

WE PAY ANTI-ROAD JOBS' DOLE CHEQUES!

The Luddite of the Year award must surely be jointly bestowed on those fine, upstanding Whitehall-based Benefits Agency bureaucrats who have decided that anti-road protesters blocking the progress of the Newbury bypass development by occupying trees in its path may be deemed as available for work and therefore eligible for benefit cheques which will be delivered to them at their arborial addresses!

It demonstrates the extent to which a predominantly anti-car, anti-road Civil Service establishment can manipulate a weak Government, running scared; and which is therefore prepared to pander to tiny but vocal minority interest groups like the anti-road lobby in a misguided attempt to bolster its waning popularity.

It is a great pity that the environmental movement is progressively being taken over by people who are more concerned with media impact than scientific truth; who have compromised their principles in a welter of revenue-raising, "never mind the scientific reality, "just look at the air-time we're getting!!", sensationalist soundbites.

As their foot soldiers they are using the more militant, rabble-rousing elements of the unemployed; those who would, in the past, have been attracted to the more extreme Left- and Right-wing philosophies, but have now embraced the "Bash the car, bash the driver" cause; possibly partly out of envy, and certainly in an attempt to gain a façade of credibility and legitimacy for their yobbery.

The real crime is that those of us who appreciate the benefits that the motor vehicles and good roads confer are busy working, driving the economy forward and paying taxes - taxes which are being fecklessly frittered away in providing benefits to rent-a-mob activists who clearly have no intention of *ever* finding jobs; whose ethos is inimically opposed to democracy and whose main objective is the disruption of the very fabric of our society.

Meanwhile, the long-suffering residents and commuters of Newbury, and many other towns awaiting by-pass developments, are paying the price of Civil Service prejudice coupled with Government indecision and impotence. Really it is a price in wasted resources, time, anxiety and stress, that is far too high.

But anti-road protesters aren't interested in cold, hard, scientific facts - only in causing mayhem. Heaven preserve us from mindless, irrational zealots, weasel-faced bureaucrats and weak, spineless politicians!

New threat to bypass

According to reports in the media, English Nature has discovered that the habitat of an endangered and declining species, namely *Vertigo moulinsiana*, resides in the path of the Newbury bypass. This species has been given "super reserve status" under the European Habitats and Species Directive and as a consequence benefits from the highest level of protection. This protection can only be waived for "imperative reasons of overriding public interest". English Nature is considering whether to designate the site as

an area for special conservation status and if this were to happen, work on the bypass would be severely delayed pending a solution to the problem being found. Just delaying a major road construction project like this, even for a few days, would be extremely expensive, let alone the cost of diversion.

Vertigo moulinsiana is a slow moving mollusc (snail). Readers may consider that relocating the habitat of a snail would be a lot easier and cheaper than the alternative. But someone would have to catch it first.

Issue 10, Spring 1996

£3.00

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ABD Gatso watch

- First fruits of your survey.

Your letters

Three Cheers!

Council taxpayers fund anti roads campaign

Almost unbelievably, in addition to their personal dole cheques, courtesy of income tax payers, council tax payers have inadvertently been contributing further lump sums to the anarchists' coffers!

The Sunday Telegraph reported recently that anti roads campaigners had received financial grants from local authorities, amounting to tens of thousands of pounds. The campaigners had used the funding to support direct action to block much needed schemes; including the Newbury bypass. At least thirty authorities had given council taxpayers' money in this way; including Hillingdon and Croydon. Advice from legal experts indicates that the grants may be ultra vires and therefore illegal.

Transport Minister uses car for station run

The Minister of Transport, Sir George Young, recently spoke at a transport forum in Warwickshire where he is said to have been "particularly critical of short car trips of under 2.5 miles". We learn, however, that he drives every day from his home to his local railway station, a distance of about one mile. At Paddington station, he is met by his official car for the chauffeur driven run to his office, while his fellow commuters fight their way across London on the Underground.

Road Building Halted

According to a report in Construction News (January 25th) the Highways Agency has halted another twenty major road maintenance projects over and above the budget cutbacks already announced; see last issue of OTR. Many of these projects had already been tendered for by hard pressed construction firms, which will have to bear the high cost of the abortive bids themselves. The roads affected include the A2, A21, M20 and M27.

Paul Everitt, of the British Roads Federation, was reported to have said: "We are deeply concerned at this latest development. There are already more than 2,600km of trunk road and 960km of motorway in need of urgent maintenance and any further cutback in road maintenance only brings the whole road network closer to the point of collapse."

London's Roads Crumbling

London's Evening Standard (February 1st) reported that Government research released in 1994 had shown that each every class of highway in London was in a poorer condition of repair as compared to 1979 when the current Conservative administration was first elected.

Defects double

Apparently road maintenance expenditure cuts in 1994 and 1995 together with harsh winter conditions in recent years had contributed to the problem.

The increase in defects since 1984 were 99% trunk, 41% principal, 43% urban classified and 82% unclassified.

Fuel Tax Scam!

The DoT is desperate to find resources for road building. In the last round of Treasury cutbacks the roads budget was reduced by a third to £8 bn.

Ministers, worried about the unpopularity of road tolling, have put forward a plan for additional fuel taxes. The new taxes would be hypothecated to a "Road Fund" for spending by a newly privatised Highways Agency.

The hypothecation of taxes is strictly against Treasury regulations. What will be the quid pro quo for a bending of the rules? A massive rise in pump prices and

an increase in the amount British motorists subsidise the chancellor's awful black hole.

The plan was originally put to the chancellor by our friends the Automobile Association. With friends like these who needs enemies. In any case what happened to the original road fund licence?

AA and RAC team up to shame government

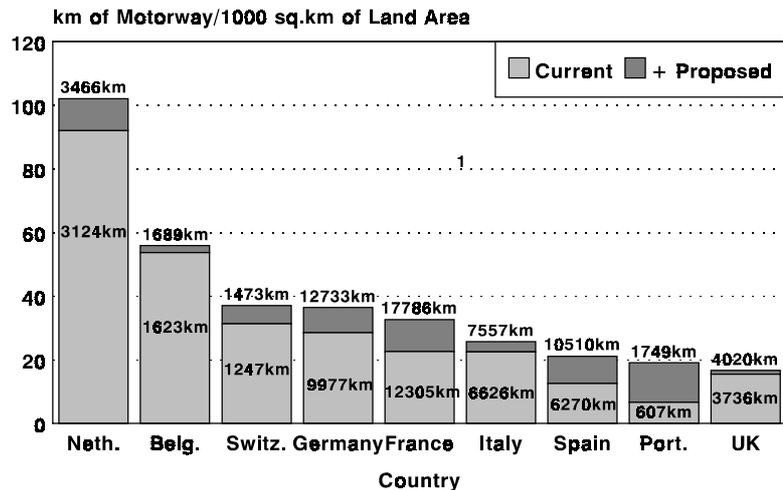
On the other hand have our friends in the motoring organisations seen the light? According to a recent press report the AA and the RAC have teamed up to campaign to shame the government into

increasing the paltry share of motoring taxation actually spent on maintaining and building roads.

