

Chat With Chic

By U. S. Senator Chic Hecht

What's your opinion on the 55 mph speed law? Should it be modified? Should it be retained? A recent report published by the National Research Council (NRC) examined the present status of the 55 mph law and its effect over the past 10 years. The study urges retention of the speed law on most of our national highways. However, it left open the door for change, saying in effect that Congress should decide whether to raise the limit on less travelled roads.

I believe a change is in order and plan to introduce, early in the next session of Congress, legislation which will modify the 1974 law which mandated a 55 mph limitation on the nation's highways.

Basically my reason is this: I feel the responsibility for setting speed limits is a state's right. The State of Nevada, not the federal government, is better suited to make its determination which roads can be travelled at higher speeds, not some bureaucrat in Washington.

The NRC study "55 - A Decade of Experience" enumerates a number of very interesting findings on current state of the 55 mph limitation. It explores the pros and cons of the 10-year law in depth.

On the "pro" side, it points out the law undoubtedly helped save fuel and that it contributes materially to saving lives (highway fatalities declined from 55,511 in 1973 to 46,602 in 1974).

On the negative side, however, the study pointed out that newer cars with better safety features are now operating on the nation's roads; that highways, bridges, etc., are more safely built; that the law has required motorists to spend 1 billion additional hours driving each year and that additional costs for enforcement are about \$118 million per year.

And I've always held repugnant the fact that the feds have authority to withhold federal highway funds from a state in which more than 50 percent of all motorists exceed the limit on roads posted at 55 mph. This smacks of too much big brotherism. It's federal control over a problem we can best solve.

The NRFC committee was divided on the question of speed limits for rural interstate routes, and this, is exactly what I propose to change.

Approximately 31,500 miles of rural interstate are posted now at 55 mph; these routes represent about six percent of all mileage posted at 55 mph throughout the country and they carry about 19 percent of all traffic.

The NRC committee has asked itself these

questions: will growing non-compliance lead to nullification of the law? Does widespread non-compliance breed disrespect for law generally? Is control of speed limits a state or a federal responsibility?

The study concludes by pointing out: "These issues present choices that are best made by Congress."

My office presently is sampling opinion among trucking companies, bus companies and other highway users on how they view the 55 mph law and what changes, if any, they envision. I invite your comments as well and urge you to write me to inform me of your views. Please send a card or letter to: Sen. Chic Hecht, 302 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510.

Nigerian Leader Outlines Conditions To Renewed Ties With Israel

LONDON (WNS) — Nigeria is prepared to restore diplomatic relations with Israel following Israeli withdrawal "from all occupied Arab territories" and its breaking of links with South Africa, the World Jewish Congress reported, recently.

The Nigerian head of state, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, set forth these conditions during formal

remarks delivered recently in Lagos. His remarks, broadcast by Lagos Home Service, were monitored here by sources of the WJC.

According to the broadcast, Buhari said there were "two major conditions" for the restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel: "One of the conditions is the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories, particularly the recognition of the right of the Palestinians to a homeland. The other is the breaking of Israeli military, nuclear and economic collaboration with the apartheid regime of South Africa."

Buhari, speaking at the annual dinner of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs in Lagos, said that "it was inconceivable that the Jewish people who have been victims of racial horrors and genocide, could now provide weapons and death and oppression to the apartheid regime." He added that South Africa remains the greatest threat to Nigeria's national interest.

An analyst of the WJC Third World Department suggested that Buhari's comments were significant in two respects. Firstly, the fact that the Nigerian leader publicly raised the issue of renewing relations with Israel is viewed as in and of itself significant. Secondly, although he referred to the "Palestinians" he did not mention the PLO, nor was there any reference to a "Palestinian state" but rather a "homeland."

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ATTORNEY AT LAW

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