

Naturally I am very much pleased and flattered to have the privilege of helping you observe National Transportation Week. Before I go any further, I do want to say one word in commendation of your good judgment in inviting me to speak. If you wanted someone who was enthusiastic about the general subject of transportation, you could have hunted through every one of the fifty states and not found a single individual who was more interested in ships, trains, roads, airplanes and all the rest than I have been through a good many years. Now if my oratory could only match my enthusiasm, you would be just about to hear one of the darrest speeches you have ever listened to.

When I first came to Congress and luck put me on the Commerce Committee, - which of course is transportation linked to its twin sister agency, communication, - I couldn't have been better pleased if they had doubled my salary. And during the years, the tune on which I have played in season and out is that good transportation and communication has had more to do with making America great, rich, and powerful than any other single factor, unless it could be the character of her citizens and the excellence of her form of government. In this opinion I find myself in complete agreement with prominent people who have had much better opportunity to observe and evaluate our country's development than I have ever had.

Way back in the early years of the eighteen hundreds a Frenchman by the name of De Tocqueville came to this country to look and to comment, mostly in admiration and amazement. The western boundary of the nation had only recently been secured to the Mississippi, and Jefferson had just bought the vast territory to the west of the river and on into the mountains, stretching his authority, as some critics observed, until it cracked. But De Tocqueville was enormously impressed. He noted that navigable rivers penetrated into every part of the vast domain, and rafts and boats were already using those waterways to advantage. Also, steam transportation on rail lines was just coming into

use, and the railroad was beginning to creep through the woods and over the fields. These means of transportation, said De Tocqueville, would bind this vast territory together in bands of steel that could never be broken.

It took a lot of people to fill up the empty spaces of the west, and the country had to wait until it could find enough settlers. The covered wagons of the pioneers give an attractive romantic touch to settlement, but actually these cumbersome vehicles were necessarily few and far between. Far more practical and effective were the operations of the railroad moguls. After the Civil War these enterprising fortune hunters were given huge stretches of land on which to build their tracks. Obviously tracks and trains were useless without people to use them. An intensive campaign to get people to leave the crowded east and move west was inaugurated. Said James J. Hill, one of the most energetic of the empire builders: "You farmers talk of free trade and protection and what this or that political party will do for you. The cost of land in the older parts of this country is so high that you can't afford to buy land and start your sons out in life around you. Why don't you vote a homestead for yourself? That is the only thing Uncle Sam will ever give you. We must have landless men for manless land!"

Hill promised them low rates for the railroad journey west, and let his passengers take some cattle and furniture free. The idea was immensely popular, and thousands of families accepted the offer. It is said that in 1894 a vanguard of homeseekers left Indiana in fourteen passenger coaches, filled with men, women and children, and accompanied by forty-eight freight cars carrying household goods and livestock. And that is the way the west was filled up so fast when it got started.

But it is important that I do not let myself get started on the fascinating tale of transportation development, lest we be kept here all night. But I do beg of you, as a special favor, that if you cannot resist the soporific influence of my song, you at least try to muffle the snores.

I suppose there is not a man here tonight who was present at the birth of the automobile. But possibly a few of the more venerable and white-whiskered ones may remember the day when the driver of a motor vehicle out on the public road was required by law to lead a frightened horse past his snorting and puffing machine. Not too long ago the courts were asked to settle a case in which a horse had reared up and come down with his front feet on the windshield and dash of an automobile. The case was decided against the horse, and the owner was obliged to pay damages. So today, while it may be true that down on the range the buffalo roam, they can't indulge in that habit, legally, on the highways. Roads are built for automobiles, and if animals wish to use them, they would be advised to get some human to put a halter on them and lead them gently, but firmly off the hard-surfaced roadbed.

In the modern style of living, the automobile is regarded not only as a means of getting from here to yander, but as a sort of interim habitation. The young suburban woman who was asked where she lived pointed to her green station wagon and said, "That's where I live." Considering her customary daily routine, she was about right. Early in the morning she took her husband to catch the bus. Then she had to take her older child to school and the younger one to kindergarten. Returning home, she had to go and get the groceries. After lunch she loaded up with her friends and went to the afternoon bridge party. Hurrying away from that, she picked up the children and started dinner. Finally, she met her husband at the bus stop.

Then, of course, there came the airplane, and the jet age. But let's not get into that. You are already too well acquainted with it. The point is that the United States has a great number of strong and viciously competitive transportation systems. We have more miles of highway and more motor vehicles than anybody, and perhaps more than everybody else put together. The same with railroad tracks and freight cars and tug boats and airplanes and everything else in the transportation line. The result is that we can move anything anywhere in

magic time. So we fought a war on every continent at the same instant, and produced all the necessary materials, from pins to battleships, and had them on hand at the scene of conflict when needed. So, also, we produce enough food and clothing and innumerable gadgets of all kinds for ourselves, with enough left over to supply a big part of the world. In short, everything we do and are to make us stand out from the rest of the world depends upon the wonderful systems of transportation we have built and now operate.

All of these systems were assisted, at least in the beginning, by a far-sighted and benevolent government. That phrase in the Preamble to our Constitution which admits that one purpose of government is to promote the general welfare has been used from the beginning of our history as justification for the expenditure of federal funds for transportation development. First, it was used to build roads and canals; then to open up waterways and construct harbors and ports; then to subsidize railroads, and, more recently, it has been poured out in huge sums for the benefit of highway transportation and air flight. The sign, "Project 66," which you see almost everywhere as you travel by auto is the trade-mark of a multi-billion dollar appropriation for so-called Interstate Highways whose ostensible purpose is the provision of military arteries in the event of war. It is only the beginning of other appropriations for the other systems of transportation. Each system, in turn, has been given government priority in the past. Once the railroads enjoyed the prestige and the power accorded the big corporation. Their securities were the blue chips of the money markets. Then came a time, with the increasing competition of the highways and the airways, when the railroads felt more like a cross-eyed step-child with red hair. When the government pointed out to them that in their infancy they had been showered with favor and money, their reply was, "Yeah, but what have you done for us lately?"