Simon Dyer AA chief was reported to have said that UK's roads were "sinking to third world standards." The AA and RAC are campaigning for an exact breakdown of the amount we pay in fuel taxation to be displayed at garage forecourts and on fuel pumps. Mr Dyer said "For every £10 of petrol or diesel that you buy the Chancellor takes £7.50. Yet barely £2 of this goes to improve, manage and maintain the roads network. The resulting gulf has become a national shame." The campaign is intended to expose the Chancellor at every fill up.

"Great" Britain: Europe's highway paupers (see opposite)

Current & Proposed EEC Motorway Lengths



Data Sources: - (1) Motorways - International Road Federation Motorway Databook 1994
- (2) Total Highway Lengths & Land Areas: World Fact Book 1992

The Association of British Drivers

On The Road is published by Pro-Motor, a company limited by Guarantee and registered in England under no: 2945728.

For contact details see:
www.abd.org.uk/contacts.htm

“GREAT” BRITAIN: EUROPE’S HIGHWAY PAUPERS

“If the pro-road lobby gets its way, the country will be covered in tarmac...” How many times have we heard this, or some similar combination of anti-road eco-babble, from one “environmentalist” or other in recent months? Well, as ever, the Association of British Drivers is pleased to provide you with a scientifically balanced perspective:

We in Britain are paupers in terms of high quality roads and are comprehensively trounced by our European contemporaries in this respect.

The adjacent charts and tables show that we are substantially behind all our major European competitors both in terms of kilometres of motorway for every 1000 square kilometres of land area; and, in many cases, in terms of *total kilometres of road* for every square kilometre of land area.

environmentally-conscious Holland is near the top of the table

Tiny, environmentally-conscious Holland is near the top of the table on both counts by a comprehensive margin with a current 92.04km of motorway for every 1000 square km of its land area; and 3.18km of total road length for every sq.km of its land area.

Belgium is a comfortable second for motorways with 53.69km per 1000sq.km of land area (rising to 55.87 when a further 66km of planned expansions have been added).

France currently has 22.55km of motorway for every 1000sq.km of land area, with 5481km of planned expansions taking it to 32.60 by 2010).

As usual, we in Britain win the wooden spoon with a current 15.46km per 1000sq.km for motorways, rising to 16.64 if a further 284km of planned expansions actually go ahead; and with a paltry 1.50km of total road length for every sq.km of land area: less than half of the comparable ratio for the Netherlands, we are distinctly mid-table non-entities.

We are, in consequence, alongside European fast-improving also-rans like Spain and Portugal (who are both, in fairness, dramatically expanding and improving the quality of their road networks as you read this).

Is it any wonder we Britons have chronic congestion on *our* motorways and major roads when we have amongst the highest traffic densities in Europe with the one of the lowest densities of high class road?

But will the politicians and environmental terrorists take heed? Well, they’ve never allowed such minor obstacles as the Truth to get in the way of their tall stories before; so we can hardly expect them to start now, can we?

All roads, 1992 figures

	Road length (km)	Land Area (’000sq.km)	Road density (km/sq.km)
Belgium	103000	30230	3.41
Netherlands	108000	33940	3.18
France	1551000	545630	2.84
Switzerland	62000	39770	1.56
UK	363000	241590	1.50
Germany	466000	349520	1.33
Italy	294000	294020	1.00
Portugal	74000	91640	0.81
Spain	151000	499400	0.30

Existing motorway, 1994 figures

	Motorway (km)	Land Area (’000sq.km)	Motorway density (km/1000sq.km)
Netherlands	3124	33940	92.04
Belgium	1623	30230	53.69
Switzerland	1247	39770	31.36
Germany	9977	349520	28.54
France	12305	545630	22.55
Italy	6626	294020	22.54
UK	3736	241590	15.46
Spain	6270	499400	12.56
Portugal	607	91640	6.62

Motorway, planned for 2010

	Motorway (km)	Land Area (’000sq.km)	Motorway density (km/1000sq.km)
Netherlands	3466	33940	102.12
Belgium	1689	30230	55.87
Switzerland	1473	39770	37.04
Germany	12733	349520	36.43
France	17786	545630	32.60
Italy	7557	294020	25.70
Spain	10510	499400	21.05
Portugal	1749	91640	19.09
UK	4020	241590	16.64

These league tables show how Britain is heading for relegation. See also the graph opposite.

How can we compete economically when we are so poorly served by such a key resource as the roads infrastructure?

UK & World News Roundup

Liberal Democrats favour road tolls

Paddy Ashdown wants to impose a daily charge of £3 on motorists entering London. He has also declared his party's commitment to an electronic road toll system which he believes should be levied on car users.

Skye-high road tolls defied

The Government should perhaps be taking note of the strength of feeling against road tolls on the Isle of Skye. Many islanders have said that they would rather go to jail than pay the toll of £5.20 to cross the new bridge which links the island to mainland Scotland.

A protest organisation called SKAT (Skye and Kyle Against the Tolls) has been formed by angry residents, and apparently about 2000 drivers have now crossed the bridge without paying, about 1 in 50 of the bridge users. One of them, a Councillor called Drew Miller, is facing 26 charges under the New Roads and Streets Act 1991, with a potential fine of up to £1000 fine for each offence.

187 people face charges under that Act so far, but the protesters are now challenging the competency of the charge, which is a procedure open to them under Scots law.

The protesters say that even many of the drivers who do pay the tolls support their organisation, and that the strength of feeling is now so high that many people who have never broken a law before, including doctors, church ministers, and teachers are flouting the toll charges.

Just like the Poll Tax, road toll protests are starting in Scotland. If the Government insists on pressing ahead with tolling in England and Wales, they are likely to spread southwards.

How does a nude protester get home?

Rumour has it that the nude protester who burst into Coventry Cathedral in the middle of a service to commemorate the Centenary of the Automobile in this country was given a lift to Exeter by a journalist after pulling off her stunt... in a car, of course!

