

## Success of ABD's First National Day

The Association of British Drivers' First National Day, held in London on 22 November 1994, was a great success. An audience of members and guests heard excellent speeches from Chairman, Brian Gregory and invited speakers Gordon Lee of Autoforum, Roger King of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (co-sponsors of the event) and Paul Everitt of the British Road Federation (BRF). They brought new perspectives and powerful arguments to bear in support of the ABD's aims.

Formal proceedings were opened by Brian Gregory and Julian Rowden setting out the ABD's aims and the supporting facts which are so blatantly ignored by the anti-car lobbies.

Next to speak was Gordon Lee who, in an entertaining address, liberally sprinkled with anecdotes, made many telling points. Among them how, at public enquiries for road building schemes, the "general public" is represented mainly by the anti-road lobby. He urged ABD members to attend such enquiries if possible to make the case for the improvement of the road network.

Roger King's powerful speech struck many chords. He analysed the arguments of the anti-car lobbies then demolished

them, logically, one by one! As a former MP, he was able to give an insight into the Parliamentary decision-making process and suggested ways in which members can influence their own MPs. In a nutshell: write to your MP and visit your MP's "surgeries".

Paul Everitt came armed with a veritable arsenal of facts and figures collated by the BRF. For example on the shocking state of repair of our roads due to long term neglect.

A full report of the event, the speeches and the many highlights of the day can be found inside this issue.

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Issue 6, Spring 1995

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ABD National Day - full report

The Royal Commission Report

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Royal Commission Fallout

- Threat to 200,000 jobs

- £1900 pa cost to each London driver

- Futility of pro-rail argument

International News - this months issue has a strongly international flavour with news of:

- Pollution research in America

- Speeding laws in France

- Lack of Motorway miles in UK

- Channel Tunnel preview

- Road pricing rip-offs

Letters - Facts, figures and thought-provoking views from readers.

## ABD membership up

ABD membership has increased dramatically since the last issue. Welcome to all new members! More details inside.

## Royal Commission - objectivity in doubt

In October, the Royal Commission for the Environment published its controversial report on Transport and the Environment, a weighty tome of 325 pages including indices, and characterised by a strong anti-car sentiment throughout. The reader is left with the feeling that the authors had set about the task with pre-conceived ideas, and, indeed, had decided in advance what they wanted to say. They then assembled a group of like minded people who would produce all the "evidence" necessary to write a report along those lines.

Amongst the chosen "worthies" were scientists chosen for their interest in pollution and the environment, most with strings of letters after their names that are longer than the names themselves. (Isn't it strange that nearly all those who work to oppose the motor car are either in national or local government or live in some academic ivory tower: the people that taxpaying motorists pay to keep in employment?).

### **no-one with a background in the field of transport**

By contrast, there was no-one with a background in the field of transport, whether in the manufacturing or operational sector - so there was no-one who could provide some balance.

Predictably, the report virtually ignored the

fact that transport is the very heart of any civilised society. Every civilisation since the Romans has understood that a developed society simply cannot function without first rate transport infrastructure.

In their heyday, the Romans built a network of roads right across Europe. As the industrial revolution swept across Britain canals were built across the country, followed later by the railways which extended right across the British Empire and beyond. In the same way all leading modern industrial nations have built motorways, because they have understood the need to meet demand for the fullest and fastest possible movement of goods and people.

Even fans of railways will be disappointed by this piece of work. Whilst acknowledging that some countries are working on rail systems for high-speed trains capable of 400 kph, it

decides that the U.K. must stay on the slow track, recommending that

*"no proposal be taken forward in the U.K. for trains running at more than 300 kph unless a comprehensive assessment has shown that the environmental benefits from transferred air traffic will outweigh the environmental costs of landtake, construction work, noise and the additional energy required to propel trains at this speed".*

### **a dull analysis**

In many ways the Report seems to sum up so much of what is wrong with Britain today: a lack of a drive; no vision of a future even more exciting than the past. Instead, it presents a dull analysis assessing the cost of everything but which understands the value of nothing - like the nineteenth century Japanese emperor who banned the wheel because he feared the ideas his people might get if they were allowed to become mobile. Much is made of the "social and environmental cost of mobility". Sadly, there is all too little about the enormous social and economic benefits of mobility.

The Report is quite blatant about its bias

*... continued on page 4*

# Excellent speakers stir National Day audience

Turn out from the membership was excellent; many thanks to all members and, especially, guests who attended. Formal proceedings were preceded by a buffet with wine, and provided an excellent opportunity to meet other members and guests socially.

We were sorry that some members who would have liked to come were unable to do so, in some cases because of short notice. This unfortunately arose through circumstances beyond our control.

Sadly, the National Day coincided with the funeral of Philip Turner, a motoring journalist, and many members of the Press, who we had hoped to see were therefore unable to attend.

We were, however, particularly pleased to welcome Lord Strathcarron, Trevor Magner from the British Motorcycle Federation, and Stuart Bladon a freelance journalist who has a regular spot in Diesel Car magazine.

Especial thanks go to our guest speakers, Roger King, Director of Public Affairs at the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, Gordon Lee, Secretary of AUTOFORUM, and Paul Everett spokesman for the British Road Federation.

Chairman, Brian Gregory spoke on behalf of the ABD, and member Julian Rowden also spoke on the subject of the motorcar and the environment.

### Gordon Lee, Autoforum

AUTOFORUM's Gordon Lee, Trade Unionist and former British Leyland employee spoke of the an organisation known as the Campaign for the Defence of the Motor Vehicle, set up in the early 1970s to counter the use of the motor industry by Governments of the day as a regulator for the economy.

In the 1960s and 1970s, demand for cars was turned on and off by successive Chancellors of the Exchequer by altering rates of "Purchase Tax" (the for-runner to Value Added Tax), and

hire purchase rules.

They seemed oblivious to the real damage they were causing by leaving the industry unable to undertake any long term planning and it almost lead to the destruction of the car industry in this country.

That organisation, as regular readers will know, was renamed and relaunched as AUTOFORUM earlier this year and its brief is to fight for a climate in which the importance of the motor vehicle both economically and socially is properly understood.

He highlighted the fact that tens of thousands of jobs in this country are dependent on the motor industry, both in manufacture of cars and components, and in the sales, distribution and servicing sectors, and stressed the close connection between the health of the car industry and the interests of the car user.

### ordinary car owners have it in their power to ensure that our freedoms are not eroded

A change in the Government's attitude towards the car is long overdue, and he made the point that whilst those in the industry can lobby hard, at the end of the day it will be ordinary car owners and drivers all over the country who have it in their power to influence policy and ensure that our freedoms are not eroded.

At Public Enquiries affecting new road projects, for example, the "general public" appear in the form of anti-road lobbies, leaving the lone voices of the likes of AUTOFORUM and the British Road Federation to put the case in favour of the project. It IS worth attending Public Enquiries, and putting the case why the road in question **SHOULD** be built.

### Roger King, SMMT

Roger King gave a rousing speech, which was particularly well received by all those present. He started by praising the car as the greatest invention of all time, and explaining that it was in a real sense the fulfilment of mankind's dream

of complete personal mobility: the freedom simply to get into ones car and drive anywhere one likes, across countries and continents.

He condemned the power of the anti-car lobby in British society, and compared attitudes here to those in most other advanced nations where the car has been more wholeheartedly embraced as a great benefit to us all.

