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THE REPORT
OF THE
COMMITTEE OF TEN

— — —

TO THE
GOVERNORS HIGHWAY
SAFETY COMMITTEE

○ — ○

STATE HOUSE
AUGUSTA MAINE

▽ DEC. 27 1935 ▽

In October, 1935, the Honorable Louis J. Brann, Governor of Maine named a committee of approximately fifty citizens to consider the appalling increase in the toll of life and limb being taken on the streets and highways of Maine, to take cognizance of the rising highway fatality curve of this year, to study the highway safety problem in all its phases and to make recommendations for betterment.

As the result of a meeting of this representative group and to expedite the formulation of a complete, well-balanced plan of action, the Chief Executive was asked to name a COMMITTEE OF TEN, as a sub-committee. This Committee of Ten was instructed to study all phases of the problem, to investigate successful procedures elsewhere, to consider the many suggestions offered and to recommend a set-up and plan of attack to the parent committee for its consideration.

The Committee of Ten was duly appointed and proceeded to hold meetings in accordance with instructions. As a result of these meetings and after an intensive study of the problem, as well as after careful consideration of methods elsewhere, suggestions, physical and financial limitations, the Committee of Ten developed the following proposals. They are respectfully submitted to the Governor of Maine and his Highway Safety Committee for consideration and action.

It is recommended that the Governor's Highway Safety Committee continue to function, serving as a group, representative of the people of Maine and acting as an Advisory Group to such state officials and official groups as may be charged with, concerned with, or responsible for, safety on the streets and highways of Maine.

It is recommended that the Governor's Highway Safety Committee constitute a nucleus for a state-wide effort for safety betterment, working for a general intensification of activities, coordinating the many agencies now striving for such a result, enlisting the hundreds of potential forces available, stressing safety education and otherwise directing an intelligent, forceful and relentless attack upon the deplorable street and highway accident situation now prevailing.

It is proposed for the consideration of the Governor's Committee that the attack be drawn along four basic lines, i.e., EDUCATION, ENGINEERING, ENFORCEMENT and ENTHUSIASM - these basic approaches to be developed by a complete organization set up along the following lines.

The Committee of Fifty, made up of the personnel of the present Governor's Highway Safety Committee, serving as a General Committee and a Board of Control, to which group will be referred matters of policy, reports of progress, proposed legislation, and the like, by a small group to be known as the Executive Committee, its personnel being that of the present Committee of Ten.

The Committee of Ten, serving as an Executive Committee, shall exercise a constant and general supervision over the accident prevention activities of the organization, shall execute to the best of its ability the wishes of the General Committee and perform such special duties and functions as may be assigned to it by the General Chairman.

It is urged that Governor Louis J. Brann be named as Honorary Chairman of both Committees and that Honorable Lewis O. Barrows, Secretary of State, be named as General Chairman with complete jurisdiction over committees and functions.

In the opinion of the Committee of Ten, the success or failure of this movement for greater street and highway safety depends almost entirely upon the degree and type of leadership given those who must necessarily execute the many and several tasks associated with such an activity. It being utterly impossible for either the Chief Executive or the Secretary of State to devote to the matter the requisite amount of time, it follows and is the recommendation of this Committee that a full-time Safety Director be named by the Governor of Maine.

Such full time Director would report directly to the Governor and the Secretary of State, develop the several phases of the work, organize and advise with Committees, submit frequent and complete reports and otherwise carry out the wishes of the Executive Committee. By such an appointment the work could be assured of a sustained momentum and the essential continuity; success or failure seems to hinge upon leadership in matters such as this.

The problem of street and highway safety betterment has been resolved into nine principal, basic approaches, as follows:

EDUCATION (Child and Adult)
ENGINEERING & TRAFFIC CONTROL
COOPERATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES
LEGISLATION, LAWS, REGULATIONS & COURTS
COOPERATION WITH OTHER ACCIDENT PREVENTION AGENCIES
LAW ENFORCEMENT
PUBLICITY
STATISTICS & ANALYSES
COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

It is recommended that these be adopted by the Committee of Fifty and that the Secretary of State be given authority to name the personnel of these and such other committees as there may be need for.

