

Cottage Grove Sentinel

A Weekly Newspaper With Plenty of Backbone

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KEM AGAIN ON TRAFFIC REGULATIONS

In camp near Bandon, July 24.—(To the Editor).—Am pleased to note that The Sentinel agrees with my traffic letter with the exception of two or three statements which it seeks to correct and which we are pleased to stand corrected on to any extent in which we are wrong, and I am indeed pleased to note that our mayor and councilmen are not responsible for that fool sign at the school house, and that some of our executive officers are not guilty of maladministration of the law to the extent that some of the petition signers believed.

However, The Sentinel does not deny or undertake to explain away the charge that a traffic cop and one of our city courts arrested and fined a driver for cutting a corner when he had to do so to save life. I hope this charge can be satisfactorily explained also; but, if it can not, then I say it is a foul blot on the escutcheon of our civil law and a travesty on justice, and both the court and the cop should be fired bodily. Whether the cop was a state or county officer is beside the question.

I am surprised to note that the school signs are placed by the state, because they are not all alike and I am at an utter loss to know why this is so. The difference in these signs naturally led me to conclude they were the result of city ordinances and placed by order of the council or school board.

However, as I have already said, all this is beside the real question, for the intent and purpose of my letter was to call public attention to foolish laws foolishly enforced, regardless of who the author or executor might be.

You say we must have a speed

limit "because of the few who would take advantage of the lack of a limit." I will venture to say there are few if any who have been driving for a considerable length of time that do not at times exceed the speed limit and many of them to the limit of the car's capacity. If a speed limit prevented this your argument would be good but it doesn't. The point I make is, it makes no difference how fast one drives when there is no one to kill but himself. One who does not know when to drive fast and when to drive slow, or how fast to drive, should not be permitted on the road with a car, and if the next legislature will eliminate the speed limit and then provide that everyone who is caught driving in a reckless manner without regard for the rights of others shall, for the first offense, lose his driver's license for one year and for the second offense shall lose it for all time, we should see in a short time an improvement in driving that would be worth while. The same evidence that would convict one of exceeding the speed limit would convict him of reckless driving. O. M. KEM.

P. S.—I haven't caught that whale yet but I'm going to. O. M. K.

Editorial note.—Theoretically it is a very simple matter to fix the traffic laws in such a way as to do away with reckless and careless driving, but The Sentinel is quite certain that when Mr. Kem and the editor of The Sentinel are no longer able to discuss the question it will be an even more lively subject than now.

We quite agree with Mr. Kem that suspension of drivers' licenses for reckless and careless driving would help a great deal, but Mr. Kem should bear in mind that the courts of the state have been following the practice of suspending licenses for these offenses with no appreciable effect upon the number of reckless and careless drivers. The editor of The Sentinel was instrumental in having two drivers' licenses suspended, but that did not cure even those who were compelled for a time to give up the pleasure of driving their cars.

This proposed cure also has the disadvantage that many flagrant violators would get away even as they do now while one driver who seldom disobeyed the law might be taken in simply because he did not have a mirror with which to watch the road in the rear.

Then also what about the tourists? They are the ones who make the most fuss about the enforcement of traffic regulations. What

would the tourist do when taken in for driving at a reckless speed and informed that he could not for a year operate a car in Oregon. Surely he could reasonably expect the citizens of Oregon to petition the legislature to do away with such a fool law. Traffic officers sometimes make errors and a tourist might justly claim that he was being mistreated, especially if he saw some local speed demon get away with a worse offense.

Then it might happen that the tourist was a habitual offender in his own state, but this would be his first offense in Oregon. He then would get a less penalty than that meted out to a resident of the state. The Sentinel continues to believe that the resident here who spends his dollars with us year in and year out is entitled to equally as fair treatment as the tourist who may merely pass through our city or at best visits us but infrequently.

The Sentinel doubts if permanent suspension of drivers' licenses would be constitutional, but there seems to be a remedy that has apparently proved efficacious elsewhere, if the people of the state wish to apply it. Put the reckless driver in jail. We have talked to a number of tourists who say that there are very few reckless drivers in Santa Ana county, Calif. The judge there does not fine 'em. Nothing but jail sentences go with him and that county has had as its guests some of the famous movie stars and at least one millionaire sugar king.