He rehearsed many of the arguments used to condemn the car and then illustrated the flaws in each and every one of them. As every member of the ABD knows, only a fraction of the money collected from motorists is spent on projects for the benefit of motorists, and yet we are suddenly finding ever more outrageous "costs" being quoted in the media which apparently arise from our use of cars, and for which we should therefore be required to pay.

Analyse those costs, though, and one finds that billions of pounds are said to represent the "cost of congestion". But nobody seems to ask the question as to what form that cost takes or who should pay it to whom. Surely, the cost is the value of the time wasted by drivers caught up in congestion - so it is the drivers themselves who are paying the costs. The idea of actually making the motorist pay again because he has been forced to spend his own time in traffic jams is surely somewhat illogical!

### members can win hearts and minds of politicians

Roger King, who was a Member of Parliament for nine years and thus has considerable political experience, then discussed ways in which individual members can help in the battle to win hearts and minds of politicians - or at least to make them listen!

Most of us will already have been in touch with our MPs, and some members are in very regular correspondence with them! Roger King agreed thought that, in addition to letter writing, it would be worth actually going to see your local MP at his or her local "surgeries" to discuss transport policy and attitudes towards the car. Do not be afraid to make these visits into a regular event, as it will help to ensure that he or she takes notice. Some will even be delighted to talk about something different from the endless run of housing difficulties which are the staple diet of MPs surgeries!

Roger King ended his speech on an optimistic, upbeat tone - keep up the good work, and in the long run we **WILL** win.

### Paul Everitt, British Road Federation

Paul Everitt highlighted the enormous profits which the Treasury makes out of all users of motor vehicles: a contribution which reached £14 billion in 1993, the extent to which receipts exceeded expenditure.

He also gave some alarming statistics indicating the extent to which our road network

## The Association of British Drivers

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## ABD National Day Report (continued)

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is crumbling, and the rate at which that disrepair is increasing. Compared to ten years ago, urban principal roads show 30% more defects, urban unclassified roads show 20% more defects, and trunk roads have 13% more defects. Consultants commissioned by the Department of Transport have reported that 15% of inside lanes of motorways already need reconstruction, and a further 23% will need reconstruction within the next 5 years.

He cited the example of the Batheaston bypass, where local residents had campaigned for decades to have a road built to take the traffic out of their village and improve their environment, yet most publicity had gone to a small number of activists who have been trying to stop the project by force.

Paul Everett said that road transport was essential to the country's economy, and was critical of the Government's failure to invest in new road capacity. He, too, stressed the importance of involving drivers themselves - people like us - in the battle to influence Government policy. He, too, suggested attending local Public Enquiries to counter the "Eco-Warrior" types who often dominate.

### Brian Gregory, ABD Chairman

Brian Gregory forcefully expressed the dissatisfaction that the average motorist now feels with the UK political establishment: the already grossly over-taxed British motorist is unjustly viewed by the Treasury as a prime, weakly defended revenue-raising target. Tacit encouragement for the wholly unjust casting of the car driver as the villain-of-the-(environmental)-piece was consequently being provided by Government (through the DoT and the DoE).

There was now interference by central Government in the local planning process to the motorists' detriment; and the completely unjustifiable prospects (on either ethical or road safety grounds) of motorway tolls, constant surveillance, reduced motorway speed limits and astronomical increases in the revenue generated from speed cameras sited with revenue, instead of road safety, in mind.

Brian Gregory stressed that we in the Association of British Drivers would like to see a much greater proportion of the revenue generated from motorists being ploughed back into *all forms* of transport; and certainly *no reductions* in current levels of investment in road building and improvement; and no increases in taxation on motorists (who already pay *more than enough* for the "privilege" of using our underfunded and undermaintained road network).

We want unbiased, balanced, scientific studies into the the lifestyle changes and home conditions that are the main contributors to breathing disorders, so that the contribution of road transport (i.e., predominantly buses, taxis, H- and LGV's) can be realistically assessed.

Much greater expenditure on continuous

driver education and training would achieve far more in reducing road casualties than all the Gatso cameras in the world. Motorway tolling proposals should be abandoned and the consequent colossal revenue saving invested in a modern motorway traffic management system similar to the one currently being installed on German Autobahns.

### education, not legislation, is needed

Using objective evidence from around Europe and the United States, the total absence of scientific justification for the "Speed Kills" philosophy in context of non-urban roads was provided; and the vital importance of safe following distances was emphasised. What is required is more education, not more legislation!

The Association also seeks the introduction of variable speed limits, with an increase in the permissible maximum motorway speed under good weather and traffic conditions to at least 85mph. This would increase respect for lower limits when these are posted due to weather or adverse prevailing conditions.

Road fund licence (and consequently "continuous taxation" of vehicles) should be abolished, and all revenue raised from fuel taxation (encouraging more fuel-efficient cars).

By all means let us have efficient (environmentally clean!) public transport where that is the most appropriate transport solution, but there should be positive discrimination in favour of this mode, *not* unjust and unfair negative discrimination against the car! In short, it is long overdue that the political establishment in this country got off the motorist's back!"

### Julian Rowden, ABD

ABD member Julian Rowden set the record straight on a number of environmental issues. After a short introduction dealing with the hypocrisy of many guilt ridden anti-car sympathisers who are quite happy to see low income drivers priced off the road, but quite naturally "need cars" themselves, he turned to the main environmental theme.

Contrary to popular belief, in the field of noxious emissions (all poisonous gases, but not Carbon Dioxide), he said that:-

- cars are responsible for a relatively small share of total air pollution;
- a relatively small number of all motor vehicles are responsible for a relatively large proportion of all vehicle based air pollution; and
- as cars get cleaner and cleaner, and as older vehicles are replaced vehicle sourced air pollution will fall still further, and is projected to continue to fall for at least two decades to come, despite the expected increase in traffic

In the quest for reductions in carbon dioxide

emissions, he quoted figures supplied by the RAC which show that just 13% of all man-made emissions in this country arise from petrol driven cars.

He quoted statistics which illustrated that modest improvements to fuel efficiency in homes and other buildings could yield enormous reductions in carbon dioxide emissions by reducing electricity and gas consumption for heating and lighting.

In fact, cost effective energy efficiency measures could lead to savings equivalent to taking *at least 6.5 million cars off U.K. roads* - without hurting lifestyles or living standards. Julian stressed that the ABD *wants* cleaner air, but set out an alternative agenda to achieve it.

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## Motorway cameras are on the way!

Those masters of the political U-turn at the DoT have done it again. Mawhinney and his cronies at Marsham Street, now little more than Brain-dead Gummer's fawning lackeys, having completed their virtual termination of the new road building budget are now (as we prophesied over two years ago) authorising the siting of Gatso speed cameras on the M25 motorway for "trials", to enforce lower speed limits under congested conditions.

We all know what happened to the "trial" 70mph motorway limit, don't we?

The DoT will not say whether the cameras will also be used to catch those exceeding the discredited 70mph limit when traffic is light, but I think we in the ABD already know the answer to that question, too.

Australian evidence (and the Government's stance on motorway tolling) shows that when it comes to a choice between improving road safety and increasing revenue, politicians take the money (and consequently the lives as well!).

And this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the depth of deceit and disrepute to which our politicians and civil servants are prepared to go to achieve their grubby aims.

