings, including usually various social passages (messages of welcome, condolence etc.) last rarely more and often less than an hour. In fact, no impartial observer who has ever attended these meetings will deny that the proceedings are usually futile and frequently farcical, with the same trivial items

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appearing and reappearing on the agenda and the majority of the members sunk in unbroken and apparently slightly bewildered silence. Indeed the impartial observer might well compare these Committees with the mechanical figures that parade every quarter of an hour across the face of a mediaeval town clock. They amuse, but do not instruct. They celebrate, but do not record, progress. (C) The Secretaries of all these Committees are permanent officials of the Society. Essentially the Royal Society has the organisation of a commercial concern, without, however, any active body of shareholders.

It is also significant of the real character of the Royal Society that none of the fairly numerous public persons who have interested themselves in the safety of pedestrians has ever been invited to hold office in the Society, nor has any body representing pedestrians ever been invited to become a member of the national body. On the contrary, the Royal Society invited the Pedestrians Association- a national organisation that has been represented on a number of Government committees- to become a member of the London Council, where it was precluded from any even nominal share in the formation of national policy, but from where its name could be quoted as "a member of the Society" and therefore as a proof of the Society's "completely representative character."

In explanation or defence of its restricted programme the Royal Society always states that its "policy is to refrain from promoting or opposing new legislation or, regulations." Why the Society should have adopted this policy, so obviously disabling of any real effort on its part, has never been explained, nor has it been explained when or by whom the decision was taken. In fact, the "policy" is not even in accordance with the Society's own Memorandum of Association, one Article of which empowers the Society to promote legislation in pursuit of its objects. (It is evident that the decision was taken at a later stage when the motor interests had increased in power and had hardened in their attitude towards road safety). Nor is it in accordance with its attitude towards pedestrians. Twice in recent years the Society has taken steps in the direction of initiating legislation against pedestrians: in 1945, when it placed before the Road Safety Committee of the Ministry of Transport the recommendation referred to above, viz. that it should be made a statutory offence

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\* e.g. War Time Bulletin, No. 12, p.4. 52

for pedestrians to cross roads of more than 40 feet in width within a hundred yards of a pedestrian crossing, and in 1940, when it asked from its member their views on the creation of a similar pedestrian "offence," of crossing any road "within say 25 yards of a pedestrian crossing." But apart from these considerations, the Society's declaration of policy is merely a part-concealment or simulated justification of its real policy, this being of the general character described, viz. to present and deal with the motor slaughter in the terms of "education as the real, or main remedy. \*

### C. "SAFETY FIRST" FOR DRIVERS

As an example of the Royal Society's propaganda may be taken its "War-time Bulletins": it published surveys of the alleged behaviour of the different classes of road-users during the war. Reference will also be made to the Society's "Safe Driving Competitions." The methods employed by the Royal Society in its "Wartime Bulletins" were simple and direct:

First, it based the bulletins on reports of inquests, (2,505 held during the period, September-December, 1940), although everywhere else it is admitted that when they become judicial inquest proceedings on road deaths, and, indeed, on all other fatalities, usually become grossly misleading. (Characteristically, how the inquests were selected- they were about a half of the total held- and what reports were used was not explained). Secondly, it devoted the Bulletins mainly to the "behaviour," i.e. the alleged behaviour of the victims, thus, directly or by implication placing the responsibility for the accidents on the victims i.e. in the great majority of cases on the nondrivers. Thirdly, it distorted the reports. Each of these points deserves amplification:

(1) It has, of course, been recognised on all sides in recent times, that, in respect of all classes of fatalities the coroner's inquest becomes merely mischievous when it attempts to become judicial. The Report of. the Departmental Committee on Coroners (1936) said: " In our opinion, the Coroner's jurisdiction ought to be limited to an investigation of the facts, how, when and where the death occurred.

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\* So moved to admiration were the Automobile Association by the Royal Society's activities in regard to the speed limit that in 1934 they voted the Society £1,000 as part of its own campaign in opposing the measure.

That investigation of facts should be clearly distinguished from the trial of liability whether civil or criminal. The Coroner's Court is not equipped for such an enquiry: its procedure does not include the machinery for the decision of questions *inter partes*. There is no issue of liability properly before the Court and no proper opportunity for the examination of the question of law which an issue of liability, whether civil or criminal, involves. The law provides appropriate tribunals for the settlement of questions of personal responsibility. (p. 33).\* At inquests on pedestrians and cyclists killed on the roads the following particular circumstances are nearly always present. (1) The main-indeed often the only-evidence is that of the driver, or of the driver supported by that of companions in the car, and of course usually this is carefully scrutinised and revised beforehand by the insurance company or the employer. (2) The driver's evidence is accepted with especial readiness in relation to the deaths of children and elderly persons i.e. in the great majority of pedestrian cases. (3) If the circumstances appear to be unpropitious the driver can refuse to give evidence. (4) Almost, invariably the driver is represented by counsel provided by his insurance company or employer, while the relatives of the victim, usually persons of limited means and experience, are seldom so represented. These particular circumstances then, added to the defects common to all inquests, produce inevitably a general gross bias in favour of the drivers. Certainly a small minority of the coroners- to their great honour- have not hesitated to denounce the motor slaughter and to draw attention to the main cause, i.e. the drivers' abuse of speed, but they have been far outweighed by the much greater number who have not hesitated to return "judicial" verdicts of the kind described. Indeed so thoroughly have inquest verdicts come to be identified as being in favour of the drivers, that when open verdicts are returned these are invariably interpreted by the public in this way, and the process is often completed in the courts by the addition of riders. (If any special proof of this general gross bias is desired, it will be found in the fact that not

infrequently drivers who have been actually exonerated at the inquest- or their employers- have large

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\* One of the chief defects of inquest proceedings is their lack of any rules of evidence. It will be remembered that because of this a danger arose of their being misused by the police in cases of suspected murder, and this was in fact the reason why an inquiry was held. Since then the police have tended to limit their participation in inquest proceedings to the smallest possible proportions and this has still further increased their futility as "judicial" tribunals.

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sums in damages awarded against them or settle for damages out of court, and that at times such drivers are prosecuted and convicted). Yet these "Reports" of inquests are described in each of the Royal Society's bulletins as "a representative cross section" of the road situation, and throughout emphasis is placed on the small percentage of verdicts "exonerating" the drivers, though, in fact, the latter is not impressive, viz. 21 per cent in pedestrian deaths.\*

(2) The "behaviour," i.e. the alleged behaviour, of the drivers is examined in detail in only the very small number of accidents in which they were killed. Out of the 74 pages of Bulletins VI-XI, this occupies three and a half pages, the remaining 70 being devoted to the "behaviour" of the non-drivers. In other words, even with the reports of inquests where there has been in the words of the bulletins "no comment"- and these are a majority- the result is construed against the victim. i.e. in the great majority of cases against the nondrivers. Almost completely the impression is created that the victims are to blame, and this not only quantitatively but qualitatively. The impression is created that by being the most often killed, pedestrians are also the most careless of the road- users and that by being by far the least often killed the drivers are by far the most careful of the road-users.

(3) As an example of the distortion of the inquest reports may be taken Bulletin VII. This sets out "Reports" of 217 inquests on child pedestrians under 15 and then "summarises" the results. At the inquests there were 15 verdicts against the drivers (two of manslaughter and 13 of negligence), 109 verdicts with "no comment" and 93 "exonerating" the drivers. In the Royal Society's "summary" there are seven "reports" suggesting some kind of blameworthiness in the drivers, and these include two in which the defect was in the vehicle (without any mention. of the driver's responsibility in this respect), two in which "the road was wet," one in which the car was only "apparently" travelling too fast, and one in which it was a vehicle that the vehicle involved was avoiding that was, "fast driven." Against these, in 200 of the Reports the child victim is blamed directly, and in three an adult with a child is blamed. And the odd seven,

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\* The former Lord Chancellor, the late Lord Buckmaster, made this comment in respect of road deaths: "I think that all coroners courts should be abolished. They are nothing but an, impediment to justice. The verdicts they return are something which is perfectly shocking. I see no reason at all why they should be permitted to function." (7.12.33).

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with no specific mention of blame, include one in which the vehicle "wasdriven slowly" ,and three in which "no one saw what happened."

In the following Bulletins the Royal Society omitted the verdicts and at the same time altered their method of "analysis ", compiling "causes," "circumstances" and "actions" in excess of the number of fatalities. The results were still worse for the non-drivers. As an example may be taken Bulletin XIII. This contains an "analysis" of 126 child fatalities and it sets out 207 "causes," "circumstances" and "actions." None is attributed directly to the drivers, the six attached to the drivers all, suggesting some degree of extenuation viz., "driver, confused," 2; "driver stepped on accelerator instead of brake", 2; and "driver's attention distracted," 2. The weather is given 3, vehicular defects 5, (without any mention of the driver's responsibility in this connection) and "vehicle out of control," 4. Of the remainder, 28 present the child, by inference, as being "responsible" e.g. ",on errand," "on way to school," etc. and 161 attribute blame directly to the children i.e. 35 more than the total of the fatalities: a comfortable margin indeed for the drivers.\* 1



With " facts" such as these to work on, it is not surprising that the Royal Society should be able to draw conclusions about the motor slaughter that are useful in the highest degree to the motor interests and the drivers, and, moreover, to do this with an engaging air of moderation. Thus the main conclusions in the Wartime Bulletins on child accidents are that "few child accidents occur in circumstances of speeding" (VII p. 11) and that, "in almost all cases (reviewed) the driver had little or no opportunity of avoiding the accident" (XIII. 3). Similarly, the main, or rather, in places, the only, remedy put forward, for these accidents, apart from more "training" for the children, is "better supervision and control by parents and guardians." It was concerning these statements that Viscount Cecil observed in the House of Lords: "It seems to me that the man who can write like that is utterly unfit to advise the Government in a question of this kind" (21.10.41): a comment to which the Royal Society has never publicly replied. On pedestrians of over 50 a note of facetiousness is,

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\* Out of 116 similar "Reports" of child accidents published in the Royal Society's Journal "Safety News" between May and October in 1944 one attributed some blame to a driver- but he was the driver of a horse-drawn vehicle. Perhaps in justice it should be added that the part alleged to have been played by speed is mentioned in one of these reports. This refers to the deaths of two children whose pram chassis (it states) "collided with the rear side of a lorry." The Report adds that the children's pram chassis "travelled out of a road at a fast speed."

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introduced. , "The cynic might say" it is observed (1. 8) "that such lives are not worth the saving." "But the fact remains" adds the bulletin, as it were shaking itself back into seriousness "that if the wartime road casualty list during the winter months is to be appreciably curtailed, efforts must be specially concentrated upon this particular aspect," the "efforts" being, of course, efforts to "educate" the elderly pedestrians. Another statement on adult pedestrians is: "In many cases where the victim was killed whilst walking along the middle, of the road, or failed to use a suitable footpath, or walked two or even more abreast on the left hand side of the road, backs to traffic, it certainly appeared that such foolhardiness might be due to unwise indulgence in alcohol" (VIII. p. 9). There was, of course, no evidence of any kind to support this. The writer just made it up; there is no parallel or similar supposition about the drivers. The only practical suggestion in the Wartime Bulletins for the control of the drivers is that "hit and run " motorists should be punished more severely i.e. the drivers who nearly always escape, and even this is put forward with the extenuating remark, several times repeated, that in a number of cases the driver is really ignorant of what has occurred. But perhaps the most significant conclusion in these Bulletins is that while speed is a main or contributory cause in many of the accidents in which only drivers or motor cyclists are involved "loss of control or speed was the main or a contributory cause" it is stated "in the majority" of accidents to drivers- it played no part at all in the accidents to pedestrians and cyclists'(XIII. 1-2). The principle of safety first for the drivers and safety last for the nondrivers could hardly be stated more explicitly.

Finally, as an example of the Royal Society's more discursive propaganda may be taken the following passage from an address by the Secretary, Colonel A. A. Pickard, to a meeting of the Society in 1935:

" Animals have now developed a road sense, but children must still be trained. Thirty years ago dogs preferred to take their nap in the middle of the road. Hens invariably flew across the road in front of your car. The chicken of today, however, hatches out with an instinct of road sense. It flies into the hedge, not into the road. Dogs are equally wary. You will see them look before crossing. They recognise the warning of the horn and stop, or even get back to the pavement. The game of 'last across the road' has almost been stamped out, but it may be many generations before babies are born with a road sense instinct."

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In short, the Royal Society places children on a lower level than dogs and chickens. Incidentally, it has been estimated that about 10,000 animals and birds are killed on the roads of Britain every day. Dog-owners know well how far this canine "road sense," or their own care, is a protection against the fast-driven cars.

This, then, is the Society that has come to be recognised by the Government as the official agency for road safety propaganda and to which it is proposed all future road safety propaganda should be entrusted. It is also the Society to which the Government has paid over a long period an annual subsidy of £15,000. What a paradise this country is indeed for the vested interests: we pay them to exploit us.

#### D. EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

According to the statistics of the Registrar General\* in the period 1930-35, there was a reduction in the number of child (under 15) deaths due to motor vehicles of 545 (1,639 to 1,094) compared with a reduction in the older age groups of 439 (5,817 to 5,378), and this was followed by small re-increases in both classes up to the outbreak of the war and then by the disastrous early war years.+ This slightly larger decrease in the child deaths as contrasted with the old age groups is even today- after the lesson of the early war years- celebrated as "a great success" for the "safety first education" in the schools. Of course, there is not the slightest justification for this.' There were the other practical measures adopted during the period: the erection of barriers outside schools, the increased police supervision of crossings, the provision in some areas of "play streets" etc., etc. It is also reasonable to believe that it was the children

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\*There are no Ministry of Transport child accident statistics up to 1937 and none from any source to date subdividing these statistics into pedestrians, cyclists and passengers. The Registrar-General's statistics include the three groups; the Ministry statistics published from 1937 onwards, the first two.

+ The statistics published in the latest Bulletin of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents-No. 19, "How 1,400 Children Died in Road Accidents" - and the impressive graph showing an unbroken decrease in child accidents from 1930 to the outbreak of the war are inaccurate. Nor, in its claim that the child "education" campaign "reaped a rich reward" in the period does the Bulletin mention the parallel drop in the older age groups or the various practical measures mentioned above. The Bulletin represents a final and complete application of the methods described above of describing the accidents solely in the terms of the behaviour of the child victims and therefore exhibiting them as "responsible."

