

TESTIMONY FOR SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION SAFETY, HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, MONROEVILLE, PA., AUGUST 19, 1981, SUBMITTED BY EDWARD A. ZENDRON, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT, PENNSYLVANIA AUTOMOTIVE WHOLESALERS ASSOCIATION, AND MANAGER, JACK'S AUTO PARTS CO., SARVER, PA.:

GOOD AFTERNOON, GENTLEMEN, AND THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR AND TESTIFY BEFORE YOU ON THE VITALLY IMPORTANT SUBJECT OF VEHICLE SAFETY INSPECTIONS.

MY NAME IS EDWARD A. ZENDRON AND I SERVE AS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF PENNSYLVANIA AUTOMOTIVE WHOLESALERS ASSOCIATION, A TRADE ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING NEARLY 300 COMPANIES IN 51 OF OUR 67 COUNTIES WHICH SELL AT WHOLESALE AND AT RETAIL A VARIETY OF AUTOMOBILE PARTS AND ACCESSORIES.

ALSO, I AM OWNER OF AN AUTO PARTS STORE IN SARVER, PENNSYLVANIA, A VERY SMALL TOWN NEAR PITTSBURGH.

I AM CERTAIN THAT YOU GENTLEMEN KNOW BY NOW THAT P A W A STRONGLY OPPOSES PASSAGE OF HOUSE BILL NO. 562 WHICH WOULD CHANGE OUR PRESENT PERIODIC MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTION FROM SEMI-ANNUALLY TO ONCE-YEARLY.

AT A HEARING HELD ON JULY 16th IN HARRISBURG, THIS ASSOCIATION STRESSED THE FACT THAT ITS MEMBERS WILL NOT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED IF ONCE-YEARLY MOTOR VEHICLE INSPECTION BECOMES LAW.

THIS STATEMENT BEARS REPEATING -- MANY P A W A MEMBERS BELIEVE THAT ONCE-YEARLY INSPECTION WILL INCREASE THEIR BUSINESS THREEFOLD WITHIN A YEAR AFTER PASSAGE DESPITE A CLAIM TO THE CONTRARY CONTAINED IN A QUESTIONABLE STUDY UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION.

AND MAY I REMIND YOU GENTLEMEN THAT P A W A MEMBERS ARE FAR MORE CAPABLE OF ASSESSING THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THIS PROPOSED CHANGE ON THE MOTORING PUBLIC THAN ALMOST ANYONE BECAUSE WE SELL TO THE FIRMS WHICH MAKE THE REQUIRED REPAIRS AND WE SELL TO THOSE PEOPLE WHO "DO IT THEMSELVES."

WE'RE ON THE "FIRING LINE" -- THE BUREAUCRAT ISN'T!

I'VE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO BRIEFLY REVIEW THOSE ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF CHANGING OUR SYSTEM FROM SEMI-ANNUALLY TO ONCE-YEARLY AND TWO IMPORTANT POINTS KEPT RETURNING TO MIND:

FIRST, THOSE DEDICATED TO CHANGING OUR SYSTEM RELY HEAVILY ON STATISTICAL STUDIES, SOME OF WHICH ARE QUITE OUTDATED AND MANY OF WHICH PLACE UNDUE EMPHASIS ON FATAL AND INJURY-RELATED ACCIDENTS. THEY POINT OUT THAT OTHER STATES WITHOUT A SYSTEM AS GOOD AS OURS HAVE NO MORE FATALITIES THAN THOSE WE EXPERIENCE IN PENNSYLVANIA. WELL, WHAT ABOUT THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF NON-FATAL, NON-INJURY-PRODUCING ACCIDENTS THAT OCCUR IN THESE OTHER STATES FOR WHICH NO EXPLANATION IS OFFERED?

SECOND, THOSE IN FAVOR OF THIS CHANGE INSIST THAT THE STATE IS NOT, UNDER LAW, GIVEN THE RESPONSIBILITY TO REGULATE VEHICLE MAINTENANCE.

THAT'S TRUE BUT WHAT ABOUT THE SAFETY FACTOR?

IT'S A MATTER OF RECORD THAT PEOPLE ARE KEEPING THEIR CARS MUCH LONGER THAN IN PAST YEARS BECAUSE OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF TODAY'S ECONOMIC CONDITIONS.

WOULDN'T YOU SAY THAT THIS FACT, ALONE, WOULD BE SUFFICIENT REASON TO THINK TWICE BEFORE CHANGING TO ONCE-YEARLY INSPECTIONS?

MY OWN EXPERIENCE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE -- AS AN AUTO MECHANIC, SERVICE MANAGER AND NOW OWNER OF AN AUTO PARTS STORE -- TELLS ME THAT ONCE-YEARLY INSPECTION INCREASES THE CHANCES FOR BRAKE FAILURE, STEERING FAILURE, EXHAUST SYSTEM MALFUNCTION, FLOOR RUSTING, HOLES IN THE BODY FRAME AND THE LIKE. ONCE-YEARLY INSPECTION WOULD NOT PREVENT FLOOR ROTTING OR RUSTING, THE RESULT OF WHICH HAS CAUSED SOME TERRIBLE ACCIDENTS.