### Are we on the road to the technological Police State?

The political commissars can and must be stopped; otherwise we will totter over the abyss into a New Dark Age even more frightening than George Orwell's vision of 1984: the Technological Police State.

It is in our hands to resist these developments and to ensure that Government remains the servant of the people, not the people become servants of Government.

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# Royal Commission on the Environment Report (continued)

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... continued from page 1

against transport in general and the motor-car in particular, and, in places, it leaves the reader wondering which particular planet the authors live on. Take this sentence as an example:

*"The availability of reliable and affordable taxi services could help to free households from the bonds of car ownership in both urban and rural areas."*

## Report shows little regard for freedom

Ominously, the report laments the new found freedoms of the former Communist block countries:

*"The countries of eastern Europe were heavily dependent on public transport systems under Communism, but many of those systems are now showing serious deterioration as ownership of a car becomes a crucial symbol of the new freedom".*

It omits to mention that the restrictions on travel and car ownership were two of the most hated aspects of the life without freedom that the people of those countries suffered.

Clear evidence is revealed in the Report that "Green" groups are desperately worried that a completely pollution-free car might be developed at some time in the future. A European proposal to reduce drastically the excise duty on biofuels, with the aim of replacing 5% of petrol and diesel consumption with bioethanol fermented from crops such as wheat, is opposed by so-called environmental lobbies, on the grounds that it might "encourage the use of unsustainable agricultural practices and increase damage to habitats"!

## Even lower speed limits threatened

The Report states that there is a need for a

*"...deep-rooted cultural change in the way people view car speed and performance".*

It claims that

*"...cars will continue to be more environmentally damaging than need be the case so long as they are predominantly designed for long distance travel at speeds above the legal limit in the U.K. ...".*

It then goes on to recommend that

*"... increased effort be devoted to enforcing speed limits, making full use of new technology".*

However, drivers will be relieved to learn that the Report opposed the introduction of speed limiters for cars.

It does, however, recommend that

*"...the case for reducing the general speed limit be considered after 2000".*

It infers that a 55 mph limit is the sort of maximum that the authors would like to see.

## authors favour 55mph limit

It favours this as part of a strategy to reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions, and, indeed, urges the Government to reduce Carbon Dioxide emissions from transport to only 80% of their 1990 levels by 2020. This is despite an acknowledgement that total emissions of Carbon Dioxide in the U.K. actually fell by 10% between 1970 and 1990, even though motorcars are a relatively minor contributor of this gas (only 13% of total Carbon Dioxide emissions in this country arise from petrol driven vehicles), and despite the enormous untapped scope for reducing fuel consumption in the buildings sector. In a separate article in this issue we show how savings equivalent to removing over 6 million cars from the road could be achieved by this method alone.

There is much evidence of the work of "Green" activists, Government officials, and academics out of touch with the real world. For instance, it states that

*"there is a growing belief that attractive and viable towns are not compatible with dominance by the motorcar",*

without qualifying the statement by the equally held view that a viable town will not exist if all the traffic is squeezed out!

## "Slash Spending and Abolish Trunk Roads!"

Perhaps the most outrageous ideas are the suggestions that

*"planned expenditure on motorways and other trunk roads should be reduced to half its present level",*

and that all roads should pass to local authority control, thus abolishing "trunk roads" altogether.

The former proposal would leave insufficient funds even to maintain the current rather basic network to a safe and adequate standard, and leave nothing over at all, even for construction of essential new by-passes.

The latter idea is justified by the authors on the basis that trunk roads are imposed from "the outside", without regard to an area. They say that abolition of trunk roads

*"...would facilitate integration of transport and land use policies and free central government from an 'inappropriate' executive task".*

The thought of allowing the "Socialist Republic" of some London Borough the power

and responsibility for maintaining a motorway sounds like a recipe for the collapse of the national road network, and for rising casualties as the potholes get deeper and more numerous.

## No broad view of the economic issues

Although non-environment issues such as road safety are allowed to creep in whenever convenient to bolster any particular argument, there is no attempt to broaden the Report to discuss other implications, especially economic ones.

It seems to accept as the complete and gospel truth the highly questionable and controversial contention that new roads just lead to more traffic. It makes little reference to the tendency of wealth generation and jobs to move to areas with excellent communications: sea and river ports until the 18th Century, railway lines in the 19th Century and motorways in this Century.

## importance of UK vehicle industry dismissed

The Report dismisses in half a paragraph the importance of the entire U.K. vehicle manufacturing sector, one of the largest sectors of manufacturing industry left in this country, and which employs tens of thousands of people! It merely notes that U.K. production of vehicles declined sharply in the early 1980s, and that the numbers of vehicles made in the years 1988-92 was only 72% (cars) and 63% (commercial vehicles) of the level 20 years earlier. It then goes on to say that the increase in the numbers of motor vehicles on the road has largely been brought about by imports.

It does not mention the arrival of four Japanese "transplant" factories, or the enormous investments being made here by all the makers, especially at Rover since the BMW takeover. Nor does it mention the fact that the U.K. is set to make over 2 million cars a year by the end of the 1990s given a degree of cooperation from Government! This would make the U.K. a net exporter of cars again.

## The Good News just can't be hidden

Despite every attempt to discredit the car in a one-sided tirade, the truth is there - if you look hard enough:

- the Report acknowledges that the ratio of tax revenue to cost as paid by car and light goods vehicle drivers in this country has already reached 4.5:1
- the Report accepts that the motor car is "not the largest source" of Carbon dioxide emissions. (That is actually a gross understatement).
- the Report acknowledges that with the effect of current and future emissions legislation in the U.K. and Europe beginning to be felt already, emissions are set to fall rapidly,

## Royal Commission on the Environment Report (continued)

and our air is set to become very much cleaner.

- the falls in emissions will continue at least for the next 20 years, and will affect all the main noxious gases: carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and particulates. The falls will occur even if car ownership and use continue to rise.
- the Report acknowledges that over a five year period 1988 to 1992, nowhere in Britain ever recorded a level of ground level ozone exceeding 360 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, whilst Los Angeles has concentrations of up to 400 µg/m<sup>3</sup> on 20-30 days per year, and the level can rise to 600-800 µg/m<sup>3</sup> on occasion.
- the Report acknowledges that energy consumption per passenger in a small car is quite similar to that in a high speed train, and *considerably lower* than that in a provincial/suburban multiple unit train. Air travel is by far the most energy intensive means of transport - going by car is a very "green" way of going on holiday!

### **buses are serious polluters**

- the Report acknowledges that many of Britain's buses are serious polluters and rightly wants incentives to have them fitted with cleaner engines.
- the Report is less than enthusiastic about motorway tolls. It endorses the view given by the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee last year, which condemned the proposals, and goes on to say:

*"In view of the potential damage if traffic transfers to environmentally more sensitive routes, we recommend that any proposal to introduce or vary tolls for a road, bridge or tunnel be subject to an environmental assessment before it is approved".*

The Royal Commission Report will prove interesting reading for members, and may be purchased from HMSO bookshops for £25.60. They are obtainable by fax and mail order from HMSO Publications Centre, PO Box 276, London SW8 5DT. Tel (orders) 0171 873 9090; tel (enquiries) 0171 873 0011; fax 0171 873 8200. Major credit cards are accepted.

## Royal Commission Fallout

### **£1900 per driver per year - cost of Royal Commission**

An analysis of the Royal Commission Report by the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) calculates that London drivers will find that the cost of living increases by at least £1900 per year.

