

# In The Public Interest THE TRUMAN REPORT

## An Interpretative Monthly Message On The Public Interest In Transportation

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It is not any failure on the part of our transportation agencies which led the Truman Committee to make its investigation and report to Congress, but it arose from persistent rumors and evidence of the failure of the administration to make provision for repair parts and new equipment which, if true, would lead to the disruption of our war program and our domestic economy.

The committee emphasized the importance of transportation, as a war activity, and that the transportation of goods and persons is necessary during every stage of development and processing of military articles and essential civilian products from the raw material in the ground, through manufacturing and distributing facilities, to their destination of final use.

Motor trucks in a very real sense form a part of the conveyor belt of industry in conveying parts in process and components from one factory to another in the mass-production of military and civilian goods. The motor vehicle is woven into our national life to such a degree, and in such manner, that diminution in the service rendered by motor transport will necessarily have serious repercussions on our war effort.

### The Performance

The ton miles freight for 1943 exceeded that of 1939 by 88 per cent. The committee found our transportation system to be essentially sound. The report does not contain a single word of criticism of the performance and of transportation agencies, nor were any failures in service or otherwise pointed out.

We are warned, however, not to let pride in achievement lead us into neglect. Disruption or diminution in transportation service now would have incalculable effects upon our progress toward victory and peace.

### The Situation

The most serious situation reported by the Committee with respect to transportation is the lack of adequate facilities, including manpower, for motor transport. This condition is largely the result of a tendency by the War Department to pile up vehicles and parts reserves beyond anything its combat branches are likely to need, a negative attitude on the part of the administration as to the fate of civilian transportation, and a vehicle demand by Federal agencies far greater, in general, than their needs seem to warrant.

There has been a tendency to think that somehow our truck transportation industry will be able to get along with little or no new equipment, and that the facilities for making such new equipment can be diverted indefinitely to the manufacture of war equipment. In the case of trucks, this tendency has been even more pronounced than that in the case of railroads.

The committee has no hesitancy in saying that requests and allocation of trucks and tires for 1944 have not been receiving sufficient thoughtful consideration, by government officials. This is an indication of poor management and lack of coordination, it is declared, a situation that should never have been permitted to arise. Motor transport therefore faces the real hazard of breakdown.



And a transportation collapse would be disastrous to the war effort.

### The Remedy

A positive program of motor truck needs, the committee believes, should be adopted and scheduled as a whole, rather than piecemeal, in order to include substantially all items that are affected by it. It should be realistically planned, based on facts rather than guesses. It should not be permitted to become another government program that will produce none or but few parts and vehicles. However, the committee is disturbed that so much time must now be consumed preparing forms conducting surveys, and devising a program when the situation daily is becoming more acute.

### Conclusion

The foregoing is only an abridged synopsis of what is contained in the Truman Committee report. While this is not the first time these facts have been called to

the attention of the Federal administration, for it has often been done by transportation organizations and groups of citizens, this is the first time a finding of this kind has been made by an official governmental body.

Naturally participating in a World War in addition to meeting the needs of our domestic economy places upon the administration a stupendous task. However, it is to be deeply regretted that an administration which professes efficiency, individual capabilities, and the backing of a superior form of government, would permit a situation to arise requiring an investigation by a Congressional Committee to avoid a catastrophe.

We have experienced too many incidents of this kind, such as the rubber situation a year ago and the present transportation crisis. The Truman Committee in its investigation and report has rendered a real public service and it is to be hoped that corrective steps will be taken immediately. This is a matter of great public interest.

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