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who gained most from the positive safety measures in the 1930 and 34 Acts, especially the better enforcement of the speed limits on commercial and public service vehicles after 1930 and the introduction of the 1934 speed limit in built-up areas, as well as from the disappearance described of the 95,200 motor cycles from the roads after 1930. It was indeed after 1930 and 1934 respectively that the two major decreases occurred in the child deaths (1930-31: 1,639 to 1,469; 1934-35: 1,294 to 1,094). This is not to say that children cannot be taught "the principles of safety first." Children can be taught anything: they are the easiest targets for regimentation: as was shown by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and has been shown throughout history by various baleful excursions into school and home training. But, as must be emphasised again, the inherent viciousness of the existing "safety first education" is that while (at whatever cost) it may induce extra care in the children it induces a still greater lack of care in the drivers, so that the total danger is increased.

But there are further debit items. In the first place this "education" is the worst possible training for the children as the drivers of the future since it teaches them to believe that the driver is the master of the road and that the only role for the other road-users, including the youngest children and the oldest and most infirm persons, is to keep out of his way and that if they are killed or maimed through not doing so this is something they deserve. Much of the motor slaughter may, indeed, be traced directly to the yearly appearance on the roads of young drivers brought up in this evil and destructive belief. Secondly, it is the worst possible training for the children as the citizens of the future, i.e. that they should be taught to accept the spectacle of the motor slaughter, with all its implications. as normal and as something to which they must submit without question. The spectacle of children passing from, one classroom where they have been told about the "great traditions of British freedom" to another where a police officer tells them that unless they keep out of the way of the motorist they will be killed or maimed and, by implication, will deserve to be, is neither pleasant nor encouraging. In fact, this training represents in one of its most acute and immediate forms the danger referred to above, of the motor slaughter becoming a breeding-ground for antisocial and Fascist ideas: it is not unfair to assume that the "Safety First" training in the schools and (elsewhere) played a

definite part in helping to create support for the "Safety First" politics of the late '30s. The general argument was the same: appeasement. This

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is leaving aside the great waste of public money and time involved in the use of school hours for this purpose.

The question of the general effects of this "education" on the minds of young children hardly lies within the scope of this work, but brief reference to it may be made:

A simple child  
That lightly draws her breath  
And feels her life in every limb,  
What should she know of death?

Everything, say the "education" propagandists. Put the idea of death and destruction deep into their minds. Never let them forget it. Fill their lives with it. Teach them fear. Make them frightened and keep them frightened. When launching his "Child Road Sense Crusade" in 1936, which was planned to reach children down to the age of three, the motor salesman and former president of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, Mr. Gordon Stewart, said at a meeting of the Society: "We aim to make the child the sub-conscious guardian of his own safety." It is possible that Mr. Stewart had no very clear idea of what he was talking about when he used these terms; but the terrible intention was none the less clear: to fill the children's minds completely with the fear of cars and death+ Largely, it is to ensure that the children never forget these terrors that police officers are employed as "road safety" instructors: as the Interim Report of the Ministry of Transport Road Safety Committee puts it: "Lessons taught by the police come back to the minds of the children whenever they see a policeman " (Para.

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\*That the spirit of our children has not been entirely crushed by this "education" was amusingly illustrated by a complaint made in the House of Commons (3.3.38) by Sir Wavell. Wakefield, M.P. Sir Wavell explained that a motorist had driven "by mistake" into a "playground street" in Glasgow and as a consequence had been mobbed by the children of the neighbourhood and had his car "considerably damaged." He therefore urged that such streets should be "adequately sign-posted." How ready are the motorists to appeal to the law when it is they who are threatened- even by children!

+ There was a peculiarly disgraceful example of this in North Kensington, London, on June 26th, 1938, when 600 school children were given a special half day's leave to attend the funeral of a school fellow who had been killed on the road, in order "to impress on their minds" the dangers of the roads, the dead child thus, by implication, being held up as a "horrible example." An address on road safety was delivered to the children by the local vicar. On the other hand, a sensible use of "horror" treatment, is made in some U. S. cities, where reckless drivers are taken on personally conducted tours of the local morgues. A large number of motorists have protested' vehemently against this. None protested against the children's "horror" funeral.

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70a). The motorist and the policeman: these are to be the chief, or the only figures in the lives of young Britain, and this in an age in which Freedom from Fear has been recognised as one of the fundamental human rights.

At a Safety First conference for children in London in 1938 a police sergeant sang the following song to his young audience:

At your work or play  
At any time of day  
Don't forget you must  
Practice Safety First.

To put the point very mildly, this is a poor substitute for Wordsworth.

## E. THE POLICE AND " EDUCATION "

It should hardly be necessary to point out how completely absurd and mischievous is the participation of the police in the activities of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Certainly, in some areas they confine themselves to a relatively passive role, attending the meetings but taking little or no part in the discussions and avoiding pronouncing opinions on the conduct of the different classes of road-users, but in others the participation is direct and active with, in some cases, the Chief Constable or some other leading police official acting as the local secretary, and it is proposed that \*this participation shall be increased. How absurd and mischievous indeed is police participation in a campaign that is aimed at reducing or superseding the safety laws, especially the most important of them- the speed, limits; how absurd and mischievous this close and intimate "co-operation" with the representatives of the motorists-the lawbreakers! Less effective enforcement of the safety laws by the police is of course inevitable in these circumstances and so is the misuse by the police of their powers of "advice," and "warning," since even these tend to be used decreasingly against the drivers and increasingly against the non-drivers. The not infrequent spectacle on the roads of police officers admonishing pedestrians and cyclists, who, at the worst, have committed no legal offence while swarms of drivers race by breaking the law in every direction typifies the extraordinary and general confusion. So, in a more amiable form., does the spectacle of police officers supervising the crossing of roads by children, while taking no notice of the law-breaking of the drivers that so largely

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makes the supervision necessary. But even under the best direction. the use by the police of these extra-legal powers is a matter of great delicacy (as it is, of course, in any direction) and at the most should be regarded as only a temporary expedient. Always there will be the two dangers: on the one hand, of a weakening of the enforcement of the law, and, on the other, of an undue extension of the powers of the police. In connection with road safety, the latter consideration has been overlooked, attention having been concentrated from both sides on the question of the enforcement of the law, but, clearly, it is undesirable that the police should be invested permanently with vague and unlimited powers of "advising" and "warning" the ordinary citizens according to the judgment of individual police officers. As is pointed out below, the situation has already become much too close to the Nazi system of "The Policeman-our Friend" to be healthy; for the first sign of a well-ordered State is that the police are restricted to the single task of enforcing the law. No doubt, police road patrols will always be necessary, just as is the ordinary police patrolling of certain streets and areas; but even these should be eventually reduced to a minimum; for the second sign of a well-ordered State is that the police are never too visible. Moreover, there is also the question of the expense.

Before the war (and apparently the position still obtains) the position with regard to the police and "education" became so confused that the Chief Constable of Lancashire, who, for a time, brought about a 40 per cent reduction in the number of road casualties in his County through the use of massed police patrols, actually attributed the success of his scheme, at least in public, to his patrols having in the main restricted themselves to "advice" and "warnings," as if the success had not been due to the fact that the patrols were police, with the power to prosecute, and as if the mere sight of police is not always sufficient to produce the most immediate effect on the drivers.

## F. "SAFE-DRIVING COMPETITION"

Finally a note on the Royal Society's "Safe-Driving Competitions," for drivers other than owner-drivers.

This competition is of the most publicised character. The bestowal of-the awards is invariably a civic or even a governmental occasion and the awards themselves are decorative and colourful in

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the highest degree. Besides Certificates, there are Silver, Bronze, Gold and Enamel Medals and Brooches, with Ribbons and Bars, Corresponding Bars and Oak Leaves-an unfortunate choice-

and finally a 25 year Brooch or a 25 year Cross- this an especially impressive decoration, looking at a distance rather like a George Cross, surrounded by Oak Leaves- and then, after this, a Bronze Badge, to be worn on the Ribbon of the 25 years Cross "for each further year of Safe Driving." The details fill a large page of small print and the instructions are meticulous, e.g. "With the 20 years Brooch will be issued a new length of ribbon for the Gold Medal, and it is intended that a driver on receiving, this 20 years Brooch shall remove from his Gold Medal, the ribbon with the 15 years Brooch and the corresponding Bars he has previously worn, which can be worn separately."

In the first place, then, it might well be asked whether the time has not long since gone by- if indeed it ever existed- for any competition of this kind, at any rate for a competition of this highly publicised and decorative character; whether, in fact, we should not have long since have reached a stage when safe driving was regarded as normal and not as something to be singled out as exceptional and deserving of medals and acclamation; and whether, therefore, a competition of this kind is not positively mischievous in providing an excuse for or extenuation of unsafe driving. In other directions we do not criticise people who do not win medals and public acclamations; we regard them as merely normal; and to a considerable extent, at least this must be the attitude towards unsafe driving created by a competition of this nature. But it is the conditions of the present "competition" that demand immediate attention.

Without doubt, it is the general- apparently it is also, often, the official- impression (A) that the awards are made only to drivers who have been entirely free from (a) convictions and (b) accidents, and (B) that the "competition" is conducted under the most rigorous conditions with the Royal Society carefully scrutinising every application. The facts are very different.

(A) Neither (a) convictions nor (b) accidents disqualify the drivers, but only:

(a) Convictions for "reckless or dangerous driving " or "driving under the influence of drink or drugs," with the added, but exiguous condition- added, moreover, only within the past four years- that regard " must be given to convictions for "careless driving " and

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that a statement must be made giving "an indication of the reasons for ignoring such conviction."

(b) Accidents in which they are "in any way blameworthy."

Thus a driver may (a) be convicted an indefinite number of times for a large variety of road offences, including breaking the speed limits, driving without due consideration, disregarding pedestrian, crossings, disregarding traffic signals and police directions etc. etc. and (b) so long as he escapes blame, be involved in an indefinite number of accidents and kill and maim an indefinite number of persons, and yet be acclaimed and exhibited each year as a safe driver, or, to use some of the phrases commonly employed, as "a hero of public safety," "a guardian of the public," "an example of British driving" etc. etc. At the same time his employer is able to boast of the "high standards of driving maintained in his organisation."

Indeed the Royal Society is so little concerned to secure obedience to the safety laws- it regards law-breaking by the drivers with such equanimity- that it actually recommends its "safety driving" awards to drivers on the ground that they are useful in the event of prosecution: to use the tactful words of the Royal Society's circular to the drivers, an award is "a useful testimonial to your skill if you are unfortunate enough to be involved in a prosecution." At the present moment (1946) this disgraceful recommendation is being prominently displayed in the Royal Society's "Safety First Exhibition" now touring the country, and it is being so displayed without arousing protest or even comment: an example indeed of the fantastic confusion surrounding the whole question of the motor slaughter as well as the activities of the Royal Society.

It is also an example of the fantastic confusion surrounding the "competition" that the condition stipulating the return of "an indication" for ignoring convictions for "careless driving" does

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\*As was explained above, this section-in substantially the form given here was circulated among local authorities by the Pedestrians' Association in October last in the form of a pamphlet. As a result of this, late in November- when this work was already in type and about to go to Press- the Royal Society announced that as from January 1, 1947, there would henceforward be added to the disqualifications (A) convictions for careless driving and (B) "any other conviction for an offence which is prejudicial to public safety." But, of course, (B) is entirely disingenuous, since- as with the "Competition" generally- the final adjudication is left to the drivers employers. The remaining legal offences e.g. breaking the speed limits, ignoring pedestrian crossings etc. were, of course, created precisely because they represent actions "prejudicial to public safety" and in sidetracking them in this way the Royal Society reveals once more, only too clearly, "the spirit of the competition" to which it appeal and the fact that, in practice, the new "condition" will mean very little indeed or nothing at all.

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not appear in the ordinary entry form and that it contains the extraordinary phrase, set out in black type, that the entrant must be shown to be "entirely free from blame," i.e. that drivers who have been convicted of "careless driving" must be shown to be "entirely free from blame" in respect of the convictions.

It is, difficult to imagine what precisely this extraordinary phrase is supposed to mean or what the Royal Society has in mind using it. As it stands, it means it is a public declaration by the Royal Society that drivers in unstated but presumably large numbers have been and will continue to be wrongly convicted of "careless driving;" that it is the right of a convicted driver's employer to sit in judgment on the conviction and if he considers, it wrong- and here he has a strong motive for doing this- to say so publicly (giving only "an indication" of his reasons); and that it is the right of the Royal Society to reject the verdict of the court and to accept instead the employer's "judgment" and on this recommendation to treat the convicted driver as being "entirely free from blame." This is not merely contempt of court: it is a rejection of the courts altogether.

In connection with (a) the remarks of a previous Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Philip Game, may be recalled: "No offences against the Road Traffic Act are merely technical offences. Nearly everyone is a potential source of accident." (1936 Report, page 11). In connection with (b) it is of course everywhere admitted that drivers wrongfully escape blame in countless numbers of accidents in which they are involved.

(B) It is the employers who prepare, and send in to the Royal Society, the "duly certified returns" of the drivers who have "qualified" for awards (Rule 5). Thus, apart from seeing that the "duly certified returns" are outwardly in order, the Royal Society acts as little or no more than a distributing agency.

It will, of course, be realised that employers, and especially large employers of drivers have the strongest possible incentive to secure as many as possible of these awards, since they are of use in every direction, not least in helping to establish a general reputation for safe driving that can be quoted in cases of claims for damages and in proposals for speeding up schedules.

Another feature of the competition is that it contains no permanent disqualification. Thus a driver may be guilty of the most atrocious offences and be the acknowledged cause of the most atrocious accident and yet merely be interrupted for a period in his developing

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career as a "safe driver." After this period, which, in respect of the lower awards, is only a year, he resumes his accumulation of awards. Nor, of course, is there any retrospective disqualification. So far as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents is concerned the rule is-once a "safe driver" always a safe driver.

And here are examples of the drivers who are given these awards:

"A Post Office telephone fitter convicted of dangerous driving in an accident in which a child was killed was stated to hold the National Safety First Association ' Silver Medal with three bars ' for safe driving." (14.6.38).

"A London bus driver for 22 years, holder of several Safety First Certificates, and never summoned before, was convicted at the Mansion House, London, of what the Lord Mayor described as a 'perfectly wicked' piece of driving. It was stated that while a line of traffic was being held up by a constable to allow pedestrians to cross the bus driver drove past stationary vehicles and knocked down two girls who were crossing." (2.1.42).

"A Green Line coach driver fined for driving without reasonable care and consideration for other persons using the road was stated to hold three Safety First certificates. It was stated that he had been convicted of dangerous driving in 1930 and had had six convictions for excessive speed and another for failing to conform to a traffic sign."(27.4.38).

A full list of the drivers with these awards., with all the accidents in which they have been involved and all the convictions recorded against them, would indeed be a formidable document.

In short, so far from providing an incentive to safe driving, these safe driving "competitions" provide an incentive to unsafe driving, besides being an insult to the genuinely safe drivers and a deception on the public. The description of these awards as " bloodstained" is not an exaggeration.