What was even more surprising was

that the sheer disrespect that the antics of a nude protester in a house of God, must have shown to this country's established religion, if not to the Lord himself, caused hardly a ripple.

Has environmentalism overtaken Christianity as the principal religion in this country.

(Anti-) Transport Minister plans corporations to take over roads

Sir George Young, our current Minister of Transport (or should that be Minister Against Transport?), is considering moving ownership of our main road network into the hands of public or private "corporations" who would finance and maintain the roads from tolls or extra duty on fuel. He intends to "sell" the idea by saying that this would remove road spending from the public expenditure budget, thus, in theory, securing more even funding for our crumbling road network.

new road starts have fallen by 98%

In fact, of course, it would mean that the Government could pocket even more money from motorists and the road haulage industry and do even less for us. Complex - and controversial - new legislation would be needed for the project, so it will not happen before the next election. Lack of Parliamentary time is the excuse; fear of the electoral backlash is more likely to be the reason.

In the meantime, new road starts have now fallen by 98% in the past five years.

M4 elevated section at risk

A report in "Building" magazine in February indicated that the investigative work being undertaken to assess the corrosion damage on the viaduct section of the M4 in west London was proceeding at an exceptionally leisurely pace, considering the potential for "carnage" should any part of the road give way. According to an "official" the government was concerned at the political implications of carrying out the work in the run up to the general election. The worry was that the heavy work

involved might distract west London voters.

Another instance of the Government putting its own direct political interest before that of the public.

It's official:

Roads benefit the economy! ...but only in Telford

A recent full page advertisement in the (London) Evening Standard placed by the Telford Development Agency put forward the case for business relocation to "the heart of unspoilt Shropshire countryside". In very large print the ad read as follows:

"£2,000m of private and public investment means better roads, better roads lead to faster deliveries, faster deliveries mean a better service.

"From 0 to 60 everything runs smoothly in Telford."

It continued

"If you're considering relocation, see Telford, then decide. It could put your company on the road to greater success."

Now just try to imagine the Government putting out a similar advertisement in the international press and substituting the words GREAT BRITAIN for Telford. You just can't, can you!

Protesters block Brenner Pass, Austria

There was a 24 hour blockade of the Brenner pass in Austria earlier this year, causing traffic jams on both the Italian and Austrian sides. More than a thousand demonstrators blocked the road, which forms the main link between Munich and Milan, in protest at the imposition of an annual fee in addition to the Sch300 (£19.00) toll charge on the 25km motorway.

Letters



Sir - My enthusiasms in life are (in descending order) cars, cricket, computers, and (a long way behind) chess. It is the combination of the first two which recently gave me an insight about why pedestrians are always grumbling that motorists are going too fast.

Anyone who has ever watched cricket from square leg or point will wonder how the batsman can see the ball, let alone play it. Of course, looking down wicket, as the batsman does, it is much clearer. Something coming towards you is muore easily seen than the same object passing across you.

A pedestrian standing on the pavement, looking at passing traffic, sees it all as fast, fast, fast. The driver, however, seeing the scenery approaching him, knows that he is travelling at a safe speed.

On another matter, I am not sure we should welcome the "90 mph" call of the

Chief Constable. He suggests that anyone exceeding that figure should lose his car. What is he thinking of? Can anyone with any brains really believe that it is never safe to do 100 mph? Confiscation would be a worse petty tyranny than we have now.

Lance K Green BA Dip Stats,
Newport, Gwent

And not so petty either! - Ed.

Sir - Could I appeal for information from members on those in positions of authority who support our cause? For example, how many Chief Constables would support higher speed limits?

Who is it who sets the speed limits anyway? Do they have any relevant qualifications? There is a particular spot near me where the police know they can always stop any number of drivers for "speeding" because no-one is going to

drive at 30mph up a very steep hill where there are two wide lanes going up and no hazards. Even timid old ladies drive at 50mph to get up.

Personally I am very much in favour of alternative forms of travel where they are practical. I would use a cycle for many journeys if only there were a proper system of safe cycle ways.

Where I live, it seems ridiculous to build tens of thousands of houses with no new roads to cope with the greatly increased traffic. Some people even have to queue to leave their housing estate in the mornings!

It may be possible for some people to work entirely from home in the future utilising video computers or video phones, obviating the need to commute. Until these alternatives are available, however, we must cope with existing traffic by building the long overdue roads.

CJ Wren, Southampton

ABD Gatso Watch

The Association has decided to determine the position of every camera site on the motorway and trunk road network. Members will be notified of camera sites initially via On The Road and we are pleased to publish the first batch below.

However, the scheme depends on **you!**

All members should report (as accurately as possible, of course) the location of camera sites known to them.

As well as the information printed below it would be helpful if you could note other details as appropriate such as Town, Road name and a full map reference if possible. Direction could be Both or Reversible as well as NSEW.

Don't forget, we are concentrating on motorway, trunk and other main roads.

County	Road	Dirn.	Location	OS Map Ref	Limit	Cameras
	A29	S	on entering town			1
	A3	B	going into London on the narrow lane urban section			3 each way
	A3	E	where 40 limit begins		40	1
	A3	E	just before the underpass at the A219 junction		40	1
	A3	W	just after the A306 traffic lights as 3 lanes go into 2		40	1
	A34	S	0.75M S of junction with M40			
	A345		Chiseldon nr Swindon	SU1979		1
	A417		Stratton nr Cirencester	SP0103		1
	A419		Latton nr Cirencester	SU0806		2
	A420		between Shivenham & Faringdon nr Swindon	SU2792		1
	A420		between Faringdon & Kingston Bagpuige	SU3497		1
	A420		nr Cumnor	SP4604		1
	A43		nr M40 J10	SP5528		1
	A45			SP3676		2
	A45					1
	A45	B	between A46 at Coventry and M42			numerous
Avon	M5	B	vicinity of Bristol		70	3 each way
Essex	A12	NE	N of M25 in space of 3 miles		70	4
London	A10	B	between M25 and N Circular			5 plus 2J

Safety and Speed Issues

ABD view on speed cameras vindicated: Oxfordshire road deaths rise despite Gatso blitz

Road Safety Minister, Steven Norris, while unveiling the 300th London area speed camera site, took the opportunity to praise their effectiveness in "detering speed in areas that in the past have suffered too many unnecessary accidents".

Sadly, this is at variance with the truth: in the area concerned there were 1267 accidents (1661 casualties) the year before cameras were introduced. This dropped to 1015 (1324 casualties) in the year of their introduction, rising again to 1161 (1544 casualties) in 1995: *in the second year of their installation, accidents and casualties are virtually back to pre-camera levels.*

In fact, the West London police admit that there has been a 45% increase in the number of "rear-end shunt" type accidents caused by drivers travelling too close to the preceding (rapidly decelerating) vehicle on the approach to a camera site. Details of the West London situation are given in the next article.

