

culties of serving rural areas, these small towns have much to gain from increased trucking efficiency and productivity.

The original bill as introduced in the Senate was sharply criticized on the grounds of safety, but I feel that the version which finally passed the Senate is a reasonable accommodation, taking into consideration both the economic gains to be realized and the safety factors to be met. The original bill called for a tandem axle limit of 36,000 pounds, but the final version called for 34,000 pounds, which I think is a reasonable modification. In addition, the constant factor in the gross weight formula was reduced from 40 in the original version to 36 in the version that passed the Senate. Since this factor is particularly important for bridge safety, I think it is a good modification.

Much has been said that this legislation would require states to adopt double bottom trailers, or some other type of trailer, but this is totally inaccurate. There is no change in the philosophy that the responsibility for maximum allowable limits for sizes and weight of vehicles operating on the Interstate System rests with the states. The legislation would merely set a Federal maximum limit on sizes and weights. This would allow those states "frozen" at the 1956 level to increase size and weights *if they wanted to do so*.

The increase in width contemplated in this bill is one of its most important features. For more than twenty years we have been building highways to accommodate wider vehicles; the size of the highway, therefore, is no deterrent to a change in this standard. Even more important, however, is the increase in the use of standard containers with an eight foot width, or pallets with a four foot width. With the present outside limit of 96 inches, neither the eight foot container nor two four foot pallets can be carried, because the inside measurement is 96 inches *less* the width of each wall of the trailer.

There are other arguments in support of this legislation, but it seems to me that the main opposition is based on the belief that larger trucks put more stress on the highways, thus causing more wear and posing more safety problems. The fact is that gross weight alone is not the consideration, but rather the number of axles determines the stress on the highway. This is the reason for the emphasis on maximum axle weights, and the emphasis in the gross weight formula on the number of axles and the distance between them.

In conclusion, I think one point that is too often overlooked is that many states, because of the grandfather clause in the 1956 Act, are already operating with size and weight limits equal to or more than the standards incorporated in this legislation. With regard to limits on single axles, every state is at least at the present Federal limit of 18,000 pounds; Fifteen are at or above the 20,000 pounds limit recommended in this bill. With regard to the tandem axle limit, every state is at least at the present Federal limit of 32,000 pounds; eighteen states are at or above the 34,000 pounds limit recommended in this bill. If this bill passed, it is possible that some of these states will stay at the existing Federal levels; this is their choice. On the other hand, it is highly probable that many states will immediately increase their size and weight limits to take advantage of the increased economic benefits by these more liberal standards.

Let me repeat: This legislation contains no Federal mandate for a change in size and weight limitations. It merely sets maximum standards for the Interstate System.