

P R E F A C E

As often as not we hear the thought expressed that we are living in an world that's getting smaller by the day, in as much as we are able to embark for any given destination with an ever increasing matter of fact-ness, at the cost of an continuously decreasing number of hours. The inconveniences that go with long-range travelling have been eliminated for the greater part in this, our 20th century, which is so rich in inventions and innovations.

The means of transportation of our ancestors and the ones we use today on the land, on the sea and in the air, are beyond compare as far as speed is concerned. At the same time there are drawbacks to everything. To this day we have not entirely been able to cope with the hazards arising from the appliance of modern technology.

The overland traffic in particular, has been claiming a growing number of victims as a consequence of an unruly behaviour in the application of the available facilities.

In the Netherlands - as much as in the rest of (Western) Europe and the United States of America - the number of casualties of motorized traffic, running into the incredible amount of many a thousand, has become a true "mene tekel". The calamity of the great floods of 1953 in our country, in which 1500 people perished, is no even match for nowadays traffic that takes a toll of 3000 lives a year in Holland.

The loss of lives suffered by the United States of America in the entire Vietnam-war, is outweighed by that of (traffic) accidents last year.

It will be quite clear that, in the first place, we have to deal with an ethical problem : at what price speed ? How to restrain ourselves and have our fellow-men do the same in order to save precious lives and so prevent widespread sorrow ? In this instance it might be good to reflect for a minute on the lives of those incapacitated for life, not in the last place on children crippled by the misdemeanour of reckless adults. This is a scientific question, however. In what way are we going to eliminate or, at least, reduce the perils of motorized traffic ?

Already many have gone to the fore, many more though will be required in order to carry on. The task that awaits us will require a far greater systematic and structural build-up, circumnavigating unessential research already done. It is the objective of this congress to contribute to this end. The universities and the institutes of technology in the Netherlands, among which the Free University, warmly applaud the goal set by this conference, which is, to go a long way towards making strenuous efforts in order to bring to a solution a most miserable situation.

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