The RAC report takes into account the increased fuel cost, road pricing and the increased cost of delivering goods and food within the London area. The increased fuel cost alone amounts to £700 per year.

The increased delivery costs will, of course, hit every resident - young or old, rich or poor - not just motorists.

### **Even £140bn would only switch 10% of car traffic to rail**

The utter futility of suggestions that motorists would switch to rail travel, given sufficient investment in the railway system, is revealed by recent research.

A survey of motorists travelling between Sheffield and London found that only 1% would consider making the change to rail even if £125m were invested in improving the line.

A study of traffic in Manchester found that in spite of an investment of £140m in the tram system, road traffic has been reduced by only 0.3%.

Taking such figures and applying them nationally reveals that an expenditure of £140,000,000,000 would only reduce car traffic by 10%.

The difference in people's socio-economic circumstances between now and the heyday of the railways mean that they tend to make complex journeys which no public transport system (let alone one which the country could afford) can cater for.

### **200,000 jobs will be lost**

An independent report commissioned by the British Road Federation (BRF) and prepared by the Centre for Economic and Business Research has analysed the Royal Commission Report.

The increased costs of travelling by road would lead to a loss of 200,000 jobs, the report calculates, if the Royal Commission's proposals were effected. The authors criticise the Royal Commission for failing to evaluate the economic effects of their proposals.

### **Royal Commission did not evaluate economic effects**

In preparing the BRF's report, researchers used the same models as the Royal Commission and found that, if their proposals were implemented, traffic volume would still increase by 45% (compared with 52% if the proposals were not implemented). Congestion would actually be far worse under the Royal Commission's proposals, increasing by 17% instead of 13%.

The traffic growth figures are, of course, based on the Royal Commission's assumptions, chosen to engender panic and drum up support for their repressive and expensive campaign against the motorist.

### **falling L-test numbers give the lie to Commission's traffic growth assumptions**

In reality, even if there is growth in total car ownership, the growth in traffic will be less. A truer indication of likely traffic growth is obtained from data on driving tests. The number of candidates for the L-test has fallen from 2 million per year in the 1980s to 1.6 million in 1993.

The government is actually closing 5% of the test centres because of falling demand!

## **ABD - Notice of AGM**

The Association of British Drivers Annual General Meeting will be held at the usual venue on 1st April. All members will receive formal notification in due course but it is hoped that early notification will enable more members to attend.

Date: Saturday 1st April 1995

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Place: The Mundy Arms Hotel, Mackworth, near Derby

# Road haulage industry crippled by excessive taxation

Although the ABD principally represents car drivers' interests, many of our concerns are shared by the road haulage industry in this country. The report which follows is particularly indicative of the attitude of the Government of this country to a sector of our economy which employs in excess of one million people, and which literally delivers the nation's goods.

This attitude can, at best, be described as one of total disinterest; at worst, as bordering on the vindictive, and one is left with the impression that the Government would have no qualms about destroying businesses in the U.K. through a mixture of a policy of appeasement towards "Green" lobby groups, and desperation to pour more and more money into that bottomless pit that is the Treasury.

The first of January 1993 was supposed to herald the dawn of the European "Single Market". All barriers to free competition within the European Union were supposed to be swept away and road hauliers, like all other businesses were hoping to compete on equal terms. Sadly, that is not the case.

The Excise duty on diesel fuel in the U.K., at 31p per litre is now the highest in the European Union, having overtaken Italy in the recent budget(s). By comparison, the tax per litre is 24.86p in France, 19.78p in Denmark and 24.82p in Germany.

The picture for Vehicle Excise Duties (which we used to call the "road fund licence" until that term was quietly forgotten) is even worse. Look at the comparison of annual charges in the table below.

In actual fact, the situation for British truck operators is *even worse than that*.

## HGV Tax Disc costs

United Kingdom	£3,100
Germany	£2,065
Irish Republic	£1,516
Netherlands	£801
Spain	£358

*The table shows the relative costs of Vehicle Excise duties ("Road Fund Licence" or equivalent tax) in several European countries.*

Since the 1st January 1995, Benelux, Germany and Denmark have imposed an additional charge of £980 on the highest

weight lorries using the roads of those countries, but from which *their own operators are exempt*. Extraordinarily, the right to levy this additional charge was agreed by our own Transport Minister!

## car drivers are in line for extortionate taxation

By now you may be wondering what all this has to do with car drivers. The answer to that is threefold:-

**First**, it is indicative of the attitude towards taxation of road transport taken by our Government, and as we have discovered yet again in the Budget (both the main one and the mini one that followed the VAT on [domestic] fuel debacle), car drivers are now every bit as much in the firing line for extortionate taxation as the haulage industry. The Government's Royal Commission on Transport and the Environment, for example, would like to see a **doubling** in the price of petrol.

**Second**, the European Council of Ministers' decision to allow Germany, Denmark and the Benelux to impose the charge on foreign vehicles *also allows*

*similar charges to be imposed on foreign registered CARS*. Fortunately, this does not seem likely in the immediate future. One may wonder why this move, which hinders free movement of traffic across borders, was ever agreed to by our so-called representatives. The answer is simple: greed. Our own Treasury would dearly like to impose a similar charge on traffic using *our roads*. Unfortunately, there would be two important differences. Those charges *would* be levied on us (as well as on foreign registered vehicles), and *would not* cover road charges *outside* the U.K. As usual, the Treasury would get its money *and we would pay twice*.

**Third**, we have a Government that is constantly castigating other European countries for putting needless costs on business by insisting on high levels of "social protection" for employees. Because of our "opt-out" from the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty, of course, none of those extra costs are imposed on our employers. It is not the purpose of this article to agree or disagree with that policy, but it is a sad indictment of much our Press that the Government is able to get away with *hypocrisy on a massive scale*. Whilst preaching the virtue of keeping down the cost of employing staff (which might hurt business but would help employees), it is quite happy to *raise* costs by imposing punitive taxation on a lawful, profitable activity *and hurt both employer and employee at the same time!*

## Oppressing motorists: A Europe-wide conspiracy?

It seems that the epidemic of frenzied legislative and financial assaults on the motorist which has been infecting the UK for several years has now reached France: Autocar & Motor recently reported that a new category of "super-speeders" has been created by the French transport authorities.

Those detected exceeding urban speed limits by over 25mph, non-urban limits by over 30mph and motorway speed limits by over 40mph face a three year ban and up to £900 fine

While the former category of driver may perhaps justifiably be targeted for exhibiting antisocial behaviour, one begins to wonder (in the *total absence* of *scientifically sound* evidence that lower blanket *non-urban* speed limits actually save lives, and indeed *may even cost lives*)

if this isn't merely another demonstration that we are being ripped off by a European political establishment which views the motorist as a (politically) disorganised, weak, and hence *fiscally juicy* target.

At the moment, the legislators and the enviro-fascists have the upper hand: the power of the sleeping giant has yet to be unleashed. Motorists of Europe unite; you have nothing to lose but the shackles of oppression and extortion!

## ABD membership doubles in seven months

ABD membership has increased strongly since mid-1994 and dramatically since the last issue of On the Road. Interest has been fuelled by articles in national newspapers including The Daily Express and The Daily Telegraph.

Publicity about the Royal Commission on the Environment is making more and more citizens realize how their freedom to earn a living and go about their legitimate business and leisure pursuits is threatened. So welcome to all new readers! With a large and active membership, the ABD will achieve its aims.

