

Benefit of High School Driver Training Programs Debatable

By United Press International
More than 1,250,000 U.S. high school students will receive credits toward graduation this year for learning to drive a car.

Driver training courses are now a regular part of the curriculum in 11,846 high schools. That is slightly more than half of the high schools in the country.

Is teaching young people to drive a legitimate function of public schools? Or is it a "frill" that should be eliminated to make room for great-

er emphasis on science, mathematics, languages and other academic subjects?

Differences of Opinion
There are, to put it mildly, vigorous differences of opinion on this subject.

While hardly anyone questions the desirability of training young people to drive safely, many people believe that this instruction can and should be given outside the schools. In the post- Sputnik battle for higher educational standards, driver training has become, for many critics, a symbol of the tendency of U.S. high schools to clutter up their curriculum with "how to do it" courses at the expense of solid intellectual disciplines.

This viewpoint was succinctly expounded by Adlai E. Stevenson in a recent article for the New York Times Sunday magazine.

"I taught my three boys to drive a car," the former Democratic presidential candidate said. "I think they can do as much for my grandsons - and let their high school

teachers concentrate on some things that are more important, or at least harder to teach."

Promotional Campaigns
On the other side of the debate are the National Safety Council and the American Automobile Association. Both are currently waging big promotional campaigns on behalf of driver education in public high schools.

"We have no quarrel with the objective of providing greater science training in this dynamic era," says AAA President Harry I. Kirk, "but certainly this can be accomplished without sacrificing the proved accident-reducing potentialities of driver education in the schools."

"Driver training is too important to be left to haphazard outside-the-classroom teaching," says a spokesman for the National Safety Council. "With accidents accounting for more fatalities in the school-age group than all other causes of death combined, the council's objective is to maintain, improve and expand school courses in safe driving."

Although driver training has only recently become a burning issue, it is not really a new feature of public education. The first high school course was started 25 years ago, at State College, Pa., by Amos E. Neyhart. Neyhart is now AAA consultant on driver education, and has been a prime mover in getting courses installed in high schools across the country.

\$34 Per Student
He estimates that it costs about \$34 per student, on the average, to provide a high school course in driving. This figure is for a "complete" course, which includes on-the-road instruction. About one-sixth of the high schools with driving courses offer classroom instruction only.

Has driver training in high schools substantially reduced accident rates among young people? It seems logical to assume that it has, but opinions are easier to obtain than hard facts.

AAA literature refers to "a number of studies" which are supposed to show that high school driving courses "reduce traffic accidents by one-half."

But this statement is, to say the least, highly optimistic. Limited surveys have been made in at least 20 different states in an effort to determine what effect high school driver training has had on accident rates, and the results have varied very widely.

In New Hampshire, for example, it was found that trained drivers had one one-fourth as many accidents as untrained drivers. But in Maryland, no significant difference was found between the two groups.

Cactus Plant Giving Trouble

Chicago - (UPI) - A large office equipment firm is having trouble with a plant, a cactus plant.

The company ornaments its main lobby in suburban Evanston with a cactus that he been growing at an amazing rate for the past four years.

Due to an increase in business, the firm has had to move to larger facilities three times during the past four years. Each move came in the nick of time for the cactus, which had also outgrown its location.

If the plant keeps on growing the way it has, it should touch the 10-foot lobby ceiling of the present headquarters in about four years. The firm is practically resigned to moving in 1962.

Neuberger Not Decided on Plans

Portland - (UPI) - Sen. Richard Neuberger (D-Ore.) told the Multnomah Democratic Central Committee Saturday night that he was undecided on his plans for 1960 and did not know if he would run for a second term.

"If I do run again, it will be on my record as a responsible legislator . . . and not through personal bitterness or partisan hysteria," the senator said.

He said that bickering and back-biting in politics are "degrading to the government."

"I have no quarrel or vendetta with anybody in Oregon politics," he asserted.

Sen. Neuberger commended Gov.-elect Mark Hatfield for running a smart campaign and warned Democrats "not to snipe at Mark Hatfield when he is governor over purely personal matters, nor should we criticize him just to be criticizing."

The senator said Oregon has "two strong political parties and this is to the benefit of the people because they can shop around for choices of candidates."

Liberals Bid For Republican Control of Senate

Washington - (UPI) - Liberal Republican senators today bid for control of the party leadership in the Senate.

Sen. John S. Cooper (R-Ky.), called for election of a member of the GOP liberal group as Senate Republican leader when the new Congress meets next month.

Sen. Thomas H. Kuchel (R-Calif.), said bluntly that "the Republican party will not be measurably successful in future elections until the progressive Republican philosophy is the solid basis on which our program is presented to the people."

Kuchel said the "progressive Republican" group should fight for:

"Unquestioned responsibility of leadership among their own number."

"A major committee assignment for all Republican senators to the extent that it is available."

"A clear opportunity to participate in all conferences with the executive branch of the government."

Fair Representation
"Fair and equitable representation on all delegations as they may be named in the Senate."

The statements came as the liberal group gathered for a conference called to plan strategy for the coming struggle for key Senate posts. About 12 senators were expected to attend with Sen. George Aiken (R-Vt.), ranking member of the liberal group presiding. Senior Senate Republicans have indicated they were ready to create a new post of assistant GOP floor leader to give the so-called Republican liberals or "progressives" direct representation in the minority high command. Kuchel has been most strongly favored to get this job.

Icy Spots Reported On Oregon Highways

Salem - (UPI) - Icy spots were reported at Warm Springs Junction, Santiam pass and Sisters today. Otherwise pavements on open Oregon route were bare. The State Highway department reported.

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