What Mr Norris clearly *meant* by his utterance was that speed cameras are effective, in *specific, very limited conditions*, in moderating the *inappropriate* application of speed in urban areas and at known accident blackspots.

In urban areas with high concentrations of children (and pedestrians generally), of cyclists, at light-controlled traffic junctions, in the vicinity of schools and so on, this is a very laudable aim of which the Association of British Drivers is wholly in favour.

It is true that a dramatic reduction in fatal and serious accidents has coincided with the introduction of speed cameras in the West London area: no more than a continuation of a trend that has been in place since before the inception of speed cameras.

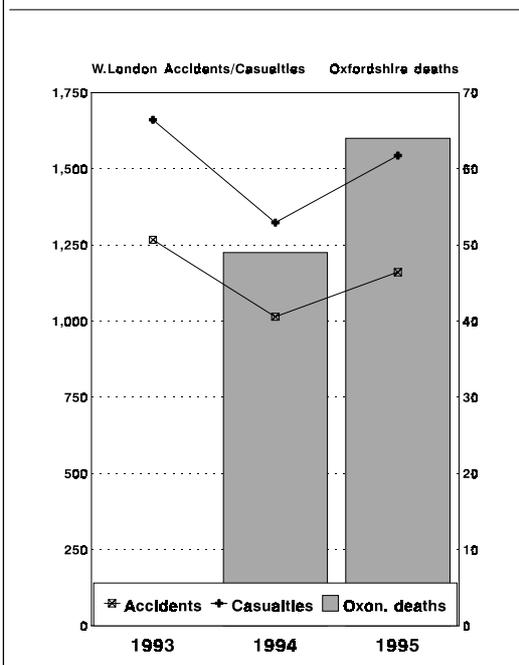
The reduction in casualties has, of course, also coincided with the widespread introduction of ABS, passenger-car side-impact bars and airbags; all of which have played an enormous part in the road accident fatality and serious injury reductions; a part the authorities choose to downplay (for reasons which are not too obscure to the thinking man).

What Mr Norris however failed to mention is that when speed cameras are inappropriately sited they in fact contribute *negatively* to road safety.

In speed camera mad Oxfordshire, where the County's Road Safety officer admits that the whole County is considered a speed camera area, road deaths were up by a massive 31% in 1995 over 1994.

This is a clear vindication of the ABD view that away from urban areas and accident blackspots; speed cameras are an extremely questionable contribution to road safety, and amount to no more than a Government cash-grab.

Effect of Gatso Cameras on Accidents



Speed camera propaganda

Press reports at the end of January this year announced the results of a study into the effectiveness of speed cameras in west London over the two years since they were installed. The cameras had reduced fatalities by a massive 70% from 23 to 7 deaths p.a. and serious injuries by a low 14% from 271 to 233 injuries p.a.. So called speed related accidents had reduced by 70%. The reports went on to admit that accidents due to bunching had increased by 45%.

An earlier study conducted by the TRL into the effectiveness of speed cameras in the same area showed that, both before and after the installation of the cameras, most accidents happened in the vicinity of junctions and very few accidents occurred on safe free flowing stretches between junctions. The introduction of cameras did significantly

reduce accidents, fatalities and injuries at the junction locations. However the study also showed that although accidents on the safe non junction sections had reduced since the cameras were installed, the fall was so small that it was statistically insignificant and therefore could not be directly attributed to the presence of the cameras.

The massive reduction in fatalities caused by the introduction of cameras in west London is due to the reduction in speed in the vicinity of junctions and other blackspots. However the effect of the cameras on the free flowing stretches is causing traffic to bunch and this effect itself causing accidents.

In the last issue of *On The Road* we revealed that the chevron experiment on the M1 had shown that where motorists are encouraged to adopt safe following distances accidents overall were reduced by 56%, multi vehicle shunt type accidents were reduced by 42% and single vehicle avoidance type accidents were reduced by 89%.

The ABD supports the use of cameras at accident black spots together with appropriate warning signs. The ABD does not however support the use of speed cameras in safe circumstances, especially on good motorway standard stretches in safe conditions.

Each and every speed camera installed on a free flowing and safe stretch of road, where at best it might not cause accidents, is a lost opportunity to use the same very expensive and scarce resource in the vicinity of a dangerous junction or other blackspot, where its use will definitely save lives.

In addition, placing cameras on safe stretches and not on adjacent more dangerous stretches encourages motorists to speed up in dangerous circumstances and actually costs lives. That is, this policy *kills through speed diversion*.

Employing speed cameras on safe, free-flowing motorway standard roads is de facto evidence of an irresponsible failure to employ scarce resources in the saving of life, a waste of tax payers money, an unjustified assault on the civil liberties of hard pressed motorists, a blatant rip off, and to top it all indirectly costs lives through the diversion of speed onto unsafe roads.

Safety and Speed Issues

Now police want "Big Brother" speed cameras!

The Government has admitted that rear facing speed cameras cause bunching see reports elsewhere in this issue.

Despite ever-mounting evidence that *non-junction, non-urban* speed cameras do not reduce casualties or accidents (witness speed-camera mad Oxfordshire's 31% increase in road fatalities in 1995 over 1994); the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), wants up to 1000 even more sophisticated ones - at an additional installation cost to the taxpayer of £15 million; with up to £7.5 million *per annum* additional running costs!

These new cameras will photograph vehicles (and hence their drivers) from the front as well as the back, to "ease problems with identifying offenders". They will, however improve nothing; read on.

Frontal assault

Brian Gregory writes of his experiences with front facing speed cameras:

"During June in 1994 I found myself in Cologne on business. After two long and fairly intensive business meetings, and having dropped a colleague off at a hotel on the outskirts of Dusseldorf, I was on my way back to Frankfurt.

Normally, I have every respect for German non-urban traffic management systems, but their Autobahn directions leave a lot to be desired. Somehow, I managed to wind up heading for Cologne, despite having tried to faithfully keep the car's bonnet Frankfurt bound.

Those of you who know German geography well (which I don't) will probably realise that Cologne is quite a way off the direct route from Dusseldorf to Frankfurt. No problem, I thought. Cologne is bound to have an outer ring road that'll take me back onto my original track. If it does (and I'm sure it does *actually*), I missed the signs again and found myself in the centre of Cologne at 7pm (fortunately) on a Summer's evening.