## A Chunnel preview

*Brian Sealy-Clarke, ABD Member, gives a preview of the practicalities of using the Channel Tunnel.*

In the not too distant future it is probable that most Calais bound motorists will have tried going through the Chunnel on Le Shuttle.

However, as it is not, at the time of writing, open to the general public, your Editor thought some of you would like to hear what it is actually like using this "miracle of modern engineering."

The entrance to the Terminal is off exit No 11a on the M20, and is well signposted. The M20 is now quite a good road, but from where I live, Swiss Cottage, the most direct route to the start of the motorway is a foul journey. Whereas Swiss Cottage to the start of the M2 is not exactly fun, it is better than the other option. One can then cut off the M2 at exit 3 (A229) joining the M20 at junction 6. Members living further away would use the M25.

When nearing the Terminal on the M20 you may tune into the Eurotunnel radio station frequency, 95.6 FM or 99.8 FM, these channels broadcast news etc of interest to Le Shuttle travellers.

On entering the Terminal, the first thing you find is the toll booths where cash, or most credit cards are accepted. After this, as technically you are now in France, you can choose to go straight to Le Shuttle, or, if you have time to spare you fork left to the Passenger Terminal building where there are shops, like Boots, Bureau de Change (you get a much better rate of exchange from a hole in the wall in France, using a Mastercard!) and, of course, the inevitable "Duty free shop".

### **Le Shuttle will be running every 15 minutes**

Le Shuttle will be running every 15 minutes, so when you are ready you wait for the next announcement over the PA telling you to rejoin your car and follow the green arrows. The next thing is passport control and

customs, thence to the train, where you will either be directed up a short easy ramp to the top deck or into the "ground floor". Le Shuttle is loaded by cars entering the back of the train and driving along until the deck is full or there are no more cars to be loaded. This means the first car on, drives several hundred yards! However, as the carriages are very wide this presents no problem, (personally I have used 4th gear on occasion!)

There are a number of "loaders" to be found in Le Shuttle. these are young lads and lasses who tell you to put on your handbrake, engage first gear and keep your windows open in order that you may hear any PA announcements etc, things you would never have thought of without being told! When you drive down the train, try not to run them down, as this is discouraged by Eurotunnel.

As a claustrophobic, what impressed me immediately was the size and airiness of the carriages. They are enormous, brightly lit and air conditioned - not a bit like the London Tube. It is also comforting to know there is a platform running alongside the track the whole length of the tunnel.

### **the smoothness and quietness of the journey is most impressive**

Once started, the smoothness and quietness of the journey is also most impressive. During the whole journey the train seemed to just amble along giving no sensation of speed. Yet, when I timed the journey, portal to portal it took only 23 minutes! One may have a wander around, but there is little to see, and there are no vending machines, there are, however, toilet facilities in every third carriage, both up and down. On arrival at Coquelles you drive straight off onto the Autoroute, without stopping. All the formalities were dealt with at Folkstone.

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# Letters



## Propaganda v Truth - the real motives

Sir - I was most interested to read the report of the formation of ABD espousing as it does a cause with which I totally agree. A Chemist, though now retired from teaching, like yourself I am very concerned at what seems to be the failure to be given to any views other than the prevalent orthodoxy of public transport and the so called 'Greenhouse' effect. Indeed there is much in the present situation to compare with German propaganda in WW 2 where theories, based on 'might', 'could' and 'possibly' are taken as proven fact.

In as far as public transport is concerned the argument is very far from proven in terms that only full transport units are considered while they are operating and not the position over the full 24 hours. Most rail and road public transport, outside inner urban areas, is very much underused for most of the day while a private report produced in the late 50's, to which I had access through my then employment, confirmed that aside from one route rail transport of parcel traffic was far more expensive than road. The company having this report was purchased for the Nation by Mrs Castle as Minister of Transport but the report was never made public.

In recent, historic and geologic time sequences there is no evidence to support the effect of higher levels of Carbon Dioxide and it would seem that, since the formation of the Earth, the concentration of this gas in the atmosphere has been decreasing. There is also an assumption that atmospheric balance is maintained only by photosynthesis with no account being taken of marine solution leading to the formation of Carbonate rocks. The amount of these present in the Earth's crust, as compared to photosynthetic residue, rather upsets the calculation.

I fear that there is an underlying agenda being worked in that, by the adoption of public transport, one of the main instruments of social change which allowed the ordinary person freedom of travel is being curtailed. To those of us who survived the 1958 rail strike the message of the power of small numbers of organised workers in a public transport system will not be overlooked.

I trust that you will find these observations in concord with your own views so that an organisation can be constructed which can counter a highly organised and very insidious campaign which presents to those concerned with tax collection an easy and highly lucrative source of funds.

T Rumble

## Our inadequate roads - thanks to Luddites

Sir - I am writing to offer a few ideas which may be of interest to your readers.

1. Pre-Beeching the railway network comprised some 19,600 route miles. When this

network carried most of our traffic it was supplemented by the old network of A, B and unclassified roads.

The rail network has now been halved. A very small mileage has been converted to roads but the remainder of these routes (purpose-built to a very high standard to permit the passage of heavy, long, fairly high vehicles) lie idle or have been destroyed. In their place we have a mere 2,000 miles of new motorways to carry the vastly increased passenger and goods traffic of a larger, more highly mobile and affluent population.

Granted there have also been improvements to the old roads but that is part of a process that has been going on for centuries. The core of our transport network, the motorways, is so incomplete that some counties do not have a single mile. It takes an average of thirteen years from the time that the government accepts that a new road is overdue to get it built. Twelve years to go through planning and enquiry stages and one year to actually construct it. So every road is at least thirteen years overdue in meeting a perceived need.

The latter day Luddites of the anti-road groups claim that you cannot keep pace with demand for more roads but the problem is essentially their opposition which generates needless pollution, danger, cost and frustration.

2. In most fields of endeavour a business is considered an enviable success if it generates growth.

Why is the continuing growth generated by new roads unique in being singled out for criticism?

The arguments against roads could apply equally against new housing which encroaches upon our countryside, generates more pollution and need to travel etc etc.

By the same Luddite argument, why spend more on health when it only makes the country overpopulated and overcrowded? People who survive one lot of treatment often need another or go on to have children. If we stopped spending so much on hospitals the position might be expected to be more stable!

3. I am concerned that the ABD tends to support the idea that commercial traffic should be encouraged to go back to the railways. I think this should be reconsidered.

Firstly the same arguments apply both to commercial and private road users.

We claim that people should be able to enjoy the convenience, reliability, flexibility and economy that roads can provide. The same applies to goods but the economics are almost certainly more carefully costed than is the cases with personal travel. Additionally a certain amount of motoring is for pure pleasure. No-one sends goods for a joy ride.

The anti lobby claim that both people and freight could often use rail instead of road. Passengers are easier to convey in that they are self-loading.

It is often overlooked that a great environmental advantage of road travel is that, given adequate roads, it is possible to make long journeys without travelling through city

centres whereas a rail journey involves persons and freight being taken into the overcrowded city centres to the mainline station or goods yard at both the start and finish of the journey. The railway journey will then go through the centres of intermediate towns and cities (generating noise and possible diesel fumes en route) which the road vehicle would bypass.