#### IV. ROADS AND ROAD " IMPROVEMENTS"

The first remedy for the motor slaughter proposed by the motor interests is, them "education." The second is the construction and "improvement" of roads. By this means, say the motor interests, two results can be achieved (1), safe conditions for driving and (2) segregation," i.e. the physical separation of the different classes of road users, and this, together with "education," they say- different groups attach different degrees of importance to the two "remedies" makes up the real safety programme. Outwardly this road and road "improvements" propagandism is even more friendly to the other road users than is "education": it does not even ask for "courtesy," "consideration," "seeing the other fellow's point of view," etc. etc.: it merely blames the' roads and the Government for not constructing and "improving" more. "Why need we quarrel?" genially exclaim the motor propagandists to the other road users. "Why all these recriminations ? None of us is really to blame. . It's the roads that make the accidents. Let us therefore all unite in the friendliest way and assault the tax-and rate-payers."

(1) The facts here, as exhibited by the factual statistics issued in the Ministry of Transport Reports, are set out above, but as a further illustration may be recounted the tragi-comic story of Mr. G. T. Bennett,\* the County Surveyor of Oxfordshire, and this, as will be found, is of special interest in connection with the latest official "road safety" proposals:

Early in 1937 the country was startled by the announcement that in the previous year, solely by means of road "improvements," Mr. Bennett had reduced the deaths in his county by nearly half, from 52 to 29. Mr. Bennett explained that he had been carrying out investigations during the past four years and during this time, he said, solely through his now executed road "improvements," the accidents could have been reduced by three-fourths. The results of the investigations Mr. Bennett set out in a handsomely printed report of 65 pages, with an analysis of 148 accidents and nearly 40 pages of diagrams. It was true that the number of injured in 1936 had increased from 868 to 1931; that the 52 road deaths in 1935 was a record; and that it is never safe to generalise from single figures. It was also true that some of the other County Surveyors had come to exactly the opposite conclusion: that, for example, the County Surveyor of Hampshire, Lieut.-Col. A. C. Hughes, in his report for the same year, drew special attention to an increase of 73 per cent in fatal accidents at "improved places" against no increase at all at "non-improved places" and an increase of 33 1/2 per cent in non-fatal accidents at improved places " against a decrease of 8 1/4 per cent at "non-improved places"; and that he added the comment that accidents due to careless driving (he put these at two-thirds of the total "seemed to increase

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\* Now Lt-Col. Bennett.

as road conditions ate improved." But these facts were swept aside in the general rejoicing of the motor interests. Here indeed was the dawn of a Golden Age, (financed by the tax- and rate-payers). Here indeed was the final answer to the "anti-social elements who blamed the "persecuted" drivers. (How popular the word "persecuted" was to become in international politics in the next two years, and for how similar reasons!) Here, indeed, was "proof," and from the very county, from which Viscount Nuffield's cars radiated out over the roads of Britain. To complete the picture, Mr. Bennett also denounced speed limits and pedestrians. "If," he wrote "legislation were passed prohibiting very fast speeds, and could be enforced, the effect on the accident rate would be negligible" and he recommended by-passes "to lessen the chance of a through-motorist travelling at a legal but possibly unsafe speed of 30 m.p.h.colliding with a jay walker". The excitement was immense. There was not a motor correspondent who did not put a copy of Mr. Bennett's Report by the side of his Bible, when he had a Bible. No motor article in the Motor or the daily Press was complete without a reference to the Report. Mr. Bennett was News. Above all, Mr. Bennett was welcomed to the Annual Conference of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. But the following year (1937) the road deaths in Oxfordshire increased again to 46 and the next year (1938) they were back at the record figure of 52 and Mr. Bennett passed once more into relative obscurity.

The following comment by the Assistant Police Commissioner of the Metropolis, Sir Alker Tripp, is also of interest, especially as Sir Alker is not only a leading police authority on road safety but has devoted particular attention to town and road planning:

"Improvement must always be selective and cautious. Country lanes that are narrow and winding can as a rule remain narrow and winding; they are safer so. Their office is to serve the need of the countryside and every single 'hazard' in their course steadies the speed of vehicles and discourages invasion by the fast driver. So called improvements will often build up an accident record on a road that has been virtually accident free; the road had previously been so dangerous as to be safe. The sound plan in most cases is to label the dangers quite clearly and to allow them to remain as check upon undue speed."\*

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\*"Town Planning and Road Traffic," by H. Alker Tripp (Edward Arnold and Co. 1942-3), p.95.

And this rule, that in the present conditions of uncontrolled speed, "better" roads are metely more dangerous roads, is true, of course, also of new roads, however well constructed, when they have fulfilled their function of attracting a large volume of traffic. The position was well summed up by a pre-war Governor of New Jersey, U.S.A. and ex-Commissioner for Motor Vehicles in the State, in the words: "The better the roads the more we kill."

(2) It needs only a moment's consideration to see that this is mere moonshine. In fact, as will be found, when "segregation", is put forward in a precise form as a safety measure, it is always accompanied by admissions that, to some extent at least, it is impossible, and that, even to this extent, it cannot be achieved for a very long period, or, incidentally, without vast expense. (But this does not prevent the motor propagandists from invariably referring to it as a completely practical proposition or from complaining that it has not been carried out already or from treating this as a legitimate excuse for the drivers behaving as if it had been carried out. Nor does it prevent a considerable, number of the drivers from acting in this way). It is indeed difficult to refer to this proposal in the ordinary language of moderation, but, at the risk of absurdity, the following facts may be pointed out. (a) In the residential areas, where the majority of the accidents, and nearly all those to pedestrians, now occur there will always be large numbers of pedestrians, i.e. the residents, going about their ordinary business and requiring reasonable freedom of movement: the condition to which, in fact, the motor interests and the hostile drivers object. (b) There is no chance of even minor changes of any kind being carried out for a very long period in the vast majority of the tens of thousands of roads and streets in our cities, towns and villages. This is not a result of the war, but of the simple impossibility of first wiping out and then entirely rebuilding our cities, towns and villages. (c) There is no room in the tens of thousands of roads and streets for the innumerable bridges and subways for pedestrians that the motor interests put forward as "temporary " safety measures.

In short by "segregation" the motor interests mean simply the removal from the roads of the



other road-users in the interests of the drivers, just as by the construction and "improvement" of roads they mean the construction and "improvement" of roads for the sole convenience of the drivers, this propaganda being merely the demand for more and "better" roads at the public expense put forward in the hypocritical guise of a safety programme.

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It may be added that when the task is properly taken in hand through town-planning it will not be the pedestrians, i.e. the residents, but the cars that will be "segregated": it will be the cars and not the pedestrians that will go underground and overhead. The planned cities of the future will not consist of speed tracks for fast traffic, but will be places where people can live in civilised conditions and reasonable security. It will be interesting then to discover how far the motor interests believe in their own proposal.

So far the Government have been relatively unresponsive to this proposition that more roads and road "improvements" provide a major remedy for the motor slaughter, though, as will be found, a change is indicated or urged in the latest Ministry of Transport pronouncement, the Interim Report of its Road Safety Committee. For example, in the Ministry of Transport "attributed to" statistics referred to above, the percentage of accidents attributed to road conditions was .9 (1937 Report), and before the war Ministers of Transport made frequent use of this figure, and of similar preceding figures. In this direction alone the Government has refused to listen to the views of the motor interests. But this cannot be attributed to any real change in their general attitude to the motor slaughter, any clearer or more candid recognition of its real causes. It is the historic power of the Treasury and not an intelligent view of the motor slaughter that has stood in the way of the grandiose road plans of the motor and road interests. It is the chilling shadow of its formidable neighbour that has caused this estrangement between the Ministry of Transport and its usual companion or controller, the motor interests.

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A subsidiary line of defence or attack by the motor interests is to represent the road situation as something that is extraordinarily complicated and mysterious; something that can be understood only by "experts" and by them only with the utmost difficulty. It is one of the favourite tricks of the motor interests, when public opinion is temporarily aroused and the position appears threatening to call for "a thorough scientific enquiry into the whole position": "let us really find out" they say "what are the real fundamental causes" etc. etc. ; and then when the enquiry is held, to befog it with still more "expert" evidence, so that the final report, if there is one, is even worse than its predecessors and the situation is left in an even worse state of confusion. Indeed, to judge by some of the motor propagandists, a man who has been run over by a car ought to call in an "expert" before saying even that he has, in fact, been run over. But, wisely or unwisely, the British people do not like experts and this kind of propaganda is used only sparingly.

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#### 4. THEIR SPIRITUAL HOME

So far as road safety is concerned, the spiritual home of the British motor interests is Nazi Germany. What a country that was! it had everything ; fines for pedestrians; exhibitions of "jay walkers"; "strict discipline" for cyclists; but, above all, a firm reliance on "education": for "education" was part of the general Nazi system and it is in Nazi Germany that we may study it in its full form.

First, we may recall the deep admiration of the motor correspondents.. For example, in January 1937, when the Nazis carried out "a great public safety drive," we were told that they did this "with characteristic energy." At the head of it was Herr Himmler, "friendly but firm and efficient." "Herr Himinler, when I met him" added this correspondent "gave the impression that everything he did would be done with great thoroughness and care for detail." The writer also quoted with approval Herr Huchnlein, head of the police motor squadrons and organiser of the campaign of "traffic education" when he said: "We are changing the way of thinking of the nation. The common interest before self-interest is becoming part of the thinking daily life of our

people." ("We must place the responsibility for road safety equally on all classes of road users " is the way this is said in Britain).

Especially admired by the British motor and road correspondents and "experts" were the Nazi-built motor-ways, of which Hitler's armies shortly afterwards made so effective a use. In 1938 a party visited Germany and after inspecting the motor-ways and receiving Nazi hospitality returned loud in praise and equally loud in demands for motor-ways for Britain. Here, they declared, was the real way to safety. The pedestrian representative dissented, but, of course, was ignored. But, in fact, he was right. To quote the Berlin correspondent of the Manchester Guardian (16.4.37): The accident rate on the motorways proved "surprisingly high" and this "in spite of the relatively small mileage"- and this "at once disposed of optimistic ideas that by building 'safe' roads accidents can be eliminated." The correspondent added: " It is clear to anybody who has been on the open sections at all holiday time, or on a Sunday, when there is a fair amount of traffic on them, that the danger of accidents, mainly caused by overtaking at high speed, is very considerable."

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The following comment in the British motor journal Autocar (12.2.37) on other aspects of the use of motorways is also of interest:

"A friend who has just returned from Germany tells Me that there is one crab about these roads- crab from both the car makers' and the motorists' points of view. It is that, since mile after mile can safely be taken all out- there are no road-crossings except by bridges or tunnels- the average car simply won't stand up to the pace, and 'expensive' noises are too frequently heard . . . Tyre bursts, too, have been over-plentiful and that sort of thing at 70-100 m.p.h. is not so funny. Perhaps, after all, there is something to be said for our British roads, on which, in a fast car one has to tread simultaneously on the throttle and the brake pedals!"

The Nazi "road safety" programme was in fact based on the "People's Car": just as ours is based on the "Cheap Car." In practice, the People's Car scheme was a fraud, but there is no doubt that Hitler believed in it, and, in happier circumstances, would have carried it out. Cars have always had a peculiar fascination for the gangster mind. To the gangster the possession of a car has always seemed the most delightful way possible of expressing and exhibiting personal power and distinction: it is recorded that this was one of the most notable characteristics of the American gangsters in their heyday: and Hitler was no exception. A keen motorist himself he was determined that the Master Race should also be motorists: the Nazi Boss in the big car was the natural successor, to the Nietzschean Man on Horseback and all good little Nazis were to have at least a Volkswagen.

Here, then, are some of the Nazis' "road-safety" methods: fines for "careless walking," collectable on the spot; "endangering traffic" and crossing against the amber made punishable offences; special tracks for cyclists; riding with one hand on the handle bars and riding two abreast made offences. In one week in Berlin (December, 1934) 4,627 cyclists were summoned and verbally admonished or temporarily deprived of their machines.

But it was " education " on which the Nazis really relied. The campaign was based on the slogan "The Policeman our Friend" (i.e. precisely the slogan on which the recent "road safety" campaign in Britain was based) and its aim (again like ours) was to create "a new public conscience." As one of our motor correspondents put it at the time: "The Nazis are getting at the heart of the problem in aiming to develop a disciplined united public which can decide for

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itself what is 'done' and what is simply 'not done'." As a further link between "The Policeman, Our Friend" and the public was formed the National-Socialist Kraftfahr Korps, with a membership of 500,000. It was N.S.K.K. men (they also had the task of popularising motor travel and sport) who patrolled the roads, especially at week-ends, stopping offenders and giving them verbal and printed advice, but never initiating prosecutions. There was also continuous propaganda in the Press, on the Radio, by films, in newspaper articles etc. and in the schools: all in fact exactly like the proposals in the Interim Report of the Ministry of War

Transport Road Safety Committee and the programme of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Concerning this propaganda an N.S.K.K. pamphlet insisted: "The approach must be definite, but not 'preachy'." How familiar indeed it all is!

Very pronounced was the role of the pedestrians in this "education" propaganda. For example, there was a "Pedestrians Day" (26.6.38), when propaganda officials "wandered about" among the traffic in Berlin with their heads covered with waste-paper baskets or buried in newspapers. As "types of jay-walkers" were also created the Blindganger (Blindgoing) family, and these figured in a number of humorous films. How the simple burghers of Berlin and the other German cities and towns no doubt laughed at these displays of Nazi humour: those simple burghers who were about to die on the battlefields of Russia and the West and under the bombs of the Allies, and for not dissimilar reasons! But the bluff or jovial approach to the motor slaughter was always favoured by the motor propagandists in Nazi Germany, just (as will be seen) as it is in Britain.

Of course, the drivers were not entirely excluded: even in Nazi Germany it was impossible to conduct a "Safety Campaign" without blaming the drivers at all. For example, there was a Drivers' Day in Berlin, when two cars were driven through the city, one obeying and the other disobeying the various regulations, and, characteristically, the latter won, with a gain of seven minutes. There were also experiments in a small number of cities and towns in throttling down the engines of cars to speeds of between 30 and 40 m.p.h. Finally, Hitler himself rebuked the drivers for causing smashes on his motorways by speeding, but, characteristically, he added: "It is a sad thing that nearly all the motorists can afford the ten, twenty or thirty minutes they may save by speeding over long distances." (What a safety slogan that would make for the drivers! "Drive fastonly

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when it is essential" i.e., whenever you like). In fact, Hitler and the Nazis continued to rely on "education" and the road casualties continued to mount to the record totals noted above.

The immediate reason for the Nazi policy?