Developing in greater detail the need for and proposed functions of the several committees named above, your Committee of Ten offer the following comments for consideration and guidance:

Education will prove to be the greatest single force in the development of a street and highway safety betterment. This has been proven repeatedly by the experience of our industries and an innumerable analyses have shown that a "failure to think" or "a failure to appreciate the hazards involved" or a "failure to properly weigh and evaluate factors involved" have resulted in a host of terrible disasters.

It is the hope of your committee that great emphasis be placed upon the several educational angles, especially those of the youngster in school, the youth about to apply for a driving license, the visual education phase and the force of reiteration as expressed in poster displays, newspaper space, the radio and the personal contact through the medium of speakers, etc. It is also hoped, in this connection, that educators will take cognizance of the problem and opportunity to incorporate proper courses into the curricula of Maine's schools as quickly as possible.

It is recommended that the Committee for Engineering & Traffic Control be very carefully chosen and made all-inclusive. The functions of this group will range from the making of "spot maps" (showing concentrations of hazards and law violations) through to the studies of traffic flow, road marking, road design and standardization of markers, signs and signals. It is intended that such a committee work in closest collaboration with the State Highway Department, municipalities, the railroads and the like.

The Committee having to do with the development of the complete cooperation of municipalities will be charged with a study of existing conditions and problems and especially with the encouragement of an intensification of activities in those areas where but little has been done in the way of a well-balanced drive upon hazards. It is hoped that this Committee will be able to bring about a series of organizations in political sub-divisions of the State comparable to the all-inclusive set-up herein proposed for the State of Maine.

Should the Committee of Fifty feel that existing Motor Vehicle Law legislation is inadequate or to some degree unsatisfactory, or should surveys and studies reveal any striking discrepancies in penalties as assessed by our many courts for certain infractions of the Motor Vehicle Laws, then a need would exist for a Committee on Laws, Legislation, Regulations and Courts to recommend such action as would be compatible with the situation. The Committee of Ten urge the creation of such a committee and recommend to its attention the need for a number of studies dealing with offenses, penalties, court practice, certain difficulties met with in attempts to obtain convictions, establishment of guilt and the like. Such a Committee could be of decided assistance in the way of assisting those who introduce worthy highway safety legislation at the next Legislature.

A superficial survey has been undertaken by your Committee of Ten to learn that the many insurance companies, Legion Posts, other service organizations, the American Red Cross, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, civic organizations and luncheon clubs are not only willing but anxious to participate in the drive for improved safety conditions on our streets and highways. A wealth of material resources and services are available, needed only to be coordinated. The Committee to cooperate with other accident prevention agencies seems necessary to this Committee.

Committees dealing with law enforcement, publicity, statistics-analyses and commercial vehicles are so obviously necessary to the success of this venture as to make any comment superfluous; we earnestly urge the creation of such Committees.

Among the many phases studied, your Committee of Ten offers the following few for consideration and for possible assignment to the proper committees for a complete development. These seem to constitute the principal details of a Safety Program such as is advocated and while desirable in the estimation of the Committee, are offered merely as suggestions. Each, however, has merit as proven by their employment elsewhere and it would seem that when certain or all of these are firmly woven into Maine's accident prevention scheme, the program would be guaranteed no small measure of success.

- The Adoption of an Official Observer System
- A Possible Employment of Auxiliary Police Forces
- A Physical Examination of Drivers
- A Survey of Existing Traffic Signs, Signals, etc.
- The Elimination of Obsolete Speed Limits.
- Attention to the Carbon Monoxide Hazard
- The Adoption of a Standard Code of Hand Signals
- The Inauguration of Traffic Studies
- A Study of Hazards created by Detours, Road Construction and Disabled Vehicles Along the Right of Way
- The Employment of "Flying Squadrons" of State Police
- The Encouragement of Walking on Left Side of Rural Highways.
- The Drawing of "Spot Maps" for State, Cities and Towns.
- Radio Equipment for State Police.
- The Requiring of Spare Head Lamps.
- A Standardization of Construction Markings, Marking of Vehicle Break-downs, etc.
- A Study of "Fixing" of Police Tags.
- The Study of and More Severe Punishment of "Repeaters".
- A greater Publicity on Convictions of Motor Vehicle Law Violators.
- The Award of Merit Stickers to Signers of Safety Pledges.
- A utilization of an Outdoor Advertising Program.
- A Study of the Pedestrian Problem.
- The Development of a Safe Driving Program Designed Particularly for Summer Visitors.