I remember in the 1950s, when we were still pressing for the first mile of motorway in the country to be built, a motoring correspondent sagely observed that in America it was pressure from the private motorist that had produced the first parkways etc. Here, he pointed out, they were more likely to come from pressure from the road hauliers with motorists reaping the benefits. Commercial interests played a big part in the now defunct Roads Campaign Council and I do not think we should try to use arguments against them which could rebound on us.

4. When there is a motorway accident in fog the newspapers scream 'motorway madness'. Why is it treated as normal to load passengers onto a train (the earliest type of guided missile where the 'driver' cannot steer and is not expected to be able to stop within the distance he can see)? The train then sets off through fog along a line which, even if perfect signalling has kept it clear of other trains, may well be obstructed by vandalism, fallen trees or vehicles or aircraft which have crashed onto the track.

5. Overtaking is one of the more risky aspects of driving especially on single carriageways. The time taken to pass a vehicle is greatly reduced if maximum acceleration is used but robotic speed limit enforcement will tend to discourage this. Is it beyond the wit of man to devise a waiver to cover this situation in the interests of the safety of all concerned?

6. In the 1940s (shortly after the end of world war II) an O.E.C.D. team visited the USA looking for ideas to copy in Europe. Amongst their recommendation was one in favour of crawling lanes. These are, of course, a very cost effective way of improving traffic flow by letting faster vehicles overtake slower traffic in the shortest possible space. Why are there still so few examples here?

7. A pedestrian sensing someone catching him up will normally move to one side to assist him to pass if the width of the path makes that desirable. Why does the same man at the wheel of the car feel so disinclined to help faster traffic to pass him? Not only is this common courtesy but is in the interests of road safety.

8. There is a tendency to forget that motorways

### **Write to On The Road!**

This is *your* Newsletter! Write to the ABD with your experiences, observations and opinions.

Send a text file on disc as well as hard copy if possible.



were designed for high speed traffic. When the M1 was opened the Midland Red had a number of special coaches designed to operate the London-Birmingham service at 100mph cruising speeds. Motorway speed limits were initially introduced as a fuel conservation measure during one of the phoney oil shortage scares - shortly afterwards British rail introduced 100mph trains!

The treasury cheerfully accepts the extra VAT on high value, high performance cars but then makes careful and sensible uses of their officially approved and tested performance a crime in certain circumstances.

Traffic volumes and adverse weather often make even 70mph an unreasonably high speed at times. But equally there are many occasions when it would be very reasonable to take advantage of the design of both car and road (for both of which the motorist has paid) and travel at a higher speed.

If the government does not wish to alienate the motorist it would be sensible to start experiments, using high technology, to explore the potential for variable speed limits.

9. Are we looking at the possibility of bringing a case before the European court for Human Rights in a protest against the erosion of basic human rights the moment a citizen sits behind the wheel of a vehicle and to protect the long-standing right of human beings of personal mobility?

Herbert Barrs



### **Cuttings request**

Relevant cuttings from newspapers, magazines and professional journals will be greatly appreciated. The wider the coverage the better.

Please record the source and date in the margin.

### **PRIVATE MEDICINE**

One of our members is Group Secretary of a Private Patients Group.

The group enjoys a 25% discount from the normal rates.

Should any of our members be interested in joining, please contact:

Brian Sealy-Clarke  
11 Glenross House  
107 Belsize Road  
London  
NW6 4AJ

Tel 0171-624 2971

For further information.

## **Action checklist**

**Members often ask, "What can I do to help?" Here are a few ideas:**

- Send off the pro-forma letters to your MP, Brian Mawhinney and others. (If you have not yet received these from the ABD they will arrive soon).**
- Write personally to your MP.**
- Write to your local press to protest about anti-car proposals by local government.**
- AA and RAC members should write to these organisations asking what they are doing to support their members' interests and to combat anti-car propaganda.**
- Write to the BBC and other national media whenever emotive, anti-car sentiments are presented as "fact".**
- Enrol more members! You should find a membership form with this issue. 'Phone or write to the Chairman or Secretary for more copies.**
- Do you have skills, or access to facilities, which could help run the ABD? Write or 'phone to let us know.**

**Apathy is our main enemy. Many news media present anti-car viewpoints as though they are held by the vast majority of citizens. We need to show that this is not the case!**

## **Now we know who the real polluters are!**

In a recent issue of "On the Road", we posed the question: "who are the *real* polluters in today's urban environment?"

We now have the *definitive* answer. It comes from that hotbed of environmentalist activity, the United States of America, and was unearthed by Geoff Browne of Classic Car Weekly (issue of 24/12/94).

A recently published study by independent air quality scientists for the Automobile Association of America has found:

(a) that *two-thirds* of air pollution comes from *factories, refineries and diesel trucks*; and,

(b) that *80 to 90 percent* of smog in America's most polluted cities comes from sources *other than cars*.

### **80% - 90% of smog comes from sources other than cars**

This must be counted as a mortal wound to the anti-car lobby's campaign to brand *the car* as an environmental spoiler, and as a richly-deserved kick-in-the-teeth to the environmental zealots who have allowed their enthusiasm for achieving their political aims to overwhelm their grip on scientific reality with respect to the environmental impact of the car.

Messrs.Mawhinney (of the DoT), Gummer (of the DoE) and Houghton (of the recent Royal Commission on the Environment) need bringing up to speed on these matters.

The latter, and several other key issues, will shortly be addressed through the medium of pro forma letters for each member's MP and Mr. Mawhinney.

We strongly advise you to sign them and send them off to the respective recipients as soon as possible after you receive them.

### **ABD Subscriptions**

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 1995 are due. Renewal notices have been sent out; but if you have not received yours, send £12 to the Secretary anyway!

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

# International Motoring News Roundup

## Car Crime - still out of control as Britain tops world league

Britain is still topping the international car crime league, according to recent statistics, with 3.5% of car owners having been victims in the last year alone, nearly a million cars taken, and a further half a million broken into. By contrast, Italy and Australia, two other badly affected countries, have rates of 3%.

By comparison, only about 0.5% of Germans and Dutch are victims of car crime in any one year, and 0.6% of Japanese. Britain's motorists are paying £34 million per year for security devices alone, in the fight to protect their property. Even that sum pales into insignificance when compared to the ever increasing cost of fitting sophisticated anti theft devices as standard equipment. All Ford Probes sold in this country need about £1,000 worth of extra equipment fitted as standard to UK specification cars in order to make them insurable.

The most popular cars for thieves are now the Ford Fiesta RS Turbo, followed by the Vauxhall Astra GTE and BMW 318i Coupe.

## £50,000 Police payout for anti-road protesters

Hampshire Police have paid £50,000 damages to ten anti-road protesters in an out-of-court settlement for "unlawful arrest" on Twyford Down, where they were opposing the construction of the last part of the M3 motorway near Winchester. The motorway links London to the vital south coast ports of Southampton and Portsmouth.

Previously, traffic pouring off the uncompleted M3 had joined traffic coming off the busy A34 dual carriageway from Oxford and the M40 on the old Winchester by-pass, causing chronic congestion. The route is used as a means of access to the South by many exporters from the Midlands and North.

We understand that forty further similar cases are pending by protesters.

## 6 months youth custody - for stealing 52 cars

A Bristol magistrate was forced to impose a sentence of just six months youth custody on a 16 year old who stole 52 cars in 11 months. His father was also ordered to pay £378 compensation.

