

improved sight distances and flatter grades have done much to make our roads safer.

However, at this hearing we have been concerned with another thing; an aspect of design which has not had that same emphasis and which offers considerable room for improvement.

No rational person could be unaware that the driver, whether as an innocent victim or through errors of omission or commission, is frequently a contributing cause to the accident. As a human being subject to all of the usual human failings, he is sometimes careless and frequently unpredictable.

In any case, we can safely predict that each year thousands of vehicles undoubtedly will continue to hurtle off our highways out of control, as they have done each year in the past. Reasons will range all the way from bee stings, sideswipes, or blowouts to driver error or fatigue. Whatever the reason, they are entitled to a second chance to recover control, without being smashed against some massive concrete or steel object which in too many cases should not have been there at all.

No one can challenge the fact that thousands of the deaths and serious, permanently crippling injuries result from a vehicle leaving the road and overturning or impacting an object which is without adequate protection to the motorist. Too often the object has been placed in his path by the same people who built the highway.

We must restrain ourselves from clutching for excuses which might make our own role in the whole accident picture tend to appear less culpable. It is not enough to point to the faults of the other fellow or to take comfort in what good things we have accomplished. If we are sincere and honest in our purpose; if we really want to reduce the ever-increasing high accident toll, often needless, on our highways, then we must face up to the realities of the situation, accept the facts, and be willing to change. We must look up and broaden the scope of our vision.

One of the significant problems that has been identified is a communication gap between those who know and those who are responsible for the design and construction of the roads. As a result of that gap, the knowledge we have gained from experience and research over the years has often been ignored in practice. Certainly it has been available; much has been set forth in a veritable stream of bulletins, memorandums, and other papers that have issued each year from the Bureau of Public Roads, AASHO, the Highway Research Board, and other sources. The information simply did not reach all the right people. This communication gap is serious; it must be bridged.

Another problem is how to overcome inertia, or resistance to change. Old designs of the type long discarded by progressive highway research and construction people as inadequate, cannot be justified on the basis that, "We have always done it this way." Last year's standard plans must not be blindly relied upon for the design of next year's road.

I think one of the major changes which must take place before there can be hope of lasting improvement in this whole field of highway transportation, is a reevaluation by highway departments of their primary mission.