

Editorial

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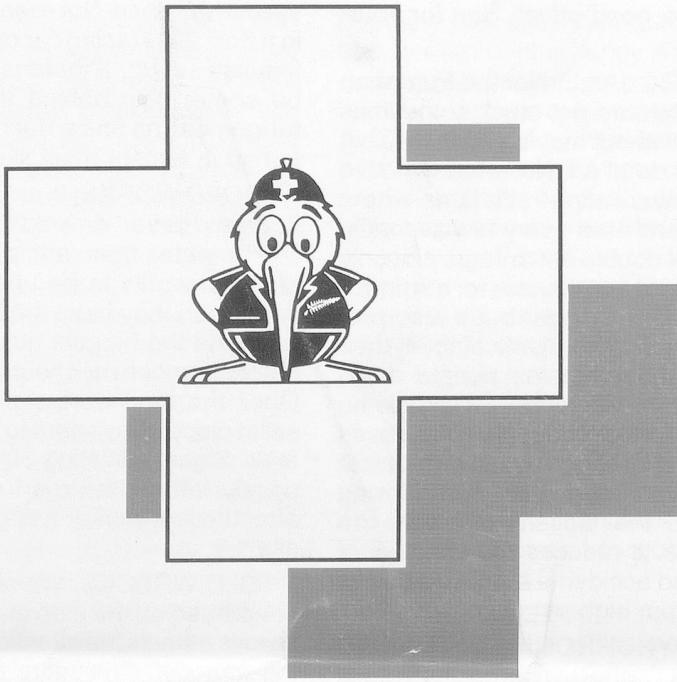
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HELWETA

EDITORIAL

According to the NZ Ministry of Transport (we will keep calling it MOT since everyone is more familiar with this name rather than with the new one) all cars that move represent a potential danger. It therefore stands to reason that the only way for cars to be safe is in the stationary position. If no vehicle moved, there would be no more traffic accidents and so our dear old MOT would be delighted if they were allowed to impose a total ban on all traffic movement. It would make their lives so much easier as it would solve all their problems. There are however two good reasons why this must not or will not be allowed to happen. Apart from the slight inconvenience which a total ban of all vehicle movements would represent to all of us (a state which would plunge NZ back into the prehistorical age before

the invention of the wheel) the major problem would be that the MOT would grow into an unmanageable monster organisation. Experience shows that a few staff can do a lot of work but it needs thousands of staff to do nothing. You have all heard of "Parkinson's Law" which says that "work expands according to the time put at its disposal". As a typical example, Parkinson mentioned the English Ministry in charge of the old British Empire. When the British Empire was at its peak, this particular ministry employed just on 200 people. As the British Empire crumbled after the second world war, the ministry needed more and more staff. By the time the British Empire virtually ceased to exist, the ministry in charge of it had a staff of over 2000. There is no reason in the world to believe that the NZMOT would not follow the same trend. It does not happen often, but in this issue the

NZ Government for once would be on our side because the Ministers too do not want a total ban on traffic. They realise, very astutely, that people would soon lose interest in buying new cars as they would not even be allowed to drive them from the dealer to their own homes. That, plus the disappearance of the petrol consumption would rob our Ministers of billions of dollars in revenues. Imagine the colossal losses in taxes on motor vehicles and petrol, not to mention the GST that goes on top of the taxes giving the Government a double income. But wait a minute. A total ban on all traffic would mean the Government would no longer need to spend billions on road work, bridge construction and road maintenance. The flaw in this reasoning is of course that the Government never used these billions collected from us hapless motorists to build or maintain roads. The money

