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Mr. President, Mr. Speaker and Members of the General Assembly:

About nine weeks ago in my report to you, I talked of the terrifying number of men, women and children who are being slaughtered on our highways every day, and of the untold thousands who are injured and maimed every year in North Carolina. I reported to you that in 1964 alone, more than 1575 people were killed on the highways of North Carolina. Those persons whose lives were snuffed out because of accidents on our highways left behind bereaved families. There were mothers and fathers who left behind little children, older parents and other loved ones. There were young boys and girls in the prime of their life who left surviving parents who had held great visions of success and happiness for their children.

Many of those who were injured upon our highways were left crippled and will remain invalids for the balance of their lives. Others will bear the scars of their injuries so long as they live. In addition to the deaths and injuries, property loss in North Carolina alone during the year 1964 amounted to more than \$800,000 for each day.

Since I stood here on February 4th and addressed you, 255 more persons have lost their lives on our highways; 784 have been injured upon our highways and property damage in excess of \$50,000,000 has been incurred. We must take drastic steps to halt this ever increasing spiral of tragedies occurring every day upon our highways. The lives of our children and loved ones as well as our own lives are at stake.

We must now look beyond any petty inconveniences which may be caused by stringent highway safety measures. It is easy to regard these deaths and injuries and loss of property as mere statistics, but think if you will in terms of a lost loved one, a lost mother or father or son or daughter, or a member of your family becoming an invalid for life.

If accidents on our highways continue during the next year at the same ratio as they occurred last year, 1/4 of us will be involved in an accident of one kind or another before this time next year. Within the next five years, 3/4 of us will have been involved in an accident.

Bold and courageous action is required and we in North

Carolina have the courage to do what is necessary and is within our power to reduce this alarming number of accidents.

I have already recommended to you several steps which I believe to be necessary. I have already taken executive action in many instances to correct those areas on our highways which are unsafe and defective. I recommended to you that we enact here in North Carolina an automobile safety inspection act, and I now propose to you an outline of my thoughts on what such an act should include.

First, let me say, that I am not unmindful of the sentiment of our people concerning automobile inspection laws. I remember too well, the unfortunate experience of our State in 1947 and 1948 with the old inspection lanes. I was one of those who had to wait in line for an entire day to have my car inspected, only to find it rejected because of a small insignificant defect. The inconveniences caused by that inspection act and the frivolous rejections will not and must not be allowed to happen again. In defense of those who operated those inspection lanes, let me say

that they were pioneers in the field of automobile inspection. They did not have the vast back-log of experience that has now been gained, not only by our State, but nearly half of the other states in the Union.

I am not unmindful of the abuses that have occurred in other states where private garages were authorized as inspection stations. In many instances, some of these inspection stations required far more of the public than the law had anticipated, and in some instances such stations merely became instruments to gouge the public. Every precaution has been taken by those with whom I have worked in this matter to spell out in simple and plain words, the requirements that we hope you will enact. Every effort has been made to safeguard the rights of the motoring public, the mechanic and garageman. Human life is too precious to allow such abuses to exist in this State and to defeat good safety laws.

And then, there are those who say that accidents are caused by speed and by drunks on our highways. It is true that that excessive drinking and excessive speed are causing and have

caused a high percentage of the accidents in our State. However, the experts and the statisticians, to whom we must turn, have studied the problem and tell us that approximately 10% of all accidents on our highways are caused by mechanical defects in the automobiles traveling on our highways. Let me say here and now, that a motor vehicle inspection law, would not eliminate all of these accidents but if it prevents only a small number, and saves only 100 lives in North Carolina, or even 50 lives in North Carolina or even 25 lives in North Carolina next year, all of your efforts and mine and all of the slight inconveniences caused the traveling public will be more than justified. Therefore, I urge you as strongly as it is within my power to do so, to give careful consideration to the proposed law which I recommend. The traffic fatality rate in those states without automobile inspection laws last year was 36.6 per 100,000 of population. The fatality rate in those states with automobile inspection laws was reduced to 17.51 per 100,000 of population. This evidence alone is sufficient to warrant a careful consideration.

Within the next few days, I shall send to the General

Assembly proposed legislation which would require every motor vehicle registered under the laws of North Carolina, to be inspected at least once each year, by an authorized safety inspection station, for defects in brakes, tires, horns, windshield wipers, and steering mechanisms. These are the five articles of equipment most commonly causing automobile accidents. The law will require that these items of equipment be in safe operating condition, and the standards required shall not exceed those presently described by the General Statutes of North Carolina.

To initiate this program, I am recommending that the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles, as soon as practicable after the enactment of the law, furnish the owner of each registered vehicle in North Carolina, a temporary certificate indicating the month in which that vehicle shall be inspected. I am recommending that in no case and under no circumstances, shall more than 1/6 of the total number of vehicles registered in this State be required to be inspected in any one month. This factor alone, along with the number of safety inspection stations to be designated, should cause little, if any, inconvenience to the motoring public in this State.

I am further recommending that the law contain a provision, which would allow a motorist who has submitted his car for inspection and has failed to meet the standards required, to operate for a period of not more than five days on a temporary certificate to the end that the motorist may have such defects repaired or corrected at a garage of his own choosing. Under this law, no motorist would ever be a captive customer of any safety inspection lane. It may be argued that this would allow unsafe motorists upon the highways for this period of five days. To some extent this would be true, but we believe generally speaking, any motorist who submits his automobile at an inspection lane, will have it in such condition that an additional five day grace period would not substantially endanger the lives of the traveling public.

To avoid the possible criticism that partiality may be shown in the licensing and appointment of the safety inspection stations, I have recommended that any person or firm with employees of good character and a good reputation for honesty, who is familiar with the requirements of the Motor Vehicles Laws of

North Carolina insofar as they concern safety equipment, has had sufficient mechanical experience and possesses equipment adequate to check the five items recommended, shall be entitled upon application to the Motor Vehicles Commissioner to be appointed as a safety inspection station. To the end that such garageman shall have an easy remedy in case he is denied such an appointment, I am recommending that upon the refusal of the Commissioner to license a garageman, he may by a simple petition filed in the Superior Court, ask the judge of that court, to hear him and any evidence that may be offered to determine judicially whether or not he is entitled under the law for licensing. The same adequate provisions have been made for those whose licenses are revoked by the Commissioner and felt aggrieved thereby.

In the past such authority has been delegated to various appointed officials. Basically, I am opposed to the delegation of power to administrative agencies to regulate; however, I recognize that it will be necessary for the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles to promulgate some regulations to carry out the provisions and intent of this article. I am recommending that he be given only such

power as is necessary to carry out this article and as a safeguard and guarantee to you and to the public of North Carolina that we will not be plagued with a rash of administrative rules, I am asking that these regulations shall not become effective until such time as the Governor of this State shall approve them.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the General Assembly, I am so firmly convinced that the lives of the men and women, and boys and girls of this State are in such peril because of unsafe vehicles, I am willing to assume upon myself the obligation to see that this Motor Vehicle Inspection Act shall be administered impartially, fairly, and with as little inconvenience as possible.