

State public beef-up needed, Auto Club says

Making the state police responsible for patrolling all Michigan freeways and stepping up their patrols on state trunklines would help reduce traffic accidents and deaths, Automobile Club of Michigan general manager James Moffat stated.

Auto Club has completed a study entitled, "Portrait of Enforcement." He said such action would free other police agencies for traffic enforcement on local roads, which account for 67 per cent of all accidents but only 48 per cent of the statewide travel.

Despite manpower shortages and other problems, sheriff and local police departments could reduce accidents dramatically by employing selective law enforcement programs (SLEP). Under SLEP, enforcement personnel are assigned to specific locations at times when most traffic law violations occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS in "Portrait of Enforcement" were based on results of a comparative analysis by Wayne State University's civil engineering department of statewide accident rates and the effectiveness of enforcement in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Auto Club cited the diminishing role of state police on freeways as a major reason for Michigan's poor accident and enforcement comparison with Ohio, where there is a highway patrol responsible only for traffic enforcement.

Between 1969 and 1976, Michigan freeways grew 20 per cent, but freeway patrol car hours increased only eight per cent.

The study declared: "The role of the state police on freeways in Michigan is becoming as important to the motorist for personal security as it is for traffic law enforcement."

Because of this, Auto Club proposed that the state police operate on all 1,662 miles of limited access roads in

Michigan 24 hours daily.

This would require 850 additional officers and 90 vehicles at a cost of nearly \$20 million annually, excluding administrative expenses.

Auto Club said it would not oppose financing increased state police freeway patrolling with funds from the state gasoline tax.

"THE ACCIDENT experience in

Michigan is depressing when compared with the combined statewide experience in Ohio and Pennsylvania," the study stated.

Accident tables comparing all Michigan roads with those in Ohio and Pennsylvania had a total of 24 categories. Michigan was inferior to comparison states in 15 categories, the same in three and better in only six categories.

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Farm bureau maps action

Elton R. Smith, president of the Michigan Farm Bureau, said his organization cannot support the farmers' strike, but explained membership in the farm bureau does not restrict a farmer's freedom of choice. He also listed a four-point course of action to help the farmers.

"While I have said that the farm bureau, as an organization, cannot support the farmers' strike, I have never advised farmers concerning their personal actions. A farmer does not give up his personal freedom when he joins the farm bureau. He signs no marketing agreement. I would have no grounds to advise farmers to participate or not participate and have not done so," said Smith at a recent meeting with farmers.

Smith told the group that in dealing with a problem as large as farmers' current financial situation, there will be "honest differences of opinion."

"One of the things that concerns me is that some people believe that lack of complete agreement is the same as complete disagreement," Smith said. "That kind of thinking is unfair."

Smith placed part of the blame for farmers' financial problems on government's failure to curb inflation, "regulatory overkill" of agriculture, and the action of organized labor in the dock strike which subsequently resulted in loss of markets for farmers. He blasted the federal government for failing to expand export markets for agricultural products.

"We were encouraged to plant 'fence row to fence row' and were assured that foreign markets could be kept open," Smith said. "You know and I know, as farmers, that we kept our part of the bargain. We did produce. But government has not done all it could to keep our export sales going. In fact, we shipped less corn and wheat last year than we did the year before. And with one acre out of three or four historically being sold abroad, we face a supply problem."

Smith, who served on the resolutions committee of the American Farm Bureau Federation and was a voting delegate at the organization's annual meeting in Houston, Texas, recently reported on action taken there regarding farm prices and income.

The delegates, representing 49 state farm bureaus and the Puerto Rico Farm Bureau, passed a resolution outlining a four-point course of action to improve farm prices to cover production costs and a fair profit.

The farm bureau will intensify its efforts to expand agricultural exports; develop and strengthen marketing organizations, structures and programs, to improve net incomes for farmers; institute and support emergency agricultural credit programs to assist farmers during financial crisis; and urge Congress and the administration to control inflation and to modify rules, regulations and programs that place added costs on agricultural producers.

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