Minding my own business, trying to find my way back onto the Frankfurt Autobahn, I picked up a particularly pernicious urban tailgater who seemed determined to intimately

weld the front bumper of his Passat (or Volkswagen, or whatever - I couldn't tell he was so close!) onto the rear bumper of my car in the dense early evening traffic. This is particularly disconcerting for a stranger (which would be obvious to the tailgater from my hire car's registration) in a strange town. I tried slowing then accelerating rapidly up to the 60kph (c.35mph) maximum speed on the road, but to no avail.

I began to get so agitated by the antics of this driver that I was spending more time looking backwards than forwards. We passed through some just turned green traffic lights, me craning and constantly surveying the rear mirror for my amorous companion - at the same time as trying to keep a lookout for the Frankfurt Autobahn signs - when "Flash!": 60kph in a 50kph limit.

I take no pleasure in exceeding sensibly-set urban limits, and can only plead ignorance of local geography and driving practices, anxiety and duress to excuse my transgression. As for the driver following, now that's a different story...

German Gatso cameras photograph the car from the front, taking both the driver's registration number and his mugshot. My tailgating "friend" presumably knew this - and that if he could get close enough to the car in front (preferably with a driver who didn't know the area) to snowplough it through the speed trap, he gets to break the urban limit and someone else gets a ticket... It hasn't arrived yet... Maybe he just didn't like people from Frankfurt?

It just goes to show that even the most well-intentioned urban road safety measures can be circumvented by the really determined, innovative and irresponsible driver; while Establishment avarice can disaffect and alienate responsible ones."

Brian's experiences show that front facing speed cameras do not provide a satisfactory response to the problem of bunching.

We, in the Association of British Drivers, have been worried about the misuse and abuse of power the willy-nilly application of these devices represents *for almost 5 years*. Now, at last, civil liberties groups are starting to

worry about the potential for abuse.

What will it take before people realise we are heading for a police régime? State-controlled internal surveillance cameras in our homes?

It is a sad fact that the type of society described in George Orwell's "1984" is closing on us fast; and as usual, the ill-, and misinformed mass of the populace and the wishy-washy liberals are only *now* realising that the game is very nearly lost - virtually as they are being herded into the queue at the steps of the guillotine or at the open doors of the gas-oven!

At 110mph some are more equal than others

A Kent based regional newspaper reported in December that a Police Constable had been prosecuted for speeding at 110mph on the M1. The PC had been driving the Chief Constable of Kent home after a speaking engagement in the Midlands.

The magistrates heard that at the start of the return journey the Chief Constable had said to his driver: "Come on put your foot down, I want to get home." The court found the driver guilty but gave him an absolute discharge without costs or penalty points.

Readers should draw their own conclusions.

ABD - Drive for Membership

The Government is taking decisions which affect you as a motorist. Your liberty and your wallet are under threat!

It is vital that we organise *now!* If we delay, it will be too late.

So encourage your friends and colleagues to join the ABD and help in the campaign to protect our freedom.

You will find a membership application form with this issue. Telephone for more copies if you need them.

Californian Dream

Julian Rowden samples motoring in the Land of the Free!

For many years, the Rowden household has taken European motoring holidays. My own love of driving for pleasure, with the excitement of finding new places before others do, has taken us, along with our Rover 216 GSi, to Germany (East and West), the Czech Republic, and one of the Danish islands over the last few summers - each trip including a high speed dash along the unrestricted German autobahns, and France had been on the agenda for 1995.

But, just before Christmas 1994, my cousin, who lives in California, sent us another invitation to visit him at his home in Malibu. He had visited us over here a few years ago, and had often asked us to go over. As the rain fell day in and day out during January February and March of 1995, the idea seemed to get better and better, so we finally decided that we should cross the Atlantic for the first time.

We booked our tickets and travel insurance through Trailfinders in Bristol, who quoted the lowest price we could find on a direct flight from Heathrow to Los Angeles International. The dates and times were perfect (leaving on a Friday evening, and arriving later the same evening; departing on Saturday afternoon 15 days later, and landing in London the following morning). The airline was Air New Zealand and the flight time was a reasonable 10 hours or so.

We decided to spend a week at Malibu, enjoying good company and good beaches - including the Bay Watch beach - and exploring Los Angeles, and then go touring for a further week.

By good fortune, I had an old American Automobile Association handbook at home, so I was able to book accommodation at various hotels around California for the second week. These days, all you need is a map, a telephone and a credit card, and the world is your oyster.

We also booked at the Heathrow Park Hotel, for the night before our departure, and for a very reasonable £85 we got a good sized room and free car parking for the duration of our stay in a special deal my wife negotiated.

I then made one enquiry of Hertz who were advertising their facility for booking hire cars in the US from over here, but when they quoted nearly £750 for a Ford Taurus for two weeks including insurance, I decided to take a chance and get a car locally - a wise decision as it turned out!

We did wonder how our two sons, Kristian (nearly 6) and Stefan (3½) would cope with the long flights, but we really needn't have worried. The sheer excitement of it all, followed by the onset of tiredness meant that we had no problems with them at all.

Setting off had a slightly unreal feel to it, but I have to admit to being excited by the thought of seeing somewhere new and experiencing driving in the US for the first time. The Air New Zealand Boeing 747 proved quite comfortable, and the cabin crew did a good job despite being very busy. The flight went quite quickly, though I found the seats impossible to sleep in.

The boys woke up before landing and we were able to get a

good view of L.A. - the grid pattern of the street lights makes North American cities look totally different from European ones even from the air at night. The airport itself looked quite seedy on arrival, and we were transported from the plane in a strange and uncomfortable bus with two front ends and standing room only. I had often heard dire tales of American customs and immigration, but like most travellers from here we were able to go under the new visa free scheme, and we found the officials quick and polite.

We were out around midnight local time, and my Cousin was waiting for us and sped us quickly along the Pacific Coast Highway to his home overlooking the Ocean in his Mercedes 190 2.6. We had taken our child seats with us, so we were "street legal" from the moment we arrived.

After a good nights sleep, a morning on the beach seemed a good idea, to unwind and get over any jet lag. We went to a place called Zuma, just along the coast from Malibu, with white sand, cool water, surfers, and lots of girls in bikinis. Then, after some phoning around we got a reasonable quote for a car from Budget in Malibu: they offered us a Toyota Tercel or a brand new Ford Contour.