The magistrate said "Our hands are tied. This we regret because you have put the public at physical risk a number of times". Watch your car - he will be back out soon.

## Police use cars as bait to catch thieves

Police are using cars as "honey pots" to attract thieves and then catch them. The cars are fitted with radio transmitters, and hundreds of

thousands of pounds worth of stolen vehicles have already been recovered, some from as far away as South Africa as a result.

One raid found a garage full of Porsches and Jaguars, and another led to the recovery of Range Rovers by a dockside, all ready to leave the country.

## 50 mph limit on M25 - Gatsos to enforce!

A speed limit of just 50 mph is to be tested on the southwest section of the M25 motorway shortly, and is expected to be extended to other motorways sooner after.

Despite written assurances to us some time ago that "there were no plans for the introduction of Gatsos" to our motorways, it is certain that the speed cameras will be fitted to at least some of the overhead gantries which will post the limits. The limit should be raised to the usual "break-neck" 70 mph when the motorway is quiet, but speeds higher than that will never be allowed.

There is little pretence that the limits or the cameras have anything to do with road safety. "Improving traffic flows" is the official excuse, but it also means that the Government's "hidden agenda" of using speeding fines as a revenue raising measure will get into gear - as we predicted more than two years ago.

The number of drivers disqualified from driving - currently 250,000 at any one time - is also certain to rise.

## Anti-road protests in Scotland

A campaign has got under way in Scotland to try and halt the construction of a seven mile extension to the M77 motorway just south of Glasgow.

The motorway is considered so important for the region that it has escaped the recent deep cuts in the road building programme, and has the backing of the Labour controlled Strathclyde Regional Council.

Squatters have moved onto the site, with the usual paraphernalia, including signs saying "Earth First, Profits Last", indicating that the protesters have their heads not so much in the trees as in the clouds.

The promise that all protests will be peaceful is hopeful, but the fact that dozens of nails have been driven into the trees in an attempt to frustrate chain saws is hardly encouraging. Although 1,080 trees will have to come down, 165,000 will be planted and 600 jobs will be created.

## Question marks over the safety of super unleaded

It seems that using Super unleaded petrol may be more harmful than using leaded four-star, according to recent research. The problem is the inclusion of Benzene, which may lead to a slightly increased risk of cancer. Benzene is

used to increase the Octane rating. Super unleaded is actually only used by a tiny minority of motorists.

Germany is pressing the E.U. to agree a Europe wide reduction in Benzene levels in petrol to a maximum of 1% in place of the current 3% present in standard unleaded.

Meanwhile, the United States is forging ahead by introducing special reformulated petrol in some areas, which will lead to even lower emissions. This is typical of a country which introduced catalytic converters 20 years ago and has consistently taken practical steps to clean the air rather than adopting the mindless anti freedom anti car mentality which we seem to suffer over here.

## Catalytic converters and the environment

Research conducted by the Warren Springs Laboratory shows that a car with a catalytic converter can emit 76% less Carbon Monoxide, 81% fewer Hydrocarbons and 77% fewer Nitrogen Oxides, even from a cold start in a congested city, and even undertaking journeys of just 2.5 miles. This puts paid to the myth that Cats only work on long journeys.

## Motorways - the U.K. falls even further behind

Germany has 8,960 km of motorway, and plans to build a further 1,600 km

France has 7,450 km of motorway, and plans to build another 2,800 km

The Netherlands (one-sixth the size of GB) has 2,090 km of motorway, and plans a further 60 km

Great Britain has just 3,100 km, and is cutting back on proposals to build a further 213 km

This means that France, despite having more than twice as much motorway as Britain, plans to build almost as much in addition as the entire British network!

## Car commuters to be squeezed

The Government is aiming to make it extremely difficult and expensive to commute to work by car. Office and other employment developments will not be permitted to offer generous car parking provision, as would once have been the case, and London is likely to be the first city to be hit.

However, Mr Norris, Transport Minister for London has hit back at Eco-fascists (his term, not ours!) who refuse to recognise the role of the private car in urban areas. He maintained that the car could not be "uninvented".

Compared to much of the rhetoric to which we have been subjected recently, those words of wisdom coming from a Government Minister must be seen as good news.

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# International Motoring News Roundup

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## Cutting casualties in Essex

Following the introduction of a "geographic information system" (GIS) in 1988 and an advanced accident recording system called "Extras" in 1991, Essex County Council has been able to boast a dramatic fall in road casualties.

Traffic levels have increased by 50% over the last 10 years, but the number of fatal accidents in 1993 was 19% less than the average recorded over the previous four years.

Essex Highways Department said that the "Extras" system has enabled the Department to identify and analyse accident blackspots more easily, and then introduce remedial schemes to make those areas safer.

This is an example of exactly the kind of reasoned, commonsense policy that the ABD has been advocating in the quest to reduce the numbers of deaths and injuries on our roads. It is a pity more local authorities - to say nothing of national Government - do not follow their example.

## Road pricing rip-off in Singapore

Singapore provides a taste of the kind of policies that greedy authorities can impose on their hapless subjects, if they are given the chance.

A simple Proton, built in neighbouring Malaysia, costs about S\$ 95,000 (£41,000) on the road, against a U.K. price of under £7,000. That includes import duties and other taxes, but more than half of that price represents the cost of a so-called Certificate of Entitlement, or COE, which must be purchased from the Singaporean Government before the car can be registered.

By contrast a Jaguar XJ3.2 costs around £139,000, five times the U.K. price, and an S-Class Mercedes around £180,000.

The local Government only releases a limited number of COEs each year, and dealers and the public bid for them. If 5,000 COEs are to be released, and there are 10,000 bids, half will be unsuccessful, and the price will be fixed at the level of the lowest successful one.

The final price also depends on the size of the car to be purchased. The Proton's COE works out at S\$50,000 (£21,000), the Mercedes' COE is about double that price.

Four years ago, a COE cost about S\$1,000, and apparently the increasing cost has surprised everyone. All of this means that car ownership is beyond the reach of many middle income families who would like them, and the high cost is starting to become a political issue.

The Singaporeans love their cars like everybody else, though, and the market for cars is still rising, according to local dealers. Demand is particularly high for Mercedes Benz, who command a staggering 12% of the market, and there is a waiting list for the C-Class models.

## Road pricing rip-off in Britain

Business has shown enormous interest in the Government's proposals to introduce electronic tolling to Britain's motorway network in 1998, with no less than 29 consortia bidding for the contract. With billions of pounds of YOUR money at stake, interest on this scale is hardly surprising.

Twenty-four of the systems proposed use gantries across the road to identify vehicles and either record vehicle details for later billing, or automatically debit a smart card. The systems use microwaves, lasers or infra-red, whilst three systems use satellites to track all vehicle movements from space.

Evaluation of the systems is taking place now, and running trials on motorways will commence next year. Not surprisingly in view of the controversy surrounding this issue, the precise location of those trials is a closely guarded secret.

In doing so, the Government has chosen to ignore the advice of its own Transport Select Committee, who published a damning report on motorway tolling published last summer. It has also ignored the misgivings contained in the notoriously anti-car Royal Commission Report on Environmental Pollution (Transport and the Environment), published in October and covered in more detail elsewhere in this issue of *On The Road*.

The Government has said that "it is considering its response" to the Transport Select Committee Report, but "in the meantime, it had to continue with its preparations".