went to pay for higher salaries for our Ministers, for a better pension scheme and for free domestic and overseas travel into eternity for all our Ministers and their extended families. So the Government has a vested interest in not following its MOT into a total ban of all traffic. Not being allowed to stop the movement of vehicles altogether, the MOT is doing its utmost to slow it down or stop it temporarily wherever it sees a chance to do so and in this it has, unfortunately, the full blessing of the Government. To achieve this, the MOT is using a series of dirty and fiendish tricks of which we will mention here only the most blatant. We all agree, no one likes high speed accidents causing death and serious injuries. But the Government positively adores slow speed nose to tail accidents where the only injuries are to the pride of the motorists involved who straight away rush to their insurance companies to have their cars repaired. This is music to the ears of our Government since repairs mean more employment and above all more GST. A few extra nose to tail accidents, and there will be enough money in the Government's kitty to allow aunty Flo, a member of some Minister's extended family, to join the rest of the family in an overseas trip to some obscure conference no one has ever heard of. Nose to tail accidents can be engineered in various ways and our dear MOT uses

them all to good effect. See for yourself.

TRAFFIC JAMS. Not the European type where cars get stuck sometimes for hours without moving an inch. That would not do at all. No, what we have are the slow crawling traffic jams, where you stop and start every few seconds. This has a double advantage. Not only does it create the chances for a string of nose to tail accidents, but it also prevents motorists from switching off their engines altogether, as people do in European traffic jams. Slow moving traffic, with all car engines going, uses up an awful lot of petrol, just as much or maybe even more than fast moving traffic. So the Government wins on both sides. It reduces the chances of high speed accidents but still keeps its income from high petrol consumption.

DIS-SYNCHRONISED TRAFFIC LIGHTS: or rather synchronised in such a devilish way that each set of traffic lights turns red just as you get to it. It slows the traffic down, it creates that stop/start ripple effect so conducive to nose to tail accidents and it raises, even in the most peaceful motorists, the blood pressure to boiling point which of course turns the motorists into candidates for more potential revenue producing accidents. Near downtown Auckland, there are two sets of traffic lights, hardly 20 meters apart, that can never be crossed in one go. Barely two seconds after the first light turns green, the

second goes red. Not even Stirling Moss in a Formula 1 racing car could beat that fiendish set up. If there is supposed to be some logic behind this weird arrangement, no one so far has been able to find it, except most likely the MOT.

ROAD WORKS: In areas where traffic jams never or seldom occur, the MOT creates them artificially by allowing road works to be undertaken at a time when they have the best chances to create the biggest nuisance (morning or afternoon rush hours for instance). Once the road work signs have been set in place, they seem to stay there for ever. Signs indicating 30km/h are purposely left on the road even months after the last worker has gone from the site.

OLD WRECKS. We all know that a car parked on the side of an open road always attracts the attention of the passing motorist. The more the car looks damaged, the more rubbernecking takes place. Two smashed-up cars on the side of the road slow the traffic right down to a crawl. This fact has not escaped the attention of our MOT who, as the word goes round, places some old wrecked cars in strategic places along the roads to slow the traffic down. Place alongside these two wrecked cars a disused police car and maybe a tow truck or two, and the scene is complete for traffic jams to form for miles on either side of the "accident".

WHITE LINES. How many times have you come across a beautiful 4 lane road simply to find that the MOT had ordered half the road to be painted over with diagonal white lines on which

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you are not allowed to drive. So a perfectly good 4 lane road, built at great expense with our tax money, has actually been reduced to an ordinary two lane street. Word has it that it is only the inability of the paint manufacturers to produce sufficient paint which is apparently preventing the MOT from painting white diagonal lines over the whole roads so that no one could use them at all. With the centre of the roads having been turned into a no-man's land, the traffic has now to crawl along on the one lane left open. In peak periods, these roads which were meant to be main traffic arteries, carry now slow moving bumper to bumper traffic as far as the eye can see and beyond. Motorists living in adjoining streets particularly appreciate this arrangement: blocked for very long times at the intersection, they have ample time to admire the MOT's wisdom whilst counting hundreds of cars passing in front of them until they find that elusive gap to join the procession.