We took the Contour, which is basically an American built Mondeo with some cosmetic changes to suit American tastes. Sitting at the wheel, it seemed virtually indistinguishable from its European cousin. It had a Zetec engine, which felt a little underpowered in urban conditions. The steering, though, was nice, and the handling, though not outstanding by our standards, was very good (don't forget this is the land of the barge!). It was automatic of course, and came with air conditioning (essential), and proved to be a comfortable companion for our stay. The car had a sophisticated cruise control system, which I found invaluable for keeping to low speed limits when necessary, and is a feature which will, in my view, cross the Atlantic soon if our Government succeeds in forcing us all to drive at unrealistically low speeds on good roads. After two decades of stupidly low limits, the U.S. has of course since seen the light and Californian limits on rural freeways have risen to 70 mph.

"dream cars"... **are actually driven and enjoyed** **as they should be**

It was interesting to see the cars they drive. There are many more four-wheel drive vehicles (Recreational Vehicles), people carriers and pick ups than here, and a wide assortment of expensive European and Japanese machinery. The Lexus is a favourite, as is the Toyota Camry, both of which seem to enjoy a degree of status that Toyota has not yet achieved on this side of the Atlantic. There are also a wide variety of "dream cars", which are actually driven and enjoyed as they should be: Ferraris, Porsches, and BMW 850s for example. The Land Rover Discovery is obviously chic at the moment, and there are a few Jaguars and Range Rovers. Otherwise the only British cars we saw were a few tatty Rover 800s left from the ill-fated "Sterling" episode. Convertibles are a favourite, of course, especially the Ford Mustang.

After a trip along Sunset Boulevard, which runs all the way from the Pacific Ocean through some of the smartest parts of L.A. to Hollywood, about an hours drive, we had dinner at a

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hotel in Rodeo Drive, Beverley Hills, and went home to crash out, as jetlag hit us, but we were fine the following morning. We had a further leisurely day, including an afternoon at Venice Beach, just along the coast from Santa Monica. Venice Beach has the atmosphere of a permanent carnival, with thousands of people of all races walking, cycling, jogging, roller skating or roller blading. There is even a long pedestrian free cycle and roller blade path which seemed almost as congested as the freeways. The sights included South American musicians, men juggling with chain saws, lying on broken glass bottles, miming, Mexican shops and fair ground style rides, to say nothing of some of the people walking along in the sunshine! In the evening we saw Olvera Street, all that is left of the Mexican Pueblo which was once Los Angeles, and ate a very mediocre Mexican meal.

After several days close to "home", we took our two boys to Disneyland at Anaheim the following day. Anaheim is over an hour's drive away from the coast at Santa Monica, using two different freeways: one from the coast to downtown L.A., and then turning south. The interesting part is that it one is driving through a continuous urban belt, with masses of factories and warehouses as well as housing. There is a lot more to L.A. than just beaches, films and computers. The traffic was dense but rarely came to a standstill, although we did our best to avoid the rush hour by leaving after 9.30 am. Most of the urban freeway we used was four or five lines wide on each side, and there are clever ideas deployed to ease congestion. For example, as you enter the freeway at a busy junction there are traffic lights that flash alternately in red and green to restrict the flow of additional cars onto the freeway.

One of the great things in America is this "can do" spirit.

One of the other things that struck us, coming from drought stricken Britain was that all the gardens seemed lush and green, and even the freeway verges were being watered to give the grass and the palm trees a fresh and green appearance - all this in a city where it had not rained properly for months and the water has to be brought from hundreds of miles away by pipeline. This difference in attitude shows itself in many ways: if you want water and there isn't any, you build a pipe and get it; if vehicle emissions cause a problem, you insist that cars meet tough emissions standards, but you don't tell people they mustn't use their cars. This kind of positive thinking led to the introduction of catalytic converters there over 20 years ago. One of the great things in America is this "can do" spirit which is so markedly different from the negative attitude of the British authorities, media, and sections of the public.

Disneyland, Anaheim is smaller than the Florida Disneyworld, but there was still more than enough to keep our two sons busy for a full day and we still had to miss out on many of the attractions. The best advice seems to be to go midweek, not at the weekend, and be prepared to queue for 30/45 minutes for each 5 minute ride. It actually doesn't seem as bad as that suggests, and we got in 10 to 12 rides in the day as well as watching the "Lion King" parade, an electrical show in the evening and a couple of stops for meals.

On the return journey, at about 11.30 pm, we were alarmed to find that the slip road we needed to change from the north-

south Santa Ana freeway to the east-west Santa Monica freeway was closed for roadworks, and we were diverted off it. We managed to get lost in what we were later told was just about the seediest part of town - to make matters worse I made an inopportune lane change, accidentally cutting up a truck driver, who blew his horn furiously! Fortunately, we found a sign back to the freeway, and we carried on our way without incident, thus avoiding the need to stop and ask the way.

We ventured into Hollywood the following day, which, frankly, was a disappointment. There is not an awful lot to see, and it is not as smart as the suburbs further west as you drive back to the Pacific Ocean. On the Wednesday, we took a trip to Universal Studios, which is well worth it. There is a guided bus tour of the studios and some of the sets, where you not only see the buildings used in many famous films, but also experience some of the special effects. At one point the bus goes into a subway station, where there is an earthquake causing part of the roof to collapse allowing a petrol tanker to fall in from the road above. At that point water pours in down the escalators, and a train on the other platform crashes into a piece of fallen concrete. That is just one of many examples. There are also many good rides, including a very realistic trip through time and space in the "Back to the Future" car, a ride on ET's bicycle and others.

We found time to visit the Paul Getty museum at Malibu, and then set off northwards, forsaking the freeway for the coast road as far north west as Ventura, and then turned north east across the mountains towards Bakersfield. This was something totally different: an almost deserted two lane highway that climbed steeply over mountains that had folds in them like a table cloth that had been carelessly pushed to one end of the table. Up to the top (about 5000 feet) it was arid but green, then suddenly the ground turned to barren sand and rocks as we came down the other side. The Ford Contour, which had always seemed slightly sluggish in the cut and thrust of Los Angeles traffic, really came into its own. The steering was precise with just the right amount of feel, and the car cruised beautifully at up to 80 mph on the mountain road. The air conditioning worked well, so we had no idea how hot it had become outside until we opened the door!

