

PLAIN TALK *by Jerome Joachim*

The concept nurtured by most traffic enforcement personnel, including police, judges, etc., as to the reason for traffic regulation is so far from the original intent of these laws that the public often looks upon many regulations as mere annoyances rather than as a real aid to motorists.

To me a stop sign, signal light or other traffic regulation device is merely a reminder that we motorists have made certain agreements with reference to our conduct at these dangerous points.

Since an accident would occur if both hit the intersection at the same time the sign is merely a method of communication which enables the drivers to decide who shall go first.

Obviously a motorist who approaches one of these signals, at a time when he can plainly see that there isn't a car within a block or two, knows there can be no "implied" agreement with someone who doesn't exist. He knows that he has an obligation not to do anything contrary to his implied agreement which might cause an accident, but when he is certain that no accident can occur, he can only be irked by the fact that the "law" expects him to observe a senseless regulation.

But to many traffic enforcement officers, the fact that a driver did everything necessary to make certain that no accident would occur is beside the point. He has been told that he must make more "pinches." Failure to do this brings censure to him. Pressure is constantly being



brought to force him to get more revenue "from motorists."

Conversely, when an accident occurs, he and his superiors have little interest in aiding the driver who suffered from the failure of someone to observe the implied agreements. Complainants who attempt to use traffic courts to establish a case against those who have caused

them damage or injury usually hear the judge say:

"What does he think this court is? A collection agency?"

The principal function of government and the police force of a nation should be to prevent people from injuring each other physically or financially either by force, deceit or carelessness. Anyone who attends sessions of the average traffic court will soon realize that this basic purpose has become secondary and that the real purpose of these courts is to provide additional revenue for the community needs.

An ideal traffic enforcement plan would be one in which traffic officials would have but two duties. The first would be to prevent accidents, the second would be to help those injured and damaged by the carelessness of others to collect for such losses as they sustain.

Until such a concept is fostered by the community it seems likely that men will continue to "fear" or "hate" the traffic regulations which they should and would respect and obey if our thinking were more rational.