"In the way of traffic regulations the Germans have spared no effort to, promote safety, except, of course, the enforcement of speed limits. That would not be greatly favoured here, as the Germans are determined to take full advantage of the possibilities of motor transport. The problem of speed with safety will, they hope, be near a solution when the national system of two-way motor roads is completed" (Times, Berlin Correspondent. 3.6.36).

And the deeper reason?

"The power of this State does not rest on administration and dead machinery but on the persuasion and education of people . . . The new State machine, which in the first months of 1933, was built up in Germany under the cloak of the old constitutional State, arose, with all its cruelty towards individuals, far more through suggestion than violence: the S.A. did not defeat its adversaries, but took them prisoners without a struggle; and Hitler's great personal achievement was to persuade the Nazis that he was already master and that resistance could serve no purpose . . . It was into such an educational State that Hitler wished gradually to remould the old 'legislative State.' He took his first measure in this direction ... when he erected a Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda and entrusted it to Dr. Josef Goebbels." (Der Fuehrer, by Konrad Heiden, pp. 447-448).

Exactly. The Nazis used one of the oldest political tricks in history: they "educated" the people out of a belief in law in order to build up their own tyranny: they appealed to their "noblest sentiments"- their "sense of discipline," "the idea of the united disciplined mind," the aim of the common interest before self interest," etc. etc. etc- in order to establish their own rule of anarchy, and they used exactly the same method on the roads to establish the rule of speed and the drivers, and exactly the same method has been and is being used in this country by the motor interests for the same purpose. In private life it is called the confidence trick. The trickster wins the confidence of his victim to rob him of his money. The motor interests win the confidence of the public to rob them of their safety. In short, "education" is the bogus substitute

for law and reliance on it is the greatest cause of the motor slaughter in Britain

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today. To quote Hitler again: "All programmes are vain. The decisive thing is the human will, sound vision, manly courage, sincerity of faith, the inner will- these are the decisive things." What a motor propagandist that man would have made!

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## 5. THE GOVERNMENT

### I. NON-ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW

The Governments have passed safety laws but not enforced them. As will be found, the laws require re-enforcement and readjustment in certain directions, but, even in their present form, if they were enforced, are capable of bringing about a very substantial reduction in the motor slaughter. But they are not enforced. On three occasions between the two wars (twice in 1934 and once in 1936) the Home Office circulated the lay magistrates (in whose courts the great majority of motor offences are dealt with) on the subject, but no action was taken and the language used was of the gentlest description. Thus, the 1934 Circulars (on the subject of the suspension of driving licences) refrained even from giving direct advice, to say nothing of instruction, and merely quoted "opinion freely expressed in authoritative quarters" that good might result from the more frequent infliction of the penalty. The 1936 Circular began by going a little further and reminding magistrates that it is, in fact, their statutory duty to suspend licences for certain specified offences unless there is "some special reason" against the course, but it hastened to add; "What constitutes a special reason must necessarily be left to each court to decide having regard to all the circumstances": a qualification that, of course, could be held to mean anything and therefore left the position exactly as it was before. In any case nothing was done: it was mere shadow boxing; and this was so clearly recognised that the motor interests staged an agitation against what they called "an unwarrantable attempt at interference with the judiciary by the executive."

Among the lay magistrates occasional signs have appeared of uneasiness at the situation: even occasional gleams of recognition of their special responsibilities in this connection. For example, in 1932 the Council of the Magistrate's Association complained to the Ministry of Transport that the penalties under the 1930 Act were inadequate and asked for increased powers against the drivers. Again, in 1938, when giving evidence before the House of Lords Select Committee, the chairman of the Magistrates' Association, Sir Edward Marlay Samson, emphasised the need for securing convictions in

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manslaughter cases and also stated that magistrates should state in open court their reasons for not suspending or endorsing licences when this course was laid down by statutory law. Finally, individual Benches have at times attempted to carry out their duties honestly, and they have done this, too, in the face or under the threat, of attacks by the, Motor Press and the Motor Correspondents of the daily Press who have used this method of intimidation without scruple.\* But, for the most part, the lay magistrates have taken the fullest possible advantage of the Government's laxity and been guilty of a degree of pro-motoring bias that has brought into the sharpest question their fitness for any of their duties. Clearly, so far from attempting to administer the Safety Laws, many of the magistrates have been concerned merely to protect themselves and their families and friends as motorists. "There" say these motoring magistrates when the defendants appear in the dock, "but for a lucky chance, go I, or -or- etc., and there we may go at any moment in the future," and they return verdicts and inflict contemptuous penalties accordingly; and most of the other magistrates have weakly or stupidly followed their lead or been overborne in the prevailing confusion. Thus, generally, so far from having enforced the safety laws, the lay magistrates have brought them into contempt and provided a perpetual incentive to the drivers to continue breaking them. Before the war a Minister could inform a deputation (and incidentally put this forward as a reason for the inaction of the Government)

that 90 per cent of the magistrates were failing in their duty in this matter and would have to be removed from the bench if that were the disciplinary course decided on. As these pages are being written, a well-known London magistrate, Sir Harry Twyford, has in Court denounced the enforcement of speed limits by the ordinary method of "police traps" as "a dirty trick." On the same occasion this magistrate was described by Press correspondents as "being noticeably reluctant" to suspend driving licences. Here clearly was a case for immediate removal from the Bench, but nothing was done, the incident passing entirely unnoticed by the authorities.

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\* In the first part of his life, Rudyard Kipling, revealed himself as an exponent of these methods, with his story "The Village that Voted the Earth Flat," which described how a group of motorists revenged themselves on a village where they had been fined by the local magistrates for a speed offence. Of course, the Magistrates were "Rads." But Kipling combined the highest genius in short story writing with pre- or semi-Fascist political ideas. Later, private and public griefs taught the perverse genius more humanity and he lived to deplore and write against the motor slaughter.

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As to the frequent refusal of juries to return verdicts of guilty in manslaughter cases arising out of road fatalities, the position is indeed fantastic. For example, in 1938, 130 drivers in England and Wales were prosecuted on this charge. Out of these, 28 cases were dismissed or withdrawn in the summary courts, and out of the remaining 102 committed for trial there were 88 acquittals. But these refusals to convict are at least partly attributable not to any real sympathy on the part of the juries with the offenders but to the confusion surrounding the charge, and to this, too, are to be attributed the light sentences usually inflicted, e.g. in 1938, only one sentence of more than 18 months. Indeed, it has been questioned in the High Court whether under the existing safety laws a charge of manslaughter can be brought at all.

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The judges of the High Court have left no doubt as to their views on the rights and responsibilities of the different classes of road users, the causes of the accidents, the conduct of the drivers and the duties of the magistrates, e.g.:

Mr. (now Lord Chief) Justice Goddard at Manchester Assizes: "No car in an action before the Court ever goes more than 20-25 m.p.h. Even, those which make one jump as they flash by never exceed that speed, and what is more interesting that each driver always hoots three times but neither hears the other." (5.7.34). Again, (giving the judgment of the Appeal Court, dismissing an appeal by a motorist): "For some reason the Court cannot understand but is to be deplored or censured, the magistrates thought proper, instead of committing the appellant to Assizes on a charge of manslaughter, to commit him to Quarter Sessions on charges of dangerous driving and driving when disqualified. The appellant had been convicted of motoring offences on twenty occasions, and the sentences imposed were for the most part wholly inadequate. If such sentences are to be passed on road ruffians, such as the appellant, it is almost hopeless to suppose that there will be any safety on the roads. In addition, he had been guilty of eleven other offences, including larceny, common wounding and assault." (10.12.39).

Mr. justice MacNaghten (in the King's Bench): "Even if a person is reading a book in the roadway that does not entitle a motor driver to run over him. On the contrary it puts on the driver of the car a higher obligation of care." (8.6.29). The late Mr. justice

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Avory (in the King's Bench): "Ninety per cent of the collisions are caused by one or other or both of the cars going too fast." (30.11.29). Lord justice Scrutton (in the Court of Appeal): "People must go (at night) at such a speed that they can pull up within their range of vision, a dictum which is in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Code." (22.6.32). Mr. Justice Humphreys (sentencing a driver to three years penal servitude for manslaughter); "Cases of conduct similar to yours are so appallingly frequent in our Courts that it has become necessary to deal with them with severity." (3.3.38)

Lord Chief justice Goddard has also emphasised especially the duties of the magistrates with reference to the suspension of licences e.g.: in a charge to the Grand jury at Maidstone Assizes (27.6.32): "I commend it to you, as magistrates of this country that where there is any

real suggestion of careless or negligent driving, Benches of Magistrates should exercise their powers rigorously and firmly. More especially they should consider whether or not people who show themselves inconsiderate drivers, and reckless of the safety of others on the roads, should not be deprived for long periods- not merely for a matter of months, but for the matter of years- of their licences to drive on the roads to the peril of His Majesty's subjects." And, again, at York Assizes ('37): "The Act says you 'shall' endorse or suspend, subject to the discretion to be exercised in special circumstances. If Parliament had intended not to circumscribe that discretion it would have said 'may.' What are to be the special circumstances? It seems to me that special circumstances must be circumstances which are special to the case and not to the offender."

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How far this failure, or refusal, of the Government to enforce the law is from tradition and custom in Britain need hardly be stressed. The people of Britain have been trained, in some periods very, painfully, to accept the enforcement of the law as an automatic process a fixed principle of life- and they cannot now believe that with regard to the protection of life and safety on the roads it has been virtually allowed to lapse. Unable to realise the extent of the Government's betrayal they are the more easily induced to believe that the fault lies in the safety laws themselves and that the real remedy lies elsewhere. Nor perhaps is it necessary to stress the gross partiality of the Government's attitude: to picture the vigorous action it would endorse or demand were the non-drivers to take independent defensive action, even if it were only to throw an occasional road hog into the nearest pond or river or burn his car. From this point of view the Government may be said to be acting as a perpetual Non-Intervention Committee, holding down the non-drivers while the drivers assault and kill them.

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Nor even is this all, for the methods used have- grotesquely- induced a certain sense of grievance in the drivers. It is, of course, the inevitable result of penalties too trivial to be deterrent but which when repeated produce a feeling of irritation: an old mistake indeed. A period of genuine discipline will remove both the impulse to break the law and the sense of grievance.

## II. THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

### A. THE WRONG DEPARTMENT

Scarcely less disastrous than the Governments' failure, or refusal, to enforce the safety laws, has been its entrustment of road safety to the Ministry of Transport, since by its nature the Ministry is not only inhibited from effective action but is impelled to action in the opposite direction. Like all other similarly placed Ministries, the Ministry of Transport has worked in the closest association with and largely under the influence of the related financial and commercial interests, here the motor and transport interests, and this to an increasing degree as these interests have grown in wealth and power. But even were the Ministry free from these influences, its position in relation to public safety would be still compromised by the inevitable conflict that exists at present between the "demands of traffic" and the more essential demands of public safety: a conflict that must persist until the general new traffic situation has been finally adjusted to the general life of the nation. In short, the Ministry is in the position of both advocate and judge, with the former role perpetually in the ascendant. The result has, of course, been that while it has made occasional attempts to lessen the motor slaughter- the 1934 Act was the most notable- and while it has also (in the 1933 and 1935 Reports) provided valuable analytical material, its general policy has been overwhelmingly pro-traffic and pro-motorist. Inevitably the common highways have become in the eyes of the Ministry of Transport "traffic lanes" and the pedestrians the "least useful" and the "most troublesome" of the "traffic units." Unrepresentative of any traffic or any com

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mercial interests, the pedestrians i.e. the ordinary users of the common highways, have sunk to the level of intruders who must look after themselves and who receive little or no sympathy if they are killed or injured. In fact it is doubtful whether this control of road safety by the

Ministry of Transport can even be described as constitutional: whether, by any stretch of language, pedestrians can be described or classed as "traffic." The former Lord Chancellor, the late Lord Buckmaster, described the position in this way. "The truth is" he said "that the Ministry of Transport has nothing to do with the foot passenger. The care of these still remains in the Home Office. The Home Office, no doubt, believing that it (the safety of pedestrians) is in the hands of the Ministry of Transport, has sunk into a profound slumber and has done nothing at all; and you certainly will get no help from the Ministry of Transport" But even this, does not describe the situation adequately, since the Ministry of Transport is actively pro-traffic and pro-motorist and the Home Office does little more than act as an apologist for the non-enforcement of the safety laws. A further result of the position has been the acquisition by the Ministry of Transport of dangerous powers in relation to the local authorities: the interests of the local authorities and inhabitants having been sacrificed increasingly to the interests of "fast through-traffic."

## B. DE-RESTRICTION

As an example of the Ministry's policy may be taken its derestriction record: its removal of the 30 m.p.h. speed limit from numerous roads in defiance not only of the clearest requirements of public safety and of the wishes of the localities, including great cities like Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham, but of the terms of its own act and its own pronouncements, and its parallel failure to introduce the speed limits on numerous other roads in the same circumstances.

Even during the passing of the 1934 Act the Ministry was secretly yielding to demands by the motor interests that the statutory area of the new 30 m.p.h. speed limit should be lessened. Evidence of this was provided when, on December 4, 1936, the Parliamentary Secretary, to the Ministry, Captain Austin Hudson, M.P., told a deputation. of London local authorities and other bodies that the Minister in 1934, Mr. Oliver Stanley, had secured the passage of the 1934 Act through Parliament only by promising that the speed limit should not be

applied to "arterial roads." There is not a word in the Act or in Hansard to support this. But it is impossible to believe that the statement represented merely an invention on Captain Hudson's part, so that we must assume that during the passing of the Act a secret agreement of some kind- perhaps larger than that suggested- was in fact reached between the Ministry and the motor interests. Indeed, it might be supposed that the bizarre and largely irrelevant definition of a road in a built-up area ("a road on which a system of streetlighting is provided by means of street lamps placed no more than 200yards apart ") was suggested or dictated by the motor interests, since it prejudiced immediately the position of the numerous unlighted roads through villages- the maintenance of which as unrestricted roads has always been one of their special aims- and created a state of general confusion that could be easily exploited. At any rate that is what occurred. The next step came, soon after the passing of the Act, when the Ministry accepted from the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club and the Royal Scottish Automobile Club a "national survey" they had- with a characteristic assumption of Governmental powers- drawn up of the roads of the United Kingdom in relation to derestriction. The precise part played by this "national survey" is not known, but, in the light of what followed, it cannot have been small. In 1935 came an even worse development, with a disgraceful campaign of intimidation the motor interests launched against local authorities and residents, or, as it might be, said, with the use by the motor interests of a new form of the old highway threat of "your money or your life." The campaign was launched in the motor journal Autocar, which wrote (the campaign being sustained with similar articles in subsequent issues): "Where fair play for motorists is not quickly and willingly granted all car owners should establish a strict boycott of the locality. Boycotts are not pleasant weapons, but on more than one occasion in the past motorists have justifiably employed them with entire success. If we users of motor vehicles cannot get a square deal by friendly methods we shall be forced to turn the economic screw. It will be hard lines on some local trades people, but prompt action on their part will quickly have its reward in custom restored." (22.3.35). So that there should be no doubt as to the areas to be intimidated the paper invited its readers to send in the names of roads they wished to get de-restricted -an example of sheer mob rule- and these were published

in subsequent issues. But even this was not enough: for Autocar also

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invited its readers to send in the names of roads where the lamp-posts "looked suspiciously new," i.e. where its readers might suspect the local authority of erecting lamp-posts in order to qualify for the speed limit, and the names of these roads too were published. Another proposal by Autocar was that drivers should threaten to withhold their cars from "offending localities" at election times. Seaside towns were described by the journal as "foremost offenders" and North Wales and Brighton were singled out for special mention. (29.3.35). It was during this disgraceful campaign that the Minister of Transport, Mr. Hore Belisha, invited Autocar to "cooperate" with him in his derestriction decisions, and the lists of roads sent in by the readers of the paper as "requiring derestriction" were duly-sent to him for his guidance and instruction. Of course, this did not prevent Autocar from continuing to attack the Minister on the question: but there has never been a way of satisfying the blackmailer.