The trip onwards to Bakersfield took us through the San Joaquin valley, which is technically a desert. However, apart from the sandy road verges, you would never know. There is mile upon mile of irrigated farmland, with nuts, fruit, vines and vegetables being grown. It is impressive, and yet another example of the way the Americans have adopted a positive approach and created a garden in the most inhospitable conditions. After an overnight stop we pressed on to Monterey on the coast near San Francisco, taking the freeway for much of the time. Unfortunately, much of it was limited to 55 mph, so we cruised at about 65-70 mph, and the cruise control was marvellous for this.

petrol...

a tankful came in at about £10

There were several stops for petrol (a tankful came in at about £10). You have to pay before filling at most stations, or leave your credit card at the desk, and all the nozzles had a rubber cover to prevent the escape of benzene fumes whilst

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filling the tank - another example of the sensible measures taken in California to help the environment. Motorway service areas are far more informal than ours, consisting of a cluster of fast food restaurants, including the inevitable McDonalds, and a couple of competing gas stations.

Monterey is a real west coast tourist destination, but with a lovely coastline and masses of wildlife to see, good restaurants and an impressive aquarium which is well worth a visit. It was another one night stop for us before heading on to San Francisco, which is very attractive in a way that Los Angeles isn't, but it is much less easy to get around. The two massive motorway bridges to the city, the Golden Gate and the Oakland Bay bridges date back to the 1930s, when car ownership had already become common in America, but was for the privileged only over here, and the British government, living in the past as ever, had decided not to build any motorways!

We were lucky enough to be invited to stay with relatives in the San Francisco area, but the visit was all too short. We made the most of it though, by parking our car all day at Fisherman's Wharf (parking is expensive in San Francisco, and the best deals are for all day parking), and after the obligatory cable car ride, spent the entire day exploring the city on foot. Amazingly, our two sons accompanied us all the way without complaint!

From there, we headed east towards Yosemite National Park, and Yosemite Valley with its pine and Redwood forests, glacial valley and spectacular waterfalls. The drive took a good six hours, but the Contour was so comfortable that no one complained. It was also nice to see the road-side stalls selling dozens of different varieties of melons and citrus fruit as well as nuts.

Yosemite is a great place for walking, but buy some sealed metal containers for food. It is illegal to take food with you otherwise, because the smell of it attracts bears. The paths are all well marked and the local shops sell maps. We can walk for a few hours or a few days, according to your inclination, but they can be steep and rocky in places. We managed to book

accommodation in the National Park's own Lodge in the valley, which is a major benefit. All the other hotels are outside the Park's boundaries, leaving a long drive in every day. Unfortunately, it does get booked up early, but it is worth telephoning to see if there has been a cancellation. We used the well organised frequent and free bus service in the valley, but had to set off in the evening to Oakhurst, on the old "Gold Rush" trail, and a night at the very comfortable Best Western hotel.

From there we drove via Fresno to the next two National Parks, Kings Canyon and Sequoia, with their wonderful Redwood trees and the massive Sequoia trees. Again we spent a night at a basic but comfortable and friendly Lodge, run by the Park authorities. Again, we had booked from Enland by telephone.

our first trip to the States... certainly won't be the last

The trees in Sequoia are awesome in their scale, and there are plenty of easy walks of any length. We saw wild deer just a few feet away from us, and from the Lodge Restaurant, a real live wild bear came by as we ate dinner. It was a real treat. We then had a good day's drive back to Los Angeles, for our last night before giving back our car, and flying home. This time, we used "Highway 5", the main Californian north-south freeway for much of our journey, which allowed us the luxury of a break-neck 65 mph limit. In practice, as we neared Los Angeles at around 80 mph, we were overtaken by a steady stream of faster traffic.

The Ford Contour cost us just £360 for the fortnight including collision damage waiver, which seemed like outstanding value. In that time we covered 1,616 miles. It was our first trip to the States; it certainly won't be the last - and with higher speeds now permitted, it will be even more of a delight to drive there. Outside of the cities, the roads are clear of traffic and driving is really enjoyable. I recommend it.

Warning: Members reading the advertisement below should know that there are reports that a motorist in Scotland has been fined for using a detection device.

Write to "On the Road"

Do you have memorable experiences of driving abroad you would like to share with your fellow members?

Or perhaps you have news of what is happening (or not happening) in your town, village or county.

Perhaps there are just issues you feel strongly about!

Short letters or longer articles - all are welcome!

If you use a word processor and could send a disc as well as a copy on paper this would be appreciated but is not essential; it's your views that count.

Advertising

Members who provide substantial assistance with running the Association can advertise in "On The Road". This is currently free of charge.

• RADAR DEFENCE SYSTEMS •

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Pollution, Health and the Environment

The "Death-dust" plague: Cars the smallest single source

The environmental scare currently in vogue is PM10: particles of 10 microns or smaller diameter, which are predominant components of emissions to air by some industrial processes, by power stations and are also found in diesel exhaust fumes.

They are reported to accelerate the decline in the health of those *already* suffering from lung and heart diseases, hence prematurely hastening the deaths of such sufferers.

One report has suggested that this source contributes to between 2,000 and 10,000 UK deaths annually. That is 6000 deaths, give or take 4000 per annum.

The facts that the uncertainty in the estimate is *two-thirds* of its average value; and that the alleged "victims" of this phenomenon are already predisposed to be affected by it through other ailments brought on by unhealthy occupational conditions or lifestyle choices (e.g., cigarette smoking) shows the imprecision of the method used.

One must also realise that even at the uppermost estimate this represents only about 4% of annual UK deaths.

Now to the key point: through the joint

efforts of two Government-appointed bodies, the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollution and the Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards (EPAQS), the sources of PM10 have been estimated.

Petrol transport sources contribute only 5% of PM10s. Diesel transport sources; i.e., the buses, taxis and diesel rail locos so-beloved of the anti-private transport lobby, contribute *nearly four times* this amount (19%).

And this is despite the *overwhelming* numerical superiority of (predominantly petrol-driven) cars.

It would appear to be high time, for the sake of everyone's well-being, that the supporters of public transport brought pressure to bear on operators and manufacturers to clean up their act to match that of the private, petrol-driven car!

Against W.H.O. policy, government sets arbitrary PM10s ceiling

The Government, through its EPAQS (Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards) advisory body, appears to be about to propose an upper limit for PM10s (atmospheric particulate material of 10 micron or smaller mean size) at a 24-hour running average of 50mgm⁻³, as part of its policy to secure: "long-term abatement of vehicle emissions, particularly from diesel vehicles".