Of the foregoing list of suggested approaches, only the "Official Observer System" is in need of explanation. This proposal is not new, having been employed with very considerable success in certain states, among these being New Jersey, Connecticut, Texas, Iowa and New York. A number of cities, notably Schenectady, N. Y. and Dallas, Texas, report the idea as being the hub of their programs.

Concisely, the Official Observer System as recommended for adoption in Maine calls for the appointment of a certain number of men and women, possessed of judgment, sincerity of purpose and reputed for their sense of fairness, to the staff of the Secretary of State. Such "Observers" will serve without pay and have no police power whatsoever.

By being thus appointed, these observers will enjoy a certain official or semi-official status and their activities will be closely identified with the accident prevention efforts of the Motor Vehicle Division and the State of Maine. Proper identification (probably in the form of a card) will be supplied, together with specific instruction and reporting forms.

Their activities will be confined to the reporting of violations of certain of Maine's Motor Vehicle laws and to the transmittal of such information concerning accidents, traffic conditions and other highway hazards as may be interesting to the Secretary of State and of help in the development of the proposed highway safety program.

A list of those so appointed will not be made public and every effort will be made to protect such Observers against embarrassment, court appearances and the like. The object of the proposal is not to fill the courts with offenders, or to establish a "spy" system; its intent and sole purpose is to record violations in a central office (The Motor Vehicle Division) that cognizance may be taken of each in a courteous but firm fashion.

The tentative procedure, if the Committee of Fifty approves, will be the appointment of the Observers by the Governor or Secretary of State and they to be carefully instructed and supplied with postcards, by means of which data may be quickly entered by checking on a printed list. Such cards would immediately be mailed to the Motor Vehicle Division for action and filing. It might be well to authorize the use of the telephone or telegraph in cases of extreme emergency, that State Police units or municipal authorities might be enabled to act quickly and intelligently in such instances. This would be particularly desirable in the cases of flagrant offenses committed by drivers of out-of-state cars.

Upon receipt of a first card reporting a car or driver, a courteous letter would be sent by the Motor Vehicle Division, calling attention to the alleged offense and emphasizing the need for care, caution and thought in the operation of motor vehicles. In lieu of this, or in cases where it would seem more desirable, a State Police officer or local police official would be asked to interview the offender.

A second report (honored only from a different Observer to obviate any possibility of spite or prejudice) would call for a stern letter of warning or a visitation as mentioned above.

Third and fourth complaints of a similar nature and from different Observers would certainly create a doubt as to the ability of the persons in question to operate motor vehicles. It is possible that many such alleged offenders, reported three or more times for flagrant violations of the Motor Vehicle law would be called upon to prove to the satisfaction of the Secretary of State their fitness to hold an operator's license.

Assuredly, such a violations file would afford a certain measure of one's safety attitude and driving ability and would go far toward isolating that 15% of all drivers responsible for nearly all motor vehicle accidents.

Your Committee has given much consideration to the Official Observer proposal and finds considerable merit in it; certainly it costs but little to try and there is every reason to believe that the success met with elsewhere in this regard will be duplicated in Maine. It would seem to your Committee that fire alarm systems are maintained by municipalities for much the same purpose.

Your Committee respectfully submits the foregoing report and suggestions and hopes that a well-organized, well-balanced and effective program will result. The Committee of Ten also hopes that the personnel of the parent Committee continue to ally themselves with any resulting program and acknowledges with gratitude the opportunity as well as the many suggestions submitted for its consideration.

Lewis O. Barrow Chairman

For the Committee of Ten.