It is interesting that in their present misery the railroads do not intend to suffer in silence and in inaction. They are beginning to incubate

new ideas and new plans. They contemplate mergers for the sake of economy. They beseech the rate-fixing agencies for permission to reduce freight and passenger agencies. They have persuaded the Congress to subsidize a high-speed pilot train which may eventually result in speeds measured by the hundreds of miles an hour, where they will beat the highway motor vehicle and challenge the air borne traffic. They have even shown some ingenuity in advertising, which is witnessed by these excerpts from a printed ad of one of the railway lines:

You don't have to park a train.

Trains don't wiggle around in traffic.

Trains don't swear at you for not moving faster.

Commuting by train costs less than by car.

Nobody ever asks a train for its registration.

Nevertheless, it is going to be hard to arouse any serious opposition to automobiles. At the moment they enjoy highly popular favor, and nothing anybody can say hurts their popularity. Back in my home state an old mountaineer used to sit on his cabin porch and watch the cars go by. Day after day, hour after hour, they went by in an endless stream. The old fellow said he couldn't possibly imagine where all those cars were going. Finally he bought one of his own. Then he found out. They were going to the repair shop. Maybe so. But a lot of them are still in condition to run quite a lot of the time. So we will try another tack. Maybe we can scare you. If you have any faith in statistics, we can tell you that 50,000 people are being killed by cars every year. And the totals are going up and up and up. At the ~~rate~~ ^{current} rate, it figures out that one out of every 40 people in this room will die in an auto accident. Don't look at the fellow next to you. You are just as likely to be the victim as he. But you wouldn't believe it. If you did believe it, you would stay out of automobiles and go by bus or some other way. You would hardly take the same

chance with typhoid fever or with cancer.

Proposed automobile safety legislation has the spot light at the present time. As we sit and listen to the evidence presented by the various groups and individuals interested in the legislation, it becomes clear that somebody else is to blame for what is wrong with the automobile. Mr. Nader and others are sure the manufacturer is at fault. Or possibly the dealer, who doesn't check the car before turning it over to the purchaser. The manufacturer argues that the cars are safe enough if the drivers wouldn't run them into places where they are not intended to go. When the individual driver gets into trouble, he can't see why the cop has to pick on him and let the real traffic violator get away. If the cop does bring a man to court, the judge turns him loose. Lawyers as a class are not interested in traffic safety. There is too much money in traffic accident cases. The insurance companies would rather settle claims out of court; they can get the rates raised to take care of the unnecessary costs, and that helps business, too. So the whole matter gets the run-around and the bum's rush. Far be it from me to treat the highway accident matter lightly. But it is going to take overwhelming public reaction to the accident situation to get anything really effective done about it. Sometimes I think our attitude is not essentially different from that of ancient and presumably much less sophisticated peoples. They did not think it unreasonable to sacrifice a certain number of human beings to the particular god they happened to worship. We have made a minor deity, at least, of the automobile, and we are not surprised that he exacts some lives as a tribute to his importance on the social and economic scene.

There are numerous other facets of this interesting subject with which I would like to deal briefly. But I do not think it would be right to close these remarks without delving somewhat into statistics. In fact, I am not sure it is lawful to make a speech without statistics. Certainly, as the executioner explained in *The Mikado*, they give an air of verisimilitude to

Facts which are otherwise dull and unconvincing. And many people believe firmly that when the statistics have been presented, the last word has been said on the subject. So be it in this case.

As you all are aware, the President has put forward a proposal to co-ordinate all the agencies of transportation under a single Department of Administration, with the general idea that each agency, or means, may receive equal treatment and consideration. The proposal has brought to light a wealth of statistics of various kinds, and I must admit that I have been impressed ~~impressed~~ with some of them. If the magnitude of the transportation problem, and its importance to the nation, justifies the creation of a federal department to serve its needs, then transportation certainly ~~deserves~~ such recognition. Some of the figures run like this:

53 per cent of the total population of this country travelled last year, and the proportion is increasing every year. What was surprising to me is that only 19 per cent were going for business reasons; the other 81 per cent were hunting pleasure or just travelling. At least 77 per cent of the people will go somewhere on vacation this year; half of them don't know where they will go yet, but they do know they will go somewhere. Inferentially, it is the going on which they are set, and not on getting to any particular place. The means of transportation which they favor seem to be about as follows: 50 per cent would like to go by plane, 37 per cent by boat, 42 per cent by car, 26 per cent by train, and 22 per cent by bus. If you are puzzled that these figures should add up to a whole lot more than 100 per cent, remember that there is no law against switching from boat to train to car, etc., en route. The thing that is important here is that every available transportation agency has its adherents.

Another set of figures emphasize the economic importance of transportation as an industry. The United States spends 120 billion dollars a year for transportation, something like a sixth of the gross national product, or more. The tax on transportation brings in 20 billion dollars, one-fifth of the national

budget. At the same time, the transportation industry pays 34 per cent of state and local taxes. Again, the industry buys half of the country's petroleum, rubber, and lead, and a quarter of the aluminum, steel, zinc, and cement. Altogether, it employs some 9 million people, or about an eighth of all civilian employment.

Fortunately for you, these figures quite take my breath away, and I must perforce close my remarks. And if they do not impress you with the magnitude and importance of transportation as a vigorous and prosperous industry, I do not know what to do with you.