

~~Good afternoon,~~

The newspapers have recently been full of the Vietnam war and we were all interested to read of the actions in which Australian troops were engaged, and saddened to think that ~~one was~~ ^{some have been} killed, because every death brings deep personal sorrow in the home circle, ~~but~~ That is why the continuing toll of death on our public roads is so tragic.

Do you realise that as many people have been killed in the six months of this year in New South Wales alone on the road to equal a complete battalion of soldiers - almost 700 - and ~~seventy~~ ^{considerably} more than in the six months of last ^{year} which itself was a record. It is right that statesmen and churchmen should strive to bring about peace negotiations in Vietnam, but our whole community should be active in demanding a cessation of the road toll, ~~because~~ ^{for} there are ^{in fact} some steps which can be taken to lessen it. For example, improvement of ~~the~~ ^{we} dangerous sections of roads would bring about some lessening, and although this is expensive it is money which we ought to be willing to find. Another method open to us is the strict enforcement of safety provisions that are already on the statute book. ~~The Police do their duty but sometimes the judiciary do not support them. I was shocked to read in the daily paper a month or two ago of a quarter sessions judge making a mockery of a magistrate's sentence which had been imposed for callous driving.~~

The problem of the toll of death on the roads is not an easy one to solve as so many factors contribute to it, such as bad roads, ~~as I have mentioned~~; inattentive driving; discourtesy; excessive speed; and faulty equipment. For the most part these factors are faced frankly and fairly, ~~and what is possible is being done to minimise them.~~ There is, however, another factor which is not always so readily conceded and that is the factor of alcohol in the blood of some of those who are in charge of motor vehicles on the public roads. This too must be faced frankly and fairly. For a long time the law has recognised that a driver must not drive on the public roads while under the influence of intoxicating liquor and it is an offence to do so. This is

because it is recognised that alcohol in the driver impairs his judgment and so his ability to drive. He becomes a menace not only to himself but also to other road users. With the advance of modern science it is now possible to determine more accurately the effect of alcohol on the driver's judgment and also to determine the quantity ~~of alcohol~~ that impairs his judgment sufficiently to imperil the lives of others. In the old days one had to depend upon observation of an unsteady gait or the inability to speak with clarity, but these tests were uncertain. Now it is possibly by chemistry to establish exactly how much alcohol is present, and it is irresponsible to neglect this method of reducing at least one factor which contributes to accidents. Indeed a former Superintendent of Traffic in New South Wales has estimated that 70% of the accidents on New South Wales are more or less caused by the presence of alcohol in the drivers.

Some four years ago the Council of Churches in New South Wales resolved unanimously to ask the then Government of New South Wales to introduce legislation to make blood tests compulsory. Unfortunately the Government declined to introduce this legislation ^{at the time} ~~at that time~~ ^{then} 4,000 more people have been killed on New South Wales roads. At its meeting ten days ago the Council of Churches in New South Wales re-affirmed, once more unanimously, its conviction ^{of the value of} ~~that~~ compulsory blood tests ~~should be introduced into New South Wales~~ as one means of alleviating the toll of the roads, and ~~that~~ same afternoon the Minister for Transport kindly received a deputation from the Council ^{on the subject} which I had the privilege to lead. Since then it was good to see in the paper that the Australian Transport Advisory Council meeting in Perth, consisting of the Transport Ministers of the various Australian Cabinets, had agreed to the proposal recommended ~~to them~~ by a sub-committee that compulsory blood tests should be adopted throughout Australia. It is to be hoped that the necessary legislation will not be long delayed.

The problem ought not to be discussed as though it were an extension of the long drawn out conflict between those who advocate total abstinence and those who do not, yet it may be

~~Summed~~

~~thought~~ that some of the emotive overtone of this conflict have delayed and obscured decisions in this field up to now. If so, they should not be allowed to do so any longer. When it is remembered that this is a request to people to curtail their drinking only in relation to driving a motor vehicle on the public roads, and that the drinking driver is a menace to himself as well as to others, it is incomprehensible that any fair minded citizen should be antagonistic.

[On the other hand it is natural and proper to be jealous of restriction of personal liberty and some people see the compulsory blood test in this light. But it should be remembered that there are some situations in which the degree of personal liberty must be willingly foregone in the interests of all. For example a pilot of an aeroplane is not allowed to drink within a specified period of flying his aeroplane in the interests of those who are flying with him.

Similarly, to drive a motor vehicle on the public roads which are used in such large numbers by others, carries with it the necessity of a willing acceptance of a curtailment of personal liberty.

Citizens who are unwilling to have their personal liberty restricted by the requirement that if involved in an accident on the roads they may be asked to undergo an examination for alcohol in the blood may preserve their sense of personal liberty by refraining from driving on our crowded roads, for this is not a right but a privilege to be exercised with proper regard to other road users.

Those who make use of this privilege of driving on the roads should realise that they may be required to submit to certain examinations to justify their driving, so that the acceptance of this curtailment of personal liberty should accompany the decision to exercise the privilege of using the public roads. This is already the case.

For example, a policeman regularly asks a driver involved in an accident to produce his licence to establish his right of driving.

It is merely an extension of this principle to require drivers involved in accidents to undergo if necessary a test for alcohol in the blood. Modern road conditions makes this extension imperative and it is widely adopted in other countries ^{and in other states of Australia}.

New South Wales lags behind ~~not only overseas countries but other states in Australia.~~
meanwhile some alphas are being unnecessarily killed & homes are unnecessarily plunged into bereavement.

It is recognized that

The rising road toll cannot be ignored. Many factors contribute to it, but many other communities have adopted the blood test as an aid in the problem. Surely we have a duty one to another to use this aid as well.