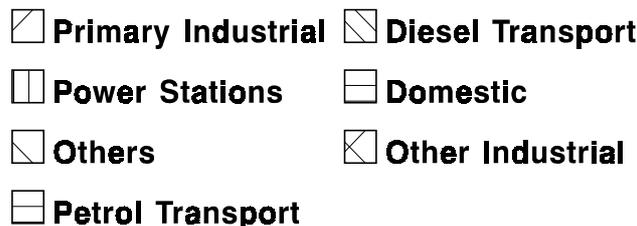
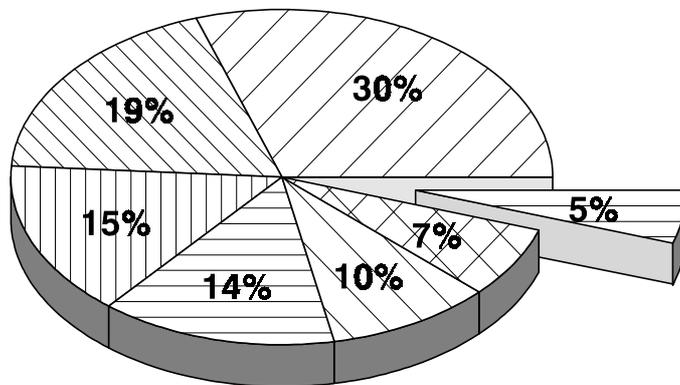
The proposed standard may be adopted in the 1995 Environment Act.

While perhaps laudable in its overall objective, this move is in direct contravention of the policy of the World Health Organisation, whose recent re-assessment of its air quality guidelines concluded "there is no evident threshold for effects on mortality and morbidity" - and therefore *refused* to set a standard.

UK air quality apparently reaches its low point on Bonfire Night, with PM10 levels of the order of 210mgm⁻³, compared with a typical level of around 20mgm⁻³.

Against such a background, one is bound to wonder whether this is a genuine attempt to improve the nation's health and quality of life - or just yet another cynical, petty assault on road users by an essentially anti-road transport, anti-private car Civil Service bureaucracy.

Sources of PM10s, 1993



Data Source: Expert Panel on Air Quality Standards

So, Diesel, once the fuel promoted by environmentalists, because it gives off less carbon dioxide than other fuels and is therefore better for avoiding Global Warming, is being slated as potentially deadly.

Can anyone now seriously believe the scaremongering pronouncements of these activists any more. It may seem to readers that these campaigners put the interest of animals and plants (not forgetting molluscs) at a higher priority than ordinary people.

We must tell these crackpots that they are messing with our very personal interests and this must stop!

Pro-Motor News

Secretary retires

The fifth meeting of Pro-Motor was held at the Mundy Arms, Mackworth, Derby on the 2nd December 1995. Kyle Burnet, our Secretary, has stepped down from the demanding post he has held both within the Pro-Motor, and, previously, in the Association of British Drivers since its formation in 1992. Throughout that time, Kyle has kept records of our growing membership and payment of subscriptions, and generally looked after our administration. His retirement will enable him to devote more time to his business. We wish to express our sincere thanks to Kyle for all the hard work he has put in on our behalf since our inception. Kyle will, of course, remain a member of Pro-Motor.

Jonathan Newby-Robson has kindly offered to take care of membership secretarial matters pending the election of a new Secretary at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

On The Road plans wider circulation

At recent meetings, members have said that On The Road is too good to keep to ourselves. As a result, OTR is now distributed to many of our friends and contacts, including journalists, politicians and people connected with the motor industry.

What is your opinion about On The Road? Please write and tell us.

Dates for your Diary

Annual General Meeting 1996 and Election for Post of Secretary

It has been decided that our Annual General Meeting should take place on Saturday 13th April 1996. Venue to be announced. Details will be sent to all members shortly

Goodwood Festival of Speed

ABD members will meet at the Goodwood Festival of Speed during the weekend of 22nd June.. This promises to be a very worthwhile event.

Other meetings - new venue

Please remember that *all* members are welcome to attend meetings. New members and others who have not been before are particularly welcome. Future meetings will be at a new venue, to be announced.

Media Successes

Chairman, Brian Gregory also spoke on a Radio 5 Live programme transmitted on the night of Sunday 21st January 1996, when he was interviewed about the Newbury by-pass protests.

He also participated in a programme on Radio Cleveland about Transport 2000's "Moving Together" campaign which seeks to reduce car commuting.

More interviews and articles are planned, and Pro-Motor continues with a rolling programme of Press Releases.

These included the highly successful releases sent late last year highlighting the fact that road casualties are much higher in countries that impose road tolls for motorway usage than those which do not.

Whilst we do not have firm details yet, rumours suggest that it would be worth watching a well-known BBC TV motoring programme over the next few weeks!

Past experience tells us that features and articles like these invariably lead to an upsurge in the numbers of new members attracted to our organisation.

ABD Subscriptions

Thanks...

To all members who have sent their 1996 subscriptions, especially to the many who included extra donations.

The ABD is run entirely on a voluntary basis. All subscriptions are used for campaigning.

... and reminders

May we respectfully remind any readers who have not yet paid their 1996 subscriptions that it is time to do so.

Three Cheers!

American states raise speed limits

In our last issue we reported that the US federal 55 & 65mph limits had been scrapped leaving individual states free to set their own speed limits for the first time since 1974.

We can now report the good news for tourists. New, higher limits have been set in the following states;

California	70mph
Montana	No limit
Kansas	75mph
Missouri	70mph
Nevada	75mph
Oklahoma	70mph
South Dakota	70mph
Texas	70mph
Wyoming	75mph

Many other southern and western states are considering raising their limits to pre 74 levels. Watch this space.

Cops told to lay off drivers

The Daily Telegraph carried an interesting report in December, apparently based on an internal police memorandum sent to police in the Holborn area.

The memo instructed officers to reduce their activity in checking motorists in favour of combating car theft, burglary, narcotics, sexual offences and violent attacks against the person.

The report indicated that the Home Office had carried out opinion surveys which did not put routine police action against minor traffic offences as a priority. The report quoted a police spokesman as follows; "We will continue to deal with motoring offences but in a targeted and intelligence-led manner, identifying trouble spots."

Now what does intelligence-led mean? Would celebration be premature?

Steven Norris likes his cars...

... big, powerful and fast!

Yes, it's true, over the Christmas holiday, The Daily Telegraph, in its Saturday motoring supplement, ran an article in which various well-known people were invited to name their dream cars. Steven Norris, Roads Minister said that a **Bentley Turbo R** would suit him!

Now surely a man of such impeccable taste will ensure that we have an adequate network of smooth clear roads so that he can enjoy motoring in the style he so clearly aspires to if and when his dream comes true.

Perhaps we should start a collection to buy him one. It might provide an incentive for him to concentrate on the job in hand. To be fair, he did quite a good job of standing up to "Today" programme interrogators on December 21. Who'll start it off with a fiver?