The Sentinel does not know very much about the circumstances of the corner cutting to which Mr. Kem refers. We understand that the position of the court was that a car being operated where a crowd was present should have been under such control that it would not have been necessary to cut a corner to avoid striking someone. Even some drivers who are not considered reckless get into a pinch of this kind before realizing the danger. It must be borne in mind in judging a case of this kind that the next time there might be a car in the way coming from the other direction. Then what would be the consequences? The law is designed to take care of all contingencies which may arise, not of a particular instance.

Cutting corners is not dangerous except when other traffic is in the way, but we are quite certain that Mr. Kem is not willing to do away with the restrictions about cutting corners onto Main street from any of the streets leading into it.

We agree with Mr. Kem that it is foolish and ridiculous to enforce past school houses during the time that it is not being used by pupils traffic regulations which are any more severe than regulations applying to other portions of the same street. We would suggest that the school officials should have control of traffic past school buildings and that the signs should be such as could be removed during the time school is not in session.

We would, however, call Mr. Kem's attention to the fact that many families living on south Fifth street and north Ninth street have little children that may at any moment run out onto the highway and that such children are entitled to protection. We do not believe that a speed of over 25 miles should be permitted anywhere on these streets at any time and we would much prefer to see it reduced to 20. At the time residents on these streets objected to the highway being routed that way the promise was implied that the speed of cars would be strictly regulated. That promise has not been kept.

Mr. Kem and The Sentinel never will agree concerning a speed limit. It is not pertinent to this discussion but it is a fact that the speed limit is designed for the protection of the roads, as well as for the protection of those using them. Great speed, especially with heavy loads, is said to raise the very dickens with the roadbed.

If Mr. Kem can explain to us how a traffic officer is going to know how great a speed any particular car safely travel, or any particular driver safely drive, then we may make some headway.

Upon one occasion in night he safe for a certain car to travel 50 miles the hour. Upon the next occasion the same car might have been through an accident and might have a fractured axle. With the many opportunities for cars to get onto the highway it could not be said that at any time the driver of a car likely to go to pieces was endangering the lives of none but himself. Seldom even is the driver in the car alone and his passengers are entitled to protection. Has Mr. Kem never ridden in a car when he wished the driver would use more discretion?

How is a traffic officer to know when a driver is competent to operate a car at 50 miles an hour? Drivers take no examination to prove their competency to perform a feat of that kind. Under ordinary conditions almost any driver with a car easily capable of that speed might endanger no one. A traffic officer could detect nothing to indicate that the driver was not a safe one, but what might happen in an emergency? The number who might ordinarily safely operate a car at 50 miles, but who would go to pieces in an emergency, is legion.

To be quite frank, we have no wish to operate a car upon highways where there is no speed limit, where we have no recourse against the speeder.

It is quite true, as Mr. Kem says, that restrictions against speeding have not entirely eliminated speeding. But is that a good argument why the restriction should be raised?

For many years we have had laws against robbery, but robbery has not ceased. There are yet many willing to risk their lives in making a big haul. Would Mr. Kem lift the restrictions upon robbery and make the one robbed prove that it was done in a reckless or careless manner?

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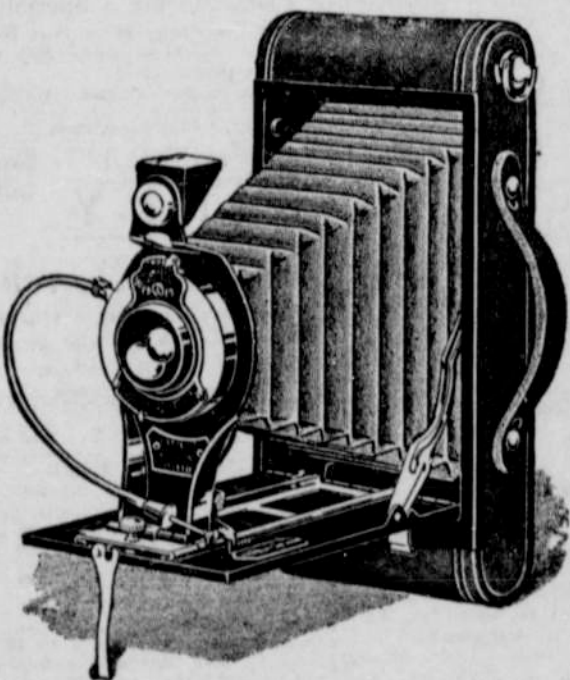
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