But, throughout, the most important factor has been the conduct of the Ministry of Transport at the local speed limit enquiries it has held under the 1934 Act: its general acceptance of the evidence of the motor organisations- as always, the Automobile Association has been the most active- in preference to that of the local authorities and the public: before the war the Ministry decided at least 75 per cent of the cases enquired into in favour of the motorists. In addition to Liverpool, Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham, the localities whose wishes the Ministry has disregarded have included: Southampton, Cardiff, Plymouth, Edinburgh, Reading, Coventry, Swindon, Stoke-on-Trent, Birkenhead, Wallasey, Worthing, and Gillingham. The Ministry's de-restriction record is not so much one of bureaucratic dictatorship as of the naked dictatorship of private interests.

Here then briefly are the practical results of the Ministry's policy:

Under the terms of the 1934 Act, and its own declarations it is the duty of the Ministry to introduce the 30 m.p.h. speed limit on all roads in all genuinely built-up areas. irrespective of the adopted defini

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\*Lord Elton remarked in the House of Lords (21.4.37); "Clearly it is a very startling paradox, this spectacle of the official protagonist of the drive for greater safety being, repeatedly entreated in vain by great municipalities up and down the country to refrain from setting aside the law."

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tion quoted above, and to withhold it only from roads that conform to the definition but are not in genuinely built-up areas. Actually, as was shown by an analysis carried out shortly before the war,\* a very large number of the roads de-restricted by the Ministry have fallen into one of the following three categories: (A) Roads entirely built-up which the Ministry wish to maintain as corridors for fast-moving traffic. (B) Residential roads entirely or partly built-up and frequently running through or near new housing estates, which the Ministry declared had "special traffic value," e.g. in "linking up radial roads," many of these roads being fronted by public and private institutions of various kinds. (C) Sparsely built-up roads giving access to playing fields, and largely used by cyclists and pedestrians for recreation. Moreover, a very large proportion of the remaining derestricted roads had exceptionally bad accident records. In 1936 alone, the Ministry derestricted 1,292 lengths of roads; on the other hand, it has left unrestricted hundreds of miles of unlighted roads in genuinely builtup areas.

But perhaps the simplest way of judging the derestriction policy of the Ministry i.e. of the motor interests, is by noting the innumerable derestriction signs throughout the country placed carefully at the entrances to lanes so narrow and winding that they can scarcely be used at all by motor vehicles, much less used by them at any speed. One receives the impression that a gang of lunatics has been at work and so far as these signs are concerned the impression is correct.

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And here are examples of the methods employed by the Ministry: of its abuse of the powers



entrusted to it by the 1934 Act- themselves (as indicated) a dangerous invasion of the rights of the local authorities. The paragraphs refer briefly in each case to a local enquiry and the subsequent Ministry ruling:

**Coventry** (1.10.35): Four roads. From March 18th to August 1935, with the speed limit; 21 accidents; corresponding period of 1934 without the speed limit; 50 accidents. All four roads derestricted. **Reading** (27.11.35): Two roads. On one of them the speed limit had reduced the accidents by 50 per cent. The other was entirely built-up on one side. All one road and part of the other derestricted. **Edinburgh** (9.7.35): Fifteen roads. In the year before the imposition of the speed limit 78 accidents; in the four months since, two. Eleven roads derestricted. **Swinton** (16.7.35): Swinton section of East Lancashire road. Three

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\* "The Derestriction of Roads in Built-Up Areas" (Published by the Pedestrians' Association).

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accidents since the imposition of the speed limit against seven in the corresponding period before. Among those opposing derestriction was the headmaster of a neighbouring school. The chief witness for derestriction was the proprietor of motor garages and a motor works on the East Lancashire road. Road derestricted. **Stoke-on-Trent** (27.9.35). Three sections of A34 (the main Birmingham-Manchester Road) and two other roads. Considerable lengths of the main road are very narrow and winding and are used by large numbers of pedestrians proceeding to and from Trentham Park. At other points building developments were taking place. Strenuous opposition to derestriction was offered by the Stoke City Council, Newcastle Borough Council and the Police. All five roads derestricted. **Liverpool** (1936): The Liverpool City Council refused to carry out a Ministry order to derestrict fifteen stretches of roads in one of the new housing estates. The tenants also conducted an agitation and sent a letter to the Minister saying; "The whole of the new Estates, comprising over one hundred thousand people, are opposed to the Order. The correspondence columns of the local Press have for months registered protests . . . It is in regard to children that our specific interests lie . . . It is a common sight to witness parents making as many as eight journeys per day to supervise them to and from school. One of the areas covered by your Order Norris Green-had over 300 casualties to children alone last year." Twelve of the fifteen stretches of roads derestricted.

**Glasgow**; Mr. Thornas Somers, Master of Works and City Engineer of Glasgow' at a protest meeting held in London on April 30th, 1937: "The Glasgow Corporation, with the concurrence of the Chief Constable, applied the speed limit to the whole of their area and it worked exceedingly well. Everybody was satisfied. The Corporation had no complaints. Traffic behaved in a much more orderly way. There was a marked absence of cutting in and out. Then, entirely against their wishes, the Ministry derestricted sixteen roads." **Cardiff**: the Chief Constable of Cardiff in his 1936 Report: "Unfortunately (in the opinion of the police) and against the considered opinion of the City Council, the Minister of Transport has thought fit to derestrict certain sections of important roads in the city. Simultaneously, he prescribed that additional expedients to ensure safety, which meant the expense of public money should be adopted on the roads he had derestricted."\* **Southampton**: The Southampton Coroner at an inquest: "The authorities in London have, in my view, iniquitously taken the speed limit off this road. I say 'iniquitously' because any person coming out of one of the numerous side roads, is very likely to meet with an accident from a car coming along the main road. I say unhesitatingly that the Corporation's decision to place a restriction on that road was a very right one and one that the Ministry of Transport ought not to have disregarded." (26.7.38)

At a dinner of the Motor Agents' Association in Southampton a speaker said: "The motor industry has won a victory over the Southampton Corporation in the derestriction of certain Southampton roads." To this the Mayor of Southampton replied later: "The motor industry has won its victory against the wish of the people living in these streets, as the petitions from these people show." + Both were remarks applicable to nearly every derestricted road in the country.

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\* In other words, the public is made to pay not only to allow the motorist to go faster and to increase the danger to themselves but also to finance an act of deception on themselves.

+ Pedestrians' Association News Letter, April, 1937.

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London has no democratic control over its roads. It only pays. The control is exercised jointly by the Ministry of Transport and the London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee, a body of which most people have never even heard. But happily the popular spirit is not entirely dead. There have been spontaneous derestriction revolts. in Hampstead (Falloden Way), Shepherd's Bush (West Way), Willesden (North Circular Road), and East Acton (Western Avenue), and the first two succeeded. The example set by parents in certain areas of refusing to send their children to school until the roads there are made safe is also one especially worthy of being followed.

### C. A MINISTERIAL EPISODE

With the Ministry of Transport not only inhibited from effective action but inevitably impelled to action in the opposite direction it is hardly surprising that none of the Ministers should have won distinction as a contributor to road safety. For the most part they have come and gone: sixteen so far; a total that itself suggests that the close proximity of the motor interests is not a pleasant experience. It must indeed, in a way, stand to the credit of British public life that several of the Ministers have exhibited a genuine determination or anxiety to rise superior to their position and to secure genuine action. Of these, perhaps the most noteworthy was the late Sir John Pybus (1931-1933), during whose term of office the way was cleared for the 1934 Act and there was issued the best (1933) of the Ministry reports. Some of this Minister's pronouncements are indeed well worth recalling e.g. "The reckless motorist at the wheel of a high speed car is a potential criminal"; "It may be that the solution of this tragic problem lies in the direction of more legislation involving the imposition of still more severe penalties on careless and dangerous driving "; "There is, at least a most effective weapon, and that is a more proper observance of the law and the most rigorous enforcements of the penalties it provides"; and "It cannot be regarded as unreasonable that a driver who is shown to have endangered the lives of others, either through recklessness or lack of presence of mind, should be disqualified for a period, at any rate, from driving."

Equally worth recalling is the following incident. (The report is from the Daily Express, 12.10.32):

"There was a dramatic scene at the Motor Show Dinner last night in London, at which Mr. Pybus, the Minister of Transport, was

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the chief guest. The dining-hall was thronged with leaders of the motor industry from all parts of the country. Mr. Pybus was greeted with loud cheers when he began to speak. When he sat down there was a stony silence. His speech was at times punctuated by ironical cheers and at one time he could not continue owing to prolonged handclapping of a non-laudatory character."

The reason for this public treatment of a guest by these champions of "courtesy," "consideration" and seeing the other fellows' point of view"?

"They (i.e. the motor industry leaders) expected some statement relating to sympathetic treatment by the government in regard to taxation, but Mr. Pybus skilfully evaded the question and side-tracked the issue."

One can only wonder what they would have done had the Minister given them a direct negative, and how they treat Ministers of Transport in private. After eighteen months Sir John Pybus resigned not only from the Ministry but from all public office. It can be assumed that it was from disgust with his experiences at the Ministry of Transport.

That the standards of "courtesy," "consideration" and "seeing the other fellow's point of view" of the motor manufacturers and traders have not improved was shewn at the dinner (mentioned below) they gave to the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Stafford Cripps, when they continually interrupted their guest's speech and greeted his appeal to them to act in the public interest with shouts of "Rot" and "Tripe."

## D. MORE PROPAGANDA

With the B.B.C., there was a welcome development in May last (1946), when, for the first time, a pedestrian representative was given the opportunity of broadcasting the pedestrian viewpoint, though, again, this was only in the course of a "round-table discussion." But apart from this, the broadcast road safety propaganda has continued to be based mainly on material provided by the Ministry of Transport. As an example may be taken a series of sixteen "Take Care" appeals given during the past summer (June-August). These exhibited the following features: (A) There was no reference to speed or to the necessity of the drivers obeying the safety laws. (B) There was a single reference to a fault committed by a driver-of opening

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his offside door and causing a cyclist to swerve into an overtaking car- and against this, in addition to an accompanying reference to a pedestrian who crossed from between two parked vehicles into the path of an oncoming vehicle, the statement was made three times that pedestrians have not yet got used to traffic being as busy as it is again now. Similarly, there were two references to "the foolish things little (or excited) children sometimes do," with appeals to the drivers "to make special allowances for this" - what a feeble phrase! - and to parents not to allow "your children" to go unaccompanied near busy roads, as if (as has been pointed out) this were possible except perhaps occasionally, with more than a fraction of the nation's children. (C) There were two direct references to road deaths: one a pedestrian killed by a cyclist and the other, a pedestrian "thought to have been killed by a non-stop vehicle": a ridiculous distortion of the incidence of vehicles involved in road fatalities. Before the war the B.B.C. conceived the unusual idea of engaging racing drivers to give broadcasts on "road sense," but shortly after one of them the broadcaster was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for manslaughter and the series was discontinued.

In the same way, the daily Press has followed the Government's example of accepting motor representatives as the natural guardians of road safety, and has entrusted the subject almost entirely to "our motoring correspondents" who, in their turn, have taken their material not merely from the Ministry of Transport and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, but, with the wider choice open to the Press, from the various motoring organisations and motor leaders. It will also be realised that in some cases at least the large expenditure of the motor interests on Press advertising is not without its effects. Very little space is found for the subject of the motor slaughter in the weekly press, and still less in the Quarterlies, mainly pre-occupied, as ever, with "problems of foreign policy": a fact that reminds us of the Biblical phrase, still sometimes applicable even in the world of the atomic bomb, that "the fool has his eyes in the ends of the earth."

A survey of "road safety" propaganda would not be complete without a reference to the bluff or jovial approach, so often adopted here, as it was in Nazi Germany. As an example may be quoted a "Safety Flash," that described how, through an unfortunate act

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of carelessness on his own part, "Old Jim" had had his pipe broken. "Oh, that's not so bad." "Oh" - and here came the point and the bluff or jovial. approach- "but it was, his windpipe." (The product, no doubt, of some self-appointed genius who thought that this was the right way "to reach the masses.") Another example was the Ministry of Transport's famous quatrain on Billy Brown of London Town, who was "right- dead right." in insisting, his "rights" but "just as dead as if he hadn't." This excited the very highest admiration among the motorists and was regarded as first-rate propaganda. not merely for road safety, but for the comic genius of the nation. It was, in the same vein that, amid gales of laughter, at a dinner of motor representatives in London before the war, Colonel Mervyn O'Gorman suggested the installation of automatic pedestrians on the track at Brooklands.

## 111. CURRENT POLICY

### A. STRANGE REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS

In 1939 the Select Committee of the House of Lords, which had been appointed the previous year to inquire into and make recommendations on road safety, presented its Report. The war came and no Parliamentary discussion was held and no Government decision taken on the Report. In 1943 the Ministry of War Transport appointed a Road Safety Committee with the terms of reference to "review" the Select Committee's recommendations and "advise on those which should be adopted as measures of post-war Policy": itself an entirely unwarranted step. since, as stated, there had been no Parliamentary discussion on or Government endorsement of the Report. It was stated that the Ministry Committee had been appointed to advise on measures for the immediate post-war period, but later, without explanation, and without any change in its character or personnel, the Committee was entrusted with the larger and still more important task of advising on permanent road safety measures, in fact, of drawing up a road safety programme for the Government. The Ministry Committee consisted- and with one or two minor changes of personnell resulting from ordinary causes, still consists- of five representatives of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

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they are there as "representatives of all classes of road users"- eight Ministerial officiqls (Transport, Home Office, Information and Scottish Home Department) and three Police officials, with a chairman and three Secretaries from the Ministry of Transport: a ridiculously weak body, in any case, to deal with so immensely important a problem and, of course, utterly unrepresentative. In 1945 the Ministry Committee presented an Interim Report endorsing with the utmost enthusiasm and gratitude the main recommendations of the Select Committee's Report as measures suitable for the immediate post-war period. There has been no explicit endorsement by the Ministry of Transport of the 1945 Interim Report, but Ministry spokesmen refer to it in approving terms from time to time, and the Committee remains in being, and presumably is now preparing to incorporate the few remaining Select Committee recomendations in its final Report. To understand official road safety "policy" it is then necessary to re-examine the 1939 Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords.