BUMPS AND CHICANES. The chicanes on the racing circuits of Monza and Hockenheim are a child's play compared to some chicanes placed by the MOT on certain roads in NZ. Some of these chicanes are so tight that no bus could ever get through, thus successfully cutting off whole residential areas

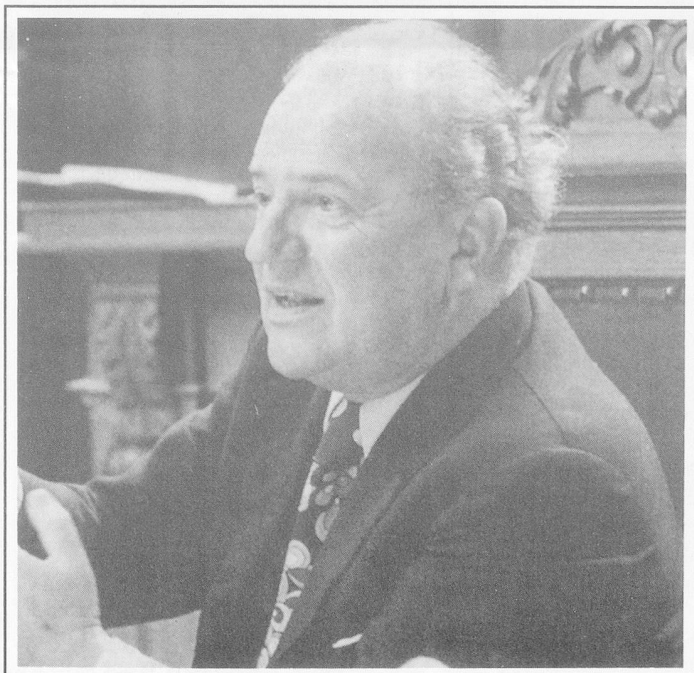
from any possible future bus services. The Government is happy with this arrangement because fifty people using a bus do not bring in much money, but fifty people each driving their own cars use a lot of petrol, hence more revenue for the Government. Maybe this time, even old grandma could join a Minister's family on a trip in First Class to Honolulu at the poor motorists' expense, all paid by the petrol tax and topped by the GST to add insult to injury. Of course the vicious bumps placed by the MOT on perfectly flat roads have no other purpose than to rip off the exhaust pipes of any low riding sports car. And as these special pipes are usually 3-4 times more expensive than ordinary exhaust pipes, the Government makes good money out of the added GST.

SPEED CAMERAS. If you stood by the road at night and flashed a strong spotlight into the face of any oncoming motorist, you would soon be arrested for endangering people's lives, and rightly so. But the MOT is, in this respect, above the law. They are allowed to do just that and this with the blessing of the Government. You drive along quite happily at night when suddenly you are shocked by an enormous flash light which leaves you totally blind for the next few seconds whilst you are still trying to steer your car. To deliberately

shock and blind an unsuspecting driver and still expect him to be in full charge of his car is pure lunacy. To use these cameras at night seems to have only one aim: to create a situation for a potential accident. Either the blinded driver jams on his breaks and gets rammed by the car behind or he finishes in a ditch. In either case, the Government cashes in on the repair jobs. Now if all the trickery by the MOT has still not brought the traffic to a virtual standstill, then they use the ultimate weapon: **THE ROAD BLOCK.** The road blocks are the nearest thing to what the MOT always wanted: to stop all traffic movement in NZ. Although for a short time and in some restricted areas only, the road blocks make the MOT feel supreme. Under the pretext of wanting to check your warrant of fitness, your car licence, your bad breath, the pressure of your tyres and the age of your grandmother, they keep you stopped as long as they humanly can. Having gone through more questions than are contained in a game of Trivial Pursuit, they reluctantly let you go, satisfied that they are stopping all traffic as long as they could. What the MOT has not yet realised though is that once out of the road blocks, the motorists are travelling twice as fast as before just to make up the lost time.

DEATH OF NELLO CELIO

Past Federal Councillor, Nello CELIO, died recently at the age of 81. He was elected to the Federal Council in 1966 and became President in 1972. He took charge of the Military Department followed by the Department of Finances. He resigned from his position in 1973 claiming that, although he had been elected as a Federal Councillor almost against his own will, he had nevertheless fulfilled his duty to his country by accepting this high position for a period of 7 years.



Nello Celio in 1972 during his year of presidency.

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