

DREW PEARSON

Volpe Chastised For Safety Stand

WASHINGTON—Henry Ford II, the motor mogul, wrote a blistering letter to Secretary of Transportation John Volpe the other day, objecting to some remarks on auto safety that Volpe had made in a New York speech.

The chastised Volpe hastened to assure Ford, in a "Dear Henry" letter, of his great admiration for the auto industry. He even went to the extreme of describing his department as a "Capitalistic agent" that cooperates with the auto industry.

This is a curious description of the role of the government agency that is supposed to enforce auto safety standards. Indeed, Volpe and his highway safety administrator, Francis Turner, are so eager to get along with the auto industry that they set no significant safety standards for the 1970 model.



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They have also... crash survivability... equipment... federal... every single... the public... tire... safest... turned out items... promised... the law. Yet no... been taken to re... all-backs or penalize... olators.

The 1966 Auto Safety Law requires the government to build a number of experimental safety cars to show the industry and the public what modern technology can do. Preliminary studies indicate that passengers can be protected in collisions at 60 miles per hour and survive collisions up to 90 miles per hour. Yet fail to protect their occupants fully at 20 miles per hour.

The auto makers bitterly oppose the experimental safety cars which would show how much safety can be built into cars, because the lessons learned almost certainly would be imposed upon the

auto industry. Volpe and Turner appear more eager to appease the industry than to protect the public. Except for a few studies, nothing has been done about the experimental safety cars.

Meanwhile, 55,000 people die and 150,000 are crippled in auto accidents each year. Another 4,500,000 are injured. The American casualties in politics are almost as high as in car accidents. A congressman was a candidate for re-election in California. Finch offered some advice, which he expressed in language only a close friend could use to the president: "Get Murphy off his butt."

BEFORE Mary Jo Kopechne met her first Kennedy, she kept a picture of Bob Kennedy on her desk in Sen. George Smather's office. This was before Kennedy's murder and Smather's retirement.

One day, the late senator dropped in to see Smathers, who mentioned he had a Kennedy admirer in his office and took Kennedy over to meet Mary Jo. She was so thrilled that she vowed she'd never again wash the hand that Kennedy had shaken.

It wasn't long afterward that Mary Jo quietly switched to Bob Kennedy's office and, through him, met his brother, Ted Kennedy.

Camp Pendleton on the California coast is buzzing with rumors that Marines have been taken off essential duties to work in the at President N... oceanside re...

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