In any connection other than' that of road safety, it would not be necessary to devote much space to this Report. It would be necessary only to point to the fact that (as will be seen) it puts forward proposals for increasing one of the main evils it is supposed to be trying to remove- the law-breaking of the drivers. But- as must constantly be kept in mind- with road safety we are dealing not so much with realities as with appearances, and it is necessary to analyse this particular appearance of policy because of the importance that has been artificially attached to it.

From the start the Select Committee promised little or nothing, but hurried at once to the task that really interested them- the creation of conditions convenient for fast driving. Using language of complacency that was startling even in 1939 they said they were "satisfied"- what a term to use !- that there was "no panacea," and they had therefore set before themselves the modest programme, "to seek and, if possible, find a long range policy." (p. 2). As an afterthought they added that they had been "amazed at, the apathy with which the staggering (casualty) figures are received by the public " (p. 5), but this remained an afterthought.

The Report sets out a brief or, as it might be said, a very restricted safety programme, but even this is really designed for the drivers. Thus, the only severe penalties proposed for the drivers are for driving

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under the influence of drink, (pp. 17, 18), the Report adding meticulous warnings as to the effects of even the smallest amounts of alcohol. But, of course, while drunken driving is highly dangerous to the nondrivers it is still more dangerous to the drivers themselves, including the drinkers. Similarly, there are proposals, of a modified character, for better driving tests (p. 25)

and the better maintenance of vehicles (pp; 64-66), and the same conditions apply here also. (At this point, with an adroitness that Mr. Puff might have envied, the Committee took the opportunity of expressing their admiration for the British motor manufacturers and affirming their allegiance to private enterprise. "The problem of defective motor vehicles" observes the Report, "is of less urgency than education and the control of road users or road improvements; for the motor trade, being competitive, addresses itself increasingly to the improvement and perfection of motor vehicles." (p. 5)).

As for the rest: for the drivers, there should be "fewer prosecutions" (seriatim) and "great restraint" with the suspension of licence's (p. 27). With speed, it is hoped that speed limits' "will have to be employed less and less" (p. 11), and, in any case restricted areas should be reduced in number or extent" (p. 11), and these recommendations are accompanied by expressions of sympathy with the drivers in having to conform with any speed limits or, indeed, with ever having to slow down at all, e.g. long stretches of restricted roads in industrial areas (it says) are bad, because the drivers are "inclined to become sleepy and less alert and to watch the speedometer rather than the road" (p. 11). Again, lorry drivers ought to be penalised for driving close to each other at their maximum speed of 20 m.p.h. because this "irritates other drivers and tempts them to take risks" (pp. 53 and 77); driving at night within the limits of one's own lights i.e. obeying the ruling of the High Court and the Highway Code, is "a counsel of perfection" (p. 31); and roads ought to be properly banked because then "motorists would be able to stay on their own side" (p. 49). As regards the roads, 49 of the 115 recommendations of the Report are of a character to permit or encourage speeding\* and : (accepting the Committee's own standards e.g. that "in the case of the majority of modern cars 30 m.p.h. is a low speed," p. 11) three

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\* See pp. 9 ' 6,,98, 111, 115, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 126, 127, 128, 131, 135, 136, 139, 143, (Sub. par. 4), 147, 150 (Sub. par. 2), 151, 153, 155, 156 (sub. par. 1), 158, 159, 160 and 164.

(relating to pedestrian crossings) that might discourage speeding, and two even of these are recommended partly as aids to traffic (p. 78, par. 44). Here are some of these detailed suggestions: 1 "Where, owing to footpaths, it is not possible to remove kerbs the Committee consider that they should be set at an angle of 120 degrees from the road, otherwise there is a danger of small cars being turned over should they hit them. The kerb should be not more than 3 in. high" (p. 51) i.e. to save the cars from overturning they should be allowed to go on to the pavements and kill and, maim pedestrians; telegraph and telephone poles, electric lights standards and trees should be removed or placed back from the roads (pp. 52, 53 and 68), presumably, in many cases, on to the footpaths; cinemas and "places of that description" should be forbidden on main roads (p. 61); the convenience and safety of (other) drivers and not of the passengers should be consulted in the arrangement of bus and tram stops (p. 60); and roads should be broadened by cutting into the first floors of buildings and creating "arcaded pavements" (p. 62).

Finally, with some generalisations about the enforcement of the law, the report puts forward its proposals for helping the law-breakers and thus increasing law-breaking viz. that with certain offences prosecuted drivers should be excused attendance at court (p. 71); that: summonses should be served by post (p. 71); and that. magistrates should be enabled, at their discretion, to postpone the disqualification of offending drivers for from 24 to 48 hours, as "this would, eliminate the quandary of the motorist who, having driven to court, finds himself disqualified from driving home" (p. 24).

As, of course, was inevitable, the remedies- "the two main (safety) factors"- are "segregation" and "education," with here the emphasis on the former. But the Report has a distinctive character in its curiously cynical admissions that neither of these can have any real effect for a very long period, if indeed ever. Thus " education" is "one of the greatest hopes of diminishing accidents" (p.12) and a "method that offers quicker results than any other" (p. 12), but it must depend largely on the "education" of children, and this should "gradually tend" to make the whole population "more road-minded" (p. 13), not even, it should be noted, "safety-minded." Similarly, "segregation" is "of supreme moment" (p. 17) and it "must come " (p. 9), but the "cost of segregation would be almost prohibitive" (p. 9) and it is "an ideal that cannot be

attained for many years." (p. 9).

But even more fantastic than the, proposals are the methods of argument:

What, indeed, can be said of a report that contradicts its own evidence, to say nothing of the evidence itself being completely unreliable: that, in fact, destroys itself? The "evidence," it need hardly be said, is the "attributed to" statistics (1937 Ministry Report), described above. On the one hand the Report describes these statistics as "salient" and as being "a more complete analysis" of accidents than any other statistics provided by the Ministry (p. 6). It "recommends the study of them" (p. 6). It quotes them generally (p. 7), and in detail with regard to drivers (p. 25), pedal cyclists (p. 29), pedestrians (pp. 32, 48 and 57), children under 7 (p. 33) and "excessive Speed" as a cause of accidents (p. 7). With the opinion of a single unnamed London coroner they provide the basis for its demand for penalties against pedestrians.\* On the other hand, when it turns to the role it wishes to assign to the roads in the accidents- and this is immediately following its general recommendations of the statistics the report is "unable to accept these figures" (p. 8) and it sets out detailed objections. "The number of accidents under the various headings" it says "is impressive and alarming and the totals cannot be refuted; but the Committee are unable to accept the Conclusions of the Ministry regarding the causes to which these accidents are attributed," (p. 8). In fact, scarcely credibly, the "totals that cannot be refuted" are also "the conclusions that cannot be accepted."

Here is an example of the use made of these statistics, as well as of the general character of the report. Twice (pp. 7 and 24-25), it quotes statistics of accidents in which "no mechanically propelled vehicles are involved,"+ and, on the second occasion it adds: "The Committee record this fact because there is a popular fallacy to the effect that the motor drivers, being in control of what is sometimes termed a lethal weapon, are usually to blame when an accident occurs.

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\* The creation of the offence of "entering the carriageway heedlessly" (p. 33); and (presumably) the adoption of several vaguer proposals e.g. "pedestrians should not be allowed to use cycle tracks"; and also of the proposal that in civil cases the presence of a pedestrian in the carriageway where there is "an adequate footpath" should be accepted as prima facie evidence of carelessness. On this the report says: "It is, in the opinion of the Committee, time that the pedestrians should be made to realise that, as a road user, he has a share in the responsibility for -road safety." (p. 33).

+ These statistics- 9.1% of fatal accidents and 33,131 non-fatal accidents are given in the introduction to the 1937 Ministry of Transport Report (p. 5). There is no discoverable basis for them in the Report's factual statistical tables.

Such attribution is understandable, but it is not borne out by the accident statistics," i.e. the statistics it has already repudiated.

Equally bad, or even worse, are some of its other self contradictions in matters of detail, e.g. when it prints- within a few lines of each other-the following passages. "It is in the opinion of the Committee a mistake to attribute the majority of road accidents to reckless driving or to the conduct of the so-called ' road-hogs for the greatest number of accidents occur where a speed limit is already in force" and "It is not possible, adequately, to enforce the speed limit on the roads and streets which are at present restricted" (p. 11). When it gives the mileage of restricted roads as "nearly a third of the total" (p. 11), when its aim is to discredit speed limits, and as "only about a quarter" (p. 32), when its aim is to discredit their effects. When it alters the two Ministry of Transport accident headings "Child under seven unaccompanied" and "Child under seven inadequately supervised"(1937 Report, p. 28), into "Caused mainly by children under seven" (p. 33). And when it sets out offences alleged against the pedestrians (pp. 32, 33, 48 and 57), but none against the drivers, and, similarly, when it sets out casualty totals of pedestrians (p. 32) and pedal cyclists (p. 29), but again none of the drivers. Characteristically, and again, scarcely credibly, the Select Committee saw the large total of pedestrian and cyclist casualties, as contrasted with the immunity of the drivers (that the Report thus emphasised), merely as a proof of indifference and carelessness on the part of the pedestrians and cyclists. "It should be remembered" it observes- and it is the first figure it gives of the casualties- "that only 7.8 per cent.\* of the persons killed or injured on the roads in 1936-37- excluding motor-cyclists- were motor driver's ": as if any unprejudiced person ever forgot it or misunderstood its real significance.

But what indeed can be said of a report by a group of public men appointed to deal with one of the gravest and most urgent problems of the time-what could be said of a report by anybody or any individual or any child or any half-wit- with the following passage:

"The reduction in severity (in car smashes) where the speed limit is imposed is due not to the speed limit but to the fact that high

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\*This figure has been obtained apparently by adding up the percentages for drivers in the 1937 Ministry Report (See p. 56). In their enthusiastic compilers of the Select Committee's Report have debited the drivers with .06% for horse drawn vehicles, the real total being 7.2% (5.1% private drivers).

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speeds cannot be reached in congested traffic. This should not be adduced as an argument for the reimposition of a universal speed limit" (p. 1 11).

It is pure Bedlam.

In fact, the Select Committees' Report is no more than a crude endorsement of the motor interests' demands for more roads and road "improvements" at the public expense and for fewer restrictions on speed and the drivers, with, added, a half-hearted and only partly interested recommendation of "education." The demand for more roads and road "improvements " at the public expense- the sole supporting evidence is the Report (described above) of Mr. G. T. Bennett, the County Surveyor of Oxfordshire- is the first topic mentioned (p. 2); the figures of motor taxation as compared with, the Ministry of Transport expenditure on roads are given before the casualty lists (p. 4); and 28 out of the 55 pages of the main part of the Report, and (as indicated) 115 out of its 238 recommendations, besides numerous incidental references, are devoted to the subject.\* (So anxious indeed, were the Select Committee to prove their case that they even questioned the good faith of the Ministry: they doubted, they said, "whether the Ministry believed in the theory advanced on their behalf" p. 35). In short, as has been seen, in a number of its recommendations, it goes beyond even the demands of the motor propagandists. It is more motorist than the motor interests. It out-Herods Herod.

When the Select Committee's Report appeared it was, naturally enough, acclaimed immediately by the motor correspondents as "The Motorists' Charter," and, ever since, in such terms as "wise document," "statesmanlike report," "essential contribution to road safety" etc. etc. the motor propagandists have assiduously kept its existence before the public attention in the hope of securing the adoption of its provisions. It is still a little difficult to account for the Report: to understand how any body of public men could put their names to it; or how it could come to be issued and accepted as an official document. Among all the thousands of Reports issued by British Government Committees it must surely be unique, i.e. apart from the Interim Report that is based on it. As to the members

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\*It is merely a minor complication, or, rather, another example of the disingenuousness of the Report, that it also declares that "the majority of accidents are the result of human error in conduct or in judgment." (p. 35).

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of the Committee, or at least the majority, at least one thing is clear, And that is, that they entertained an extraordinary contempt for public opinion, perhaps a conviction that with regard to road safety it did not exist. Indeed, in view of its character, we may reasonably assume that they expected the Report to be accepted not merely without criticism but without examination, even perhaps without it's being read, and that, no doubt, is what has generally happened. The Committee concluded their Report with the hope that it would not "find a resting-place in the pigeon-holes of Whitehall." That at least is a hope that can be shared. Even in a pigeon-hole harm might come from this absurd and mischievous document.

The Committee members were: Lord Alness (Chairman), Lord Rushcliffe, Lord Addison, Lord Reading, Lord Iddesleigh, Lord Birkenhead and Lord Brocket. Curiously, the names of the Committee members do not appear in the Report, but it is hardly worth speculation whether

this was by design or accident, or, assuming the former, what might be the reason. Following its publication the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents invited the Chairman, Lord Alness, to become their Honorary Treasurer, and the invitation was accepted.

## B. STILL STRANGER "INTERIM" REPORT"

Since, essentially, it is no more than an endorsement of the main recommendation of the Select Committee's Report, the 1945 Interim Report need not be examined in any detail. Its only real variation from the Select Committee's Report, in fact, lies in its placing the major emphasis on "education" as compared with "segregation" in putting these forward as the two main remedies to bring about road safety. Nevertheless the Ministry Road Safety Committee succeeded in adding another- and even greater- element of absurdity to the general position. (With "road safety" as conceived by the motor interests and their friends there is never an Ossa of mischievous absurdity so high that there cannot be piled on it a still higher Pelion). For, as has been stated- as the Interim Report itself is at the utmost pains to make clear- this is, in fact, an Interim Report: a Report on "the problems which will require special attention in the early postwar period" (Par. 2). Thus, to cope with these, it has put forward the recommendations "education" and "segregation"- which even the Select Committee put forward only as long term measures,

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and of doubtful value even then- which, indeed, the Interim Report itself refers to in the same or even more doubtful terms- and has left its own " long term measures" for further consideration and report. What these "long term measures" will be is thus something to stagger the imagination: something that must transcend all known measurements of time: something, in fact, that makes nonsense of the idea that the Committee ever attempted to deal seriously with the motor slaughter or ever meant or were meant to. A Report that puts forward "education" and "segregation"- to say nothing of its own and the Select Committee's comments on them as "interim measures" is clearly moving in a timeless sphere that has no relation to road safety or anything else: a sphere where not only measures but words cease to have any meaning. It is perhaps hardly necessary to add that the chief subject relegated to this timeless sphere is the enforcement of the law.