The contract is on schedule to go to tender in 1996, with the present administration showing its customary lack of interest in advice, and lack of political judgment in assessing how the electorate at large (as opposed to pressure groups and the small press elite) will respond to this wholly unjustifiable new charge.

Publicly, the Government has said that charges will be set at 1.5p per mile for cars, and 4.5p per mile for trucks. Those charges would raise tax revenue of around £700 million, but we expect the actual charges to be very much higher.

## Road pricing rip-off on the Severn Bridge

Road tolls levied on the Severn Bridge, which rose by 10% in January 1994 are set to rise by a further 9% in the New Year. The charge is now a massive £3.70 for a car, and £11.10 for a truck. Both increases are way above the rate of inflation, and are used both to maintain the existing bridge and finance the construction of the new one, just downstream of it.

Not surprisingly, ever increasing numbers of vehicles are making their way through Gloucestershire to avoid paying. Many of them are covering a lot of extra miles and burdening

formerly quiet towns and villages whilst they do so, and the risk of accidents increases with the extra traffic. The Highways Agency estimated that 2,700 vehicles a day are making the detour.

The tolls are levied on traffic making the crossing to Wales only; crossing to England is free.

## Asthma enigma

Although the anti-car lobby find it suits their purpose to blame vehicle exhaust emissions (and particularly car exhaust) for the increase in reported cases of asthma, a cause-and-effect relationship has not been scientifically established.

There are several other possible causes such as the house dust mite. Recent research has suggested two further possible causes: margarine and gas (for domestic heating and cooking).

### could it be margarine?

Researchers in Sydney, Australia, found that the rise in consumption of polyunsaturated fats paralleled the increased incidence of asthma. This was the case in the UK, US and New Zealand as well as Australia.

By contrast the incidence of asthma was low in Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries where consumption of oily fish or olive oil was high.

The researchers found that the breakdown of fatty acids in the margarines produced chemicals which can cause inflammation.

### or gas?

In Birmingham, hospital researchers investigated the effects of inhaling nitrogen dioxide. This gas is present at higher levels in homes with gas heating or cooking than in those without.

Their experiment showed that nitrogen dioxide apparently sensitised volunteers with mild asthma and exacerbated their allergenic reaction to house dust.

## Safer night driving in sight

Saab and Volvo are developing a ultra violet light system to improve nighttime visibility. The front-mounted lights are hardly visible themselves but, used in conjunction with special paint for white-lining roads, give a dramatic improvement in visibility.

GEC, Jaguar and Pilkington are experimenting at the other end of the spectrum. Their infra red system (similar to military equipment) sees through darkness and even fog!

# Even couch potatoes can be energy-inefficient!

Our illustrious politicians have spent much time recently ensuring that the motor-vehicle, and the car particularly, has come in for a huge amount of wholly unjust and scientifically unfounded criticism. The recent, supposedly objective, Royal Commission report on the Environment even talks of “freeing” the public “from the *bonds(!)* of car ownership”!

In SMMT Public Affairs Director, Roger King’s words at the recent ABD National Day, the car is an as yet unrivalled “personal mobility system”. I cannot conceive of it being rivalled by any other transport mode in the currently foreseeable future.

## the car represents unrivalled personal mobility

So let’s look at the Government’s green credentials. Did you know that our “environmentally concerned” administration had *blocked* a Private Members Bill that would have brought about a CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduction of 24 million tonnes per annum (4% of our total annual emissions of this gas)?

To achieve an equivalent reduction from road transport sources would require 7 to 9 million cars being priced off our roads!

And what was the nature of this blocked Bill? It related to the adequacy (or rather *inadequacy*) of the standard of energy-efficiency of older UK domestic properties.

Energy efficiency of houses can be rated on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is very inefficient and 10 highly efficient.

The average older UK domestic property scores 4/10. A modern UK home typically scores 7/10; while contemporary German and Scandinavian homes score 8 to 9/10.

Just by raising the energy-efficiency of older UK domestic properties by one unit to a score of 5/10, the Milton Keynes National Energy Foundation estimates that 24 million tonnes less CO<sub>2</sub> per annum would be generated in the UK.

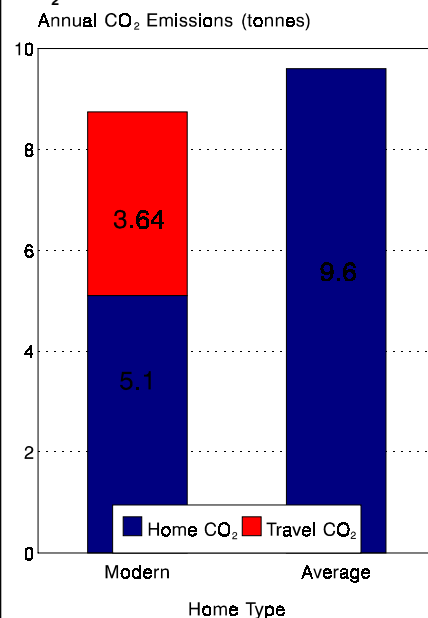
Bringing this back to an individual property basis, the thermally-inefficient older UK domestic property emits some 9.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum. Its better insulated and constructed newer UK counterpart emits some 5.1 tonnes per annum.

Now let’s return to cars again. The average UK saloon car covering an average annual mileage generates 3.64 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per annum (figures courtesy of Rover Cars).

Therefore, the family living in a modern house who use a well-maintained modern car for their transport needs generate less CO<sub>2</sub> than a similar family living in an older domestic property who don’t go anywhere at all!

So even supposedly committed, environmentally aware couch potatoes can

## CO<sub>2</sub> emissions: Domestic v. Travel



*The graph shows how a family in a modern house **with** a car produce less carbon dioxide than a family without a car but in an older house!*

be extremely energy-inefficient!

Remember that it is our supposedly suddenly “green” Government which has already blocked the proposal which could have cut the country’s CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 4% without the need for *any* change in lifestyles. Now just how genuine are its green credentials?

The only green aspect of the current crop of politicians is the greedy glow in their eyes as they dream up yet more dishonourable schemes to relieve British motorists of their hard-earned cash!

## High Performance for the ABD

Those Members who are reasonably well-versed in driving will no doubt know the name of John Lyon.

John is widely recognised as one of the *world’s* foremost road drivers and roadcraft teachers.

By enhancing drivers’ awareness and practical car-control techniques, John aims to impart to his pupils, a blend of safe and enthusiastic enjoyment of driving, but with the emphasis *firmly* on *safety*.

For many years John has run the High Performance Course (at one time under the auspices of the BSM, but now as a stand-alone business) from its base of operations in Caterham, Surrey.

John has been following our development, and as a consequence of discussions with new ABD Member, Ted Marriage, and with Chairman, Brian Gregory, he has joined the

Association of British Drivers.

Members wishing to take advantage of tuition on The High Performance Course (Brian Gregory shortly being one such Member) should contact John Lyon on 01883 346330.

John has indicated that he is already heavily committed in the early part of 1995, so Members might do well to bear this in mind and “book early” if they want to avoid disappointment or an appreciable wait!

### **Stop Press!**

John’s company is now trading under a new name, **British Driver Training Ltd**. So the full contact name and address for The High Performance Course is now:

John Lyon, Chief Executive  
British Driver Training Ltd  
Unit Seven, Caterham Hill  
Caterham  
Surrey.

Telephone 01883 346330.

## 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.