AND SUCH ACCIDENTS ARE RARELY ATTRIBUTED TO AN INADEQUATE STATE INSPECTION SYSTEM!

ANOTHER POINT YOU OUGHT TO CONSIDER VERY CAREFULLY IS HUMAN NATURE.

PEOPLE WILL STILL WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO GET THEIR CARS INSPECTED EVEN UNDER THE PROPOSED STAGGERED REGISTRATION-INSPECTION SYSTEM.

WE SELL MORE AND MORE BRAKE DRUMS AND SHOES DURING THE LAST WEEKS OF INSPECTION THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME DURING THE FULL INSPECTION PERIOD!

IF BRAKE SHOES WERE REPLACED BEFORE THE DRUMS OR DISCS WERE RUINED, THINK HOW MUCH THE CUSTOMERS WOULD SAVE!

THE SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR POWER STEERING COMPONENTS. THE CUSTOMER CANNOT KNOW IF THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH HIS POWER STEERING SYSTEM WITHOUT SEMI-ANNUAL INSPECTION INSTEAD OF ONCE A YEAR!

YOU GENTLEMEN DON'T HAVE TO TRAVEL TOO FAR FROM HERE TO VIEW THE END RESULT OF A TOTAL LACK OF A VEHICLE SAFETY INSPECTION. ACROSS THE OHIO LINE, YOU'LL FIND CARS WITH A HEADLIGHT OUT, NO TAIL LIGHTS, FENDERS LITERALLY FLAPPING IN THE BREEZE, BROKEN WINDSHIELDS AND WINDOWS, LOUD EXHAUSTS AND MANY MORE DEFECTS.

IS THIS WHAT WE WANT IN PENNSYLVANIA IN THE NAME OF "GETTING GOVERNMENT OFF PEOPLE'S BACKS?"

I'D LIKE TO MAKE ONE MORE POINT BEFORE CLOSING.

I ASK BECAUSE I HAVE NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE RESOURCES TO ASCERTAIN THE ANSWER FOR MYSELF.

WHAT EFFECT WOULD ONCE-YEARLY VEHICLE SAFETY INSPECTIONS HAVE UPON AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE COVERAGE COSTS? WOULD THOSE COSTS GO UP?

CERTAINLY THIS QUESTION NEEDS ANSWERING BEFORE ANY FINAL DECISION IS REACHED!

TO SUM UP, WHAT P A W A STRONGLY RECOMMENDS IS THAT YOUR SUBCOMMITTEE AND THE FULL HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF MODERNIZING THE PRESENT SYSTEM RATHER THAN TOSS IT OUT IN FAVOR OF ONCE-YEARLY INSPECTIONS.

WE THINK THIS MAKES GOOD SENSE.

WE BELIEVE THAT RESTORATION OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE PRESENT TWICE-YEARLY SYSTEM IS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY! PEOPLE WANT TO KNOW THAT INSPECTIONS ARE PERFORMED BY HONEST, COMPETENT MECHANICS. THEY ALSO

WANT AND DESERVE TO GET ASSURANCES THAT WHEN SOMETHING HAS TO BE REPAIRED, THAT WORK IS NEEDED, IS DONE PROPERLY AND AT A FAIR PRICE.. UNFORTUNATELY, IN PART DUE TO BAD NATIONAL AND STATE-WIDE NEWS COVERAGE OF OUR SYSTEM, THE PUBLIC PRESENTLY VIEWS OUR INSPECTION PROGRAM, THOSE ENTRUSTED TO OPERATE IT, AND THOSE TO WHOM THAT PUBLIC MUST TURN FOR REPAIRS, WITH A JAUNDICED EYE.

A CHANGE IN TIMING -- FROM TWICE TO ONCE YEARLY -- WILL DO NOTHING TO CHANGE THAT PUBLIC VIEWPOINT. IF ANYTHING, THE ONCE-YEARLY PLAN WILL ONLY REINFORCE PEOPLE'S SUSPICIONS THAT THEY ARE BEING "RIPPED OFF."

ONE VERY EFFECTIVE WAY TO BEGIN MODERNIZING THE PRESENT SYSTEM, BY THE WAY, WOULD BE TO ELIMINATE THE SO-CALLED "COSMETIC" INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS SUCH AS FAILURE TO PASS INSPECTION BECAUSE OF A MALFUNCTIONING DOME LIGHT, INCONSEQUENTIAL WINDOW CRACKS THAT DO NOT AFFECT THE DRIVER'S VISION, BODY RUST SPOTS THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH AUTO SAFETY, IN OTHER WORDS, ITEMS WHICH DO NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT A THIRD PARTY. I UNDERSTAND THAT SUCH STREAMLINING IS ALREADY IN UNDER CONSIDERATION. I CERTAINLY HOPE SO!

GENTLEMEN, THE POWER TO RESTORE THIS CONFIDENCE LIES IN YOURS HANDS.

AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR AND TESTIFY.

I WILL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

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