## C. HALF OF NOTHING

This then is the Report to which the Ministry of Transport has given a general endorsement; this the Committee which continues to be entrusted with the task of drawing up a road safety programme for the Government. But even this is not all; for, as the present Minister of Transport (Mr. Barnes) recently made plain, the Government- and apart from all other considerations, the decision was inevitable with the nation's present financial position- is still not prepared to embark on the unlimited programme of road construction and "improvement" which the motor interests demand and which first the Select Committee and then the Ministry Committee put forward as one of the two sections of their Road Safety proposals. Thus- and the confusion is entirely characteristic of the general road situation- the Ministry is giving approval to a road safety programme while elsewhere repudiating one half of it. Without indulging in any wilful excursion into facetiousness it is thus only possible to describe the Ministry of Transport's present road safety policy as one half of a non-existent programme: half of nothing.

The recent £250,000 "road safety " campaign- launched by the Ministry, of Transport with the Nazi slogan "The Policeman our Friendly Adviser" and the usual dreary and futile plans "to make the fullest use of the Press, films, advertising, the B.B.C." etc. etc. has, of course, been a complete failure. The representative pedestrian

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body warned the Ministry that this would be so, but the warning was ignored. Indeed the campaign-as usual-has been more than a failure, for once more the absurd and hypocritical ideas on which it was based have been given official endorsement and a further period of life. This large sum of public money would have been better thrown into the Thames.

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## 6. REMEDIES

So far then the position is clear and it is possible to set out the necessary practical remedies. Of course, no one disputes that an entirely new traffic situation has come into existence i.e. no one except the motor propagandists who insist that the former absence of control should continue, but until the present situation has been brought under control it is not possible even to envisage, still less to plan, a rational system able to meet the requirements of both traffic and safety. First then must come the enforcement of the existing safety laws. As to the means, we need not look beyond those employed in Providence, Rhode Island, U.S.A., and, theoretically, here also, viz. Propaganda, Police and Prosecutions, but these must be employed (as they are there) with the specific aim of securing definite results within a definite time, and not, as at present, as little more than camouflage for the law-breaking of the drivers and an alibi for the continuance of the slaughter. Thus the propaganda must be directed specifically to this end: it must be of a warning character and it must be directed mainly to those concerned, i.e. the drivers, and especially it must emphasise the dangers of speeding, the urgent necessity of the strictest observance of the speed limits and the punishments that await offenders. In short, the propaganda must be a complete reversal of that employed so far. In fact, it is only propaganda of this kind, specific in character and backed by sanctions or rewards, that has any chance of success in a situation like that on the roads. Critics of the drivers may consider that at this late date the use of propaganda is an unnecessary concession (and public expense), but it must not be forgotten that to some extent the drivers have themselves been misled, and it is only fair that for a time they should have the real situation put before them and be reminded clearly of the duties resting on them. With regard to the police use of "advice" and "warnings," as has already been pointed out, this is entirely undesirable as a permanent major measure, but again in the circumstances. there is reason for its continuance for a limited period. For the detection of offenders, the police must, of course, employ all their usual methods, including that of plain clothes officers. The American system of motor-cycle police with powers to issue summonses on the spot should also be introduced. Finally, with regard to prosecutions, means must be

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found at once of inducing or compelling the lay magistracy to carry out its duties faithfully and inflict the necessary penalties. Many more, difficult, disciplinary tasks, it may be observed, were carried out by the Government during the war in other directions, and many more will have to be carried out by the present Government, in the course of its peace-time reconstruction and development.

But (as has been pointed out) to deal effectively with the motor slaughter certain extensions and modifications of the safety laws are necessary, and steps must be taken at once to put these into effect. It may be emphasised that nowhere do these extensions and modifications represent any departure from the methods, theoretically, already in use. Moreover, they are all of an obvious character and would have been recognised and applied long ago but for the fundamental opposition described. They are necessary merely to carry the existing safety laws to the point of final and genuine effectiveness,

(1) Since the fundamental necessity on the roads is to restore respect for human life, the laws must be strengthened in this direction. In all other directions, a broad yet clear distinction is drawn between acts causing fatal and non-fatal injuries, and this principle, necessary not only in itself in establishing the sanctity of human life but in inducing the necessary degree of care or restraint, must be restored in relation to the motor slaughter. So far, the motor propagandists have obscured the issue through the argument that the severity of the injuries in a road accident is itself largely accidental and that it is therefore unfair to judge the driver by this standard. Of course, except to a slight and uncertain degree, this is untrue, but, in any sense, the principle is not affected by exceptional cases. The aim of the motor propagandists has been not to emphasize the seriousness of all road smashes but merely to minimise those with fatal results and in this way to create an alibi for the more dangerous types of drivers. Especially, fatal accidents resulting from infractions of the speed limit must involve the charge of manslaughter.

(2) Since, as the drivers themselves insist, even the strictest control of speed leaves a margin of danger for the non-drivers- as they say, there are times when even 5 m.p.h. is dangerous- the existing specific offences, e.g.. "dangerous driving," "driving under the influence of drink or drugs" etc.-necessary also, of course, as a safeguard between. the drivers-must continue. (The "less" offence of "careless driving"- introduced On the insistence of the motor interests to provide a part-escape for offenders- should be abolished:

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in the existing circumstances careless driving is of course always also dangerous driving).

Apart from these special considerations (and they will become less urgent as the general position improves) the main effort must be directed towards the control of speed. (An initial step might be to discover a clearer definition of a "built-up area" than the present one, quoted above; but here, as in every other direction, the main consideration is the spirit in which the regulation is enforced):

(1) Speeding offences: Infractions of the speed limit must be raised to the level of major offences and be punished accordingly. It may be pointed out that there is no hardship in this, since the observance of a speed limit calls for nothing more than an ordinary degree of attention and readiness to co-operate for the common safety. Similarly, failure to observe a speed limit is in itself proof of a deliberate refusal to give the necessary degree of care or to co-operate for the common safety. The drivers must become, or be made, "speed limit conscious."

(2) Speed Limits: Experiments must be carried out at once in "built-up areas" with speed limits lower, and, if it is desired, higher, than the present 30 m.p.h., with special attention directed to the 25 m.p.h. level. The result will be inevitable i.e. in pointing to the necessity for a lower figure, and, in all probability, the figure of 25 m.p.h. will be found to provide the best results from the point of view of both safety and traffic requirements. An end must be brought to the present practice of depriving roads in "built-up" areas of the speed limit because their unrestricted use is demanded by the motor interests or the drivers for their own convenience. On the contrary, the speed limit, or higher speed limits, should be extended to all roads used to any extent by mixed traffic, and especially to such roads where there is no footpath. Of course, there are no objections to varied speed limits. On the contrary, they will help to relieve the drivers from those feelings of tedium and sleepiness which the House of Lords Select Committee said were apt to proceed from long stretches of road controlled at one speed. In all connections just attention must be given by the Government to the views of the local authorities, and in exceptional cases even lower speed limits. must be permitted. The case of special vehicles, fire engines, ambulances etc. can continue to be met special exemptions.

A useful step in this connection would be to define speed limits not in miles per hour- an absurd standard in the split second

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conditions of modern traffic- but in feet per second. This is a method already employed in the New South Wales Highway Code. All vehicles must, of course, be equipped with speedometers. At present thousands of public service and commercial vehicles, including the London Passenger and Transport buses, are not so equipped: a monstrous and farcical situation.

(3) Speed "Governors". Especially with vehicles subject to a general speed limit, much greater use should be made of this mechanical method of controlling speed. ("Governors" control the speed of the vehicle at whatever level is desired, but allow extra power for hillclimbing.) Their use has indeed already been approved and welcomed by certain sections of motoring opinion in this country. Thus the *Motoring World*, commenting on the appearance on the market of a control device early in 1938, wrote: "Any device which will save the law-abiding motorist against inadvertently exceeding the 30 m.p.h. limit is to be welcomed by the whole motoring community." With highly commendable candour the journal added: "Actually the driver in restricted areas with the device is likely to go faster over a given distance than if he were travelling by a series of spurts and checks which are too often characteristic of progress under such conditions." In the United States a fairly extensive use is made of speed "Governors" and

their value is admitted everywhere. Thus, at the American National Safety Council meeting in 1938, Mr. E. I. Hibbard, of the General Electric Company, stated that there were then 1,500,000 motor vehicles in the U.S. equipped with "Governors." "with benefits" he added "to both economic and efficient running and safety." At the Accident Prevention Conference of the Federal Department of Commerce it was stated that "Governors" had been installed in 20,000 trucks of the Civilian Conservation Corps and these had brought about a 50 per cent reduction in the accidents in which these vehicles were involved. An article in the *Technology Review*, Cambridge, Mass., published early in 1941, said: "A recent survey of opinion among 180 owners of motor fleets located in 35 American States and operating some 50,000 vehicles, found that no one who had voluntarily adopted the "Governors" wanted to remove them. The device was declared to reduce accidents, according to 108 of the 180 owners; reductions in insurance costs up to 40 per cent were noted . . . The use of 'Governors' is a means of conserving rubber and oil consumption." In New Zealand (whose record on the roads, as in so many other directions, is a model to most other countries)

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speed offenders are liable to have "Governors" compulsorily installed in their vehicles. Briefly: here, then, is a simple alternative to that persecution of the drivers to which the motor interests and some of the drivers object so strenuously.

As to the penalties to be inflicted for infractions of the speed limit, if necessary, these must be of the utmost severity. But no-one wishes to make motor offences a source of public revenue; or to increase the prison population; or, permanently, to extend the activities of the police. The aim is the re-establishment of decency and civilisation on the roads and there is a simple and easily applied remedy at hand in the suspension or cancellation of driving licences. The principle must be established that he who will not or cannot drive without breaking the law shall not drive at all. Moreover this measure may help also to ease the traffic, problem\* and- a necessity in the present conditions of austerity- to curtail excessive expenditure on private motoring.

It is not necessary, here, to discuss the methods by which the application of this principle can be secured, but two points may be mentioned: (A) It must be applied rigorously and impartially: rigorously because in the present conditions there is no room for any chances, and therefore, of course, none for "second chances," and impartially on every ground. There must be no social favouritism at either end. At the one end there must be no question of "social position"- a mere imbecility, of course- and equally, at the other, there must be no question of paying special regard to "the driver's livelihood;" the hypocritical form of "leniency" exercised by magistrates when their real motive is hostility to the law. It is indeed a measure of the general fantastic confusion that it is necessary to point out that there is no leniency in protecting a livelihood that threatens life. In any case, given. the proper safeguards and conditions, it is clear that public service and commercial drivers will observe the speed limits

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\* The prohibition of private cars in busy traffic centres in the centre of cities and towns, especially, of course, London, is a long overdue traffic reform., The spectacle of one or two private cars containing at the most half a dozen persons, but usually with only one person in each, holding up long lines of buses with hundreds of passengers, to say nothing of the usual crowds of pedestrians, is one of the most ridiculous and anti-social in contemporary life, and these are the people who talk about "living in a world of speed, and needing speed and more speed." When a Lord Mayor of London a few years ago suggested to his fellow business men that they should not bring their cars into the perpetual traffic jam in the city the epithets hurled at him only just fell short of "Bolshevik." Cars are not even forbidden to park at bus stops, with the result that it is common to see would-be, passengers unable to reach the vehicle when it pulls up, or as is sometimes the case, merely slows up, some distance away from the stop.

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faithfully, since it is in their own interests to do so. (B) Driver Employees: In the case of private chauffeurs, licence suspension or cancellation should apply also to the employer. In the case of driver employees of public service or commercial concerns licence suspension or cancellation, should apply also to the vehicle. In both cases there should be added penalties for the employers.

Of course, though the control of speed is both the fundamental and the most readily attainable road safety measure, there are also other. measures to which continuous, or, as is

most often the case, greatly increased attention must be given. These include (A) Increased police supervision of crossings, especially outside schools: as has been pointed out measures of this kind are necessary until genuine discipline is secured among the drivers. (B) An extension of the method of the "all-red" period at multiple or otherwise dangerous crossings. (C) Tests for drivers. Of the existing tests the late Lord Halsbury remarked in the House of Lords (22.1.30): "You simply drive round Leicester Square and then you are told you are a competent driver," and even that was an over-statement since; the "test" is usually made in a much quieter area. Especially must be reformed the farcical "physical" test. It is perhaps not generally realised that this consists merely of the signature by the applicant of a declaration of fitness, so that all that is necessary to secure the licence, so far as sight, hearing, muscular control, etc. are concerned, is ability to be led into a room and to sign one's name, and with an insufficient check on personation even that is not necessary. The much reduced motor slaughter in France, as compared with Britain, before the war was attributed very largely to the more efficient tests for drivers in France. (D) Periodic inspection' of vehicles: partly because of systematic brake testing, the City of Toronto has one of the best accident records in the entire American continent. (E) Improvements in car design (e.g. better manoeuvrability, the elimination of unnecessary projections etc. etc.) (F) The elimination of glare headlamps, etc., etc.

Finally, footpaths must be constructed on or with all roads used, to any extent, by "mixed traffic," a measure essential in the interests not only of safety, but of public right. These are common highways, and, accepting the practical division of road-users into pedestrians and wheeled traffic, it is as much the duty of the authorities to provide footpaths for pedestrians as it is to provide carriageways for the drivers. Indeed, since, in most areas, most use is made of these high

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ways by the pedestrians and since pedestrians usually have the extra claim of- "local rights," the provision of footpaths must be seen as the first duty of the authorities. As in every other direction the principle must be established that the safety of the citizens is the first care of the state. Today on a footpath-less road a solitary pedestrian can be killed with complete impunity- like a wild animal- and usually is: he is a person without rights because he is entirely without protection. Yet frequently the practice has been not only to construct new roads without footpaths but to abolish footpaths where they exist- without doubt, one of the most cynical and anti-social acts in history. In this connection particular attention must be directed to the conduct of the motor interests- the chief instigators of these practices, and therefore chiefly responsible for forcing the pedestrians to mingle with the motor traffic, and yet at the same time, the most ardent advocates of "segregation" as "one of the two main safety factors": an example of hypocrisy and double dealing that can have had few equals anywhere at any time. But even this has not been enough, for the motor interests have directed a vicious propaganda against the pedestrians, accusing them of being "the chief danger factor" and finally grotesquely- grumbling about their being on these roads at all. (The insinuation of drunkenness against some of the pedestrian victims put out by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, and noted above, took its due place in this vicious propaganda). Finally has come the attempt to force pedestrians to walk on the right of these roads and so deprive them of the benefit of the rule that places the responsibility for avoiding collisions on the overtaking vehicles. First deprived of footpaths, the pedestrians, so it is planned, are now to be deprived of even the safeguards provided for traffic. In the most complete and deadly sense of the term they are to be made, "to look out for themselves." That this arrangement would expose pedestrians at night directly to the inescapable danger of glare headlights and would also lead to endless confusion, and therefore danger, with pedestrians wheeling bicycles, perambulators etc.-who are to remain "traffic"- are further points that have been deliberately ignored. Within the last few years we have even had a Parliamentary representative of the Ministry of Transport saying that the pedestrian can always "leap into the hedge": an asinine statement that ignores the fact that the hedge is often a wall or is otherwise impenetrable, to say nothing of the fact that usually the pedestrian is killed before he has time to do anything.

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How to secure effective central control is a matter of high Government policy, but a possible method would be to set up a Tribunal to exercise the powers now held in this connection by the

Ministry of Transport, the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Office, i.e. the Tribunal would have overriding powers and be responsible only to Parliament. This would be an extraordinary measure, but, then, the situation itself is extraordinary. Members of the Tribunal, which would necessarily be small- perhaps three would be the best number- would, of course, not be associated in any way with the motor or road interests. A judge of the High Court might be the most appropriate Chairman. In turn, the Tribunal would appoint a small independent body to control road safety propaganda. A plan to end the motor slaughter within a specific period, say, three, four or five years, would probably be the best approach by the Tribunal to its task.

By these means, then, it will be possible to remove from the roads at least a very large proportion of the dangerous drivers and to establish a reasonable degree of order, i.e. to create a condition in which at last it will be possible to plan and set up a rational traffic system able to meet the requirements of both traffic and safety. If, when, this stage is reached, it is generally agreed that pedestrians should make a larger contribution and should, therefore, be subject to some increased control, no reasonable person would oppose such a measure. But, until this stage is reached it is mere suicide for the pedestrians to accept any such proposal, since, as has been shown, any such extra control would be used immediately by the drivers, as an opportunity for more speeding, so that the total danger would be increased, and, once more, the latter state be worse than the first. On the contrary, it is their duty, not only to themselves, but to all the road-users, including even the drivers, to resist all proposals of this kind to the uttermost.

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## 7. THE ROOT CAUSE

But the main question still remains unanswered. What has been the root or fundamental cause of the Government inaction? Why have the Governments passed safety laws and not enforced them? Why have the almost equally obvious measures set out above been ignored? Why, after such a record, can a Government Department put out such a Report as the Interim Report of the Ministry of War Transport Road Safety Committee? What is the mysterious influence that has restrained the Governments from carrying out the most elementary of all their duties: the protection of the lives and limbs of the ordinary citizens and the protection of children and elderly and infirm persons? Why have the Governments permitted the ordinary standards of conduct and conditions of life to be brought to an end on the roads ? In short, what is the root or fundamental cause of the motor slaughter ?

To answer this question it is necessary to examine more closely the attitude of the motor interests, and this can be done only by examining that of the motor industry, their most important unit and real leader. But, first, briefly may be recalled the dominant conditions between the two wars- the continuously increasing international trade rivalry and domestic unemployment and the continuously increasing part these played in the political field. Loss of trade and increased unemployment, or rather the mere threat of these, became spectres that no Government dared face, nor, therefore generally did they dare face, or attempt in any way to interfere with, the financial, commercial and industrial interests in whose hands these issues lay. Not that the British Governments between the two wars were generally of a type that wished to interfere with the big interests. On the contrary, in every direction, up to the highest level of foreign policy, the difficulty was to discover where the interests ended and where the Government began or if, indeed, it ever began. With regard to the motor slaughter there is the further consideration, that it was in this period- this "golden age" of the big interests- that the motor industry and its allied interests grew up. They had never known anything different, and they acted accordingly, issuing peremptory orders to the governments, threatening to sabotage

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the industry if their orders were not obeyed\* and, as has been shown, treating the representatives of the government with open contempt.

Naturally, in so delicate a matter, the pronouncements of the representatives of the motor industry have been guarded; yet they have also been sufficiently clear. Most outspoken so far

was the late Lord Austin. Here are some of his pronouncements: "That (a return to the pre-1930 speed limit) would prove an enormous setback to the trade. All associated with the industry, particularly agents, ought to do everything they can to get clients to appreciate the danger there is of a return to the old speed limit."- Speech to members of the Motor Agents' Association (16.10.33). "It is regrettable that the government still finds it necessary to hedge our industry round with taxes, regulations and restrictions." (7.10.34). "With a settled Government and no further restrictive legislation on motorists or the manufacturers, the coming year will be the most successful ever experienced by the British Motor industry." (12.8.35). "Driving tests are a useless restriction, except in the case of public conveyances. I do not doubt that 99 per cent of motorists involved in accidents would pass any reasonable test. The same applies to the panic legislation imposing a speed limit of 30 m.p.h." (15.4.34). A glimpse of Viscount Nuffield's views was given in the debate in the House of Lords (12.12.28) on Viscount Cecil's (Road Vehicles Regulation) Bill, that proposed, with other measures, the compulsory fitting of motor vehicles with mechanical checks on speed. Said Lord Denman: "Motor manufacturers were entirely opposed to this particular provision. Mr. Morris, who had built up a great industry in light cars, speaking on the provisions of the Bill, said that he could imagine no better method of stifling our export trade in motor vehicles. The Bill would aggravate the national problem of unemployment in one of the essential industries of the country. The fallacy in the Bill was to say that high speed was the main cause of accidents." (Daily Telegraph, 12.12.28). Nor is it possible to accept as unbiased all of Lord Nuffield's other pronouncements, e.g. "When

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\*As examples may be quoted the late Lord Austin's threat to close his factory in 1929 if the Labour government should repeal the McKenna Duties and a similar threat made by Viscount Nuffield in 1938, when he said in a speech to motor distributors and dealers: "The British motor industry will always try to give the workmen a square deal and employment, but if the Government are going to take away from us any more than has already been taken, then I for one will throw in my hand and walk out, because we are getting then into the most unfair competition." (26.8.38).

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I see a lorry driver summoned for doing 32 m.p.h. in a secret trap then I say that that is the worst form of persecution. I would go further. I would say that secret traps are a damnation in this country. Education is the only way to prevent the death roll on the roads."At a luncheon of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents in London (2.12.36) "The real root of the matter is obsolete road design and the marked absence of official activity in educating other road users in road sense." (28.21.36). "The greater menace on the roads today is not the fast driver but the slow driver." (Daily Telegraph 4.10.45). To these may be added representative quotations from less important figures in the industry: for example, Lieut.-Col. D. C. McLagan, Secretary of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in an address to the Reading Rotary Club put "less restrictive legislation" at the head of the requirements for "a prosperous post-war industry" above even "a smaller burden of taxation." (Motor World, 19.1.45). "The speed limit is undoubtedly the major cause of the drop in sales"- The general manager of the M.G. Car Company (The Scotsman, 17.11.35). "We have to do the speed to sell the car."- A director of the Daimler Car Co., when fined for driving a new car at 76 m p.h. on the public road (Birmingham Post 7.9.35). Finally, this view that restrictions on speed and the drivers would fatally damage the motor industry and the export trade in cars has been a fundamental theme of the Motor Press and the Motor Correspondents, e.g. "Even the shadow of the impending speed limit caused orders (for cars) to decrease alarmingly during the first two months of the year. What would be the effect of a speed limit actually in being, if steps are not taken at once to see that it is fairly administered?" (Autocar, 22.'3.35). "Discourage the home motorist and the industry will suffer, followed, of course, by the export trade." (Motoring Correspondent of the Daily Express, 9.11.37).

Indeed, so obsessed have been the motor interests with this belief, that restrictions on speed and the drivers must fatally damage their industry and export. trade, that they have roundly accused their rivals, the railways, of being the real instigators of the "restrictive" measures. For example, Mr. R. W. Sewell, Chairman of the Road Haulage Association, in a speech in Manchester in 1935, declared that the speed limit was intended "to drive people back to the railways," and this accusation has been constantly repeated in the Motor Press. Behind the protests of the pedestrians have been discerned vast subsidies from the railway companies.

From time to time there have been echoes of internal quarrels between the Motor and the other industrial and financial interests: for example, shortly before the war, when Viscount Nuffield described home steel prices as "an absolute ramp" and the steel industry generally as "fat cigars and nothing to do," and threatened to buy his steel overseas. But with regard to the non-competitive question of road safety the other interest's have- we may safely assume- exerted whatever influence they possess in this congection in support of the views of the motor interests: the road safety question has been set aside as the "special province" of the motor interests and the various spokesmen and mouthpieces of the other interests have at least refrained from any embarrassing comments. In America a prominent part has been played in the fight for road safety by insurance groups. There is no parallel activity in Britain, and we may reasonably attribute this, in part at least, to the fact that here some of the most powerful insurance groups have, large investments in the motor industry.

Here then, finally, we discover the root or fundamental cause of the inaction of the Governments and therefore of the motor slaughter. The motor interests have convinced themselves that "restrictions" on speed and the drivers would fatally damage the motor industry in both the home and the export markets, and so far the Governments have accepted their view. Without this root or fundamental opposition the opposition of the smaller motor interests and of the individual drivers (such as this was) could have been overcome without difficulty and without this the genuine traffic problem- freed as this would have been from the complication of largely uncontrolled speed could also have been solved without undue difficulty. But this- the joint belief of the motor interests and the Governments- has been, as it were, the inner citadel constantly sending out reinforcements to these outlying positions: the inner, scarcely admitted, but "unanswerable " argument. \*The attempts to end or even to reduce the motor slaughter

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\*Viscount Cecil has put the position in this way: "One cannot help feeling that if the official mind regarded the safety of the population with the same degree of solicitation as it displays towards the prosperity of the motor trade we should be much further advanced than we are." (Ped. Associ. News Letter, January 1937), and again, in the House of Lords: "The motor companies are very powerful and very wealthy, and their customers have, unfortunately, a passion for speed. The combination of those two factors has been too great for any Government to face. I do not make a charge against one Government or another, but so far no Government has been prepared to face that combination, or, if they have, they have very soon withdrawn." (21.1145).

have thus been fatally thwarted from the start: at the best there has been uncertainty and hesitancy; at the worst there has been sabotage.

The greater degree of consideration given by the Governments to the cyclists as compared with the pedestrians, is also only explicable in these terms. From the point of view of the drivers, the cyclists are a far greater "nuisance" than the pedestrians, and the drivers detest them still more bitterly. Yet, until recently, they have been at least listened to by the Government, and, though, generally, they have been left to the mercies of the drivers, their wishes in matters of detail have been granted. This is not because cycling is a healthy recreation for millions or because it is a fine sport. It is not even because it is the means of transport for millions of workers and for millions of others in their private affairs. It is because the manufacture of cycles is an industry of at least relative importance, and the same line of reasoning has been followed, that "restrictions" on, or extra duties for, cyclists would harm the industry. The recent rear-light measure, passed despite the protests of the cycling organisations, and against all the lessons of experience, suggests, however, that these limited favours are to end, and that here, as in every other direction, the motor interests are to be supreme. It is interesting and amusing to note that the motor propagandists have attributed this (relative) influence of the cyclists to their "voting power," as if, if voting power were the dominant factor, the situation would not be dominated by the pedestrians. It is perhaps hardly necessary to add that the motoring propagandists see in "voting power " a thoroughly undesirable influence: as in every other direction their outlook here is thoroughly and bitterly anti-democratic.

Of course, with regard to the export trade, it is now clear that this has not been nearly so well managed as we have been led to believe- how little we of the public still know about these things! how vast remains the conspiracy of silence on all matters touching profit that, in fact, so far from its having been developed simultaneously with the home trade, to a large extent-

because presumably the home trade is easier to handle and more profitable- it has been neglected. Mr. Ernest Bevin, when Minister of Labour in the war-time Coalition Government, said in the House of Commons: "This business of the miserably designed car, which has enabled certain of the groups to contribute millions to charity, has been a terrific prejudice to British industry. I do not think one millionaire is sufficient compensation for the loss in our export trade. The management of the motor car

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industry is one of the most disastrous in the country, as we found when we entered the war." (4.6.45) Again, at the dinner referred to above, given by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (15.11.45), the President of the Board of Trade, Sir Stafford Cripps, revealed that only 15 per cent of the motor trade was then export. After asking for "at least 50 per cent," he added: "I have often wondered whether you thought Great Britain was here to support the motor industry or the motor industry was here to serve Great Britain. I gather from your cries, you think it is the latter." It appears then, and this is borne out by everything we know of the world position, that the only problem with the export trade is to produce the cars. But, especially because of its competitive character, the safety issue as described remains in respect of the home market.

Thus, the first step towards ending the motor slaughter must be that the Government and the nation shall face and answer the ancient and fundamental question of human life and decency versus trade and profit. Of course, there can be little doubt that the supposed danger is a mere chimera: that the motor trade itself will benefit from the necessary measures: that when civilised conditions are restored to the roads, not fewer, but more people will want to buy cars. (So, at least in the long run, it has always proved: that the way of decency is also the way of prosperity). But the decision will not be easy: it will demand resolution. The motor interests are immensely powerful and their hatred and fear of "restrictions" on speed and the drivers is deeply rooted and fixed. But until the decision is taken-until this question of human life and decency versus trade and profit is faced and answered-not even a start can be made to deal effectively with the problem.

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## CONCLUSION

*As these pages are being written the Labour Party is taking its first steps in responsible Government. 'So far the record of the Labour Party and of the Trade Unions with regard to the motor slaughter has been supine to a degree. There has been some activity among the rank and file, always the most energetic elements in the two groups, and occasional expressions of concern from headquarters, but no genuine action. Yet the great majority of the victims of the motor slaughter, and especially of the pedestrians, are members of the working class : the very basis of the existence of the Labour Party and of the Trade Unions is the conception of a more humane and equitable state of society; and finally, there is the political danger arising out of the motor slaughter described above. If then, the Labour Government and the Trades Unions fail, now that power is in their hands, to take genuine action to end the motor slaughter, they will be failing in their duty to their own class; to their historic professions and, to some extent, at least, to the political future of the country. The "reconstruction of Britain" will indeed be a dismal failure if it includes as a permanent feature of the national life the killing and maiming of a quarter of a million, or more, persons every year on the roads, with the wholesale lying and bypocrisy by means of which the slaughter is concealed or justified. But there is no reason for failure. As in every other direction, the opportunity is ready at hand. All that is needed is the will to act.*

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