

Unpopular Essays

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So is it that the system in question discourages public transportation in favour of private ownership of vehicles. The proliferation of bicycles, cars and motorcycles on our roads are the principal cause of accidents, not our driving manners.

General Obasanjo said in his new year's message concerning accidents that "there can be no greater obstacle to development than a wanton and thoughtless waste of human life." But this "thoughtless waste" is an imperative component of capitalist development.

If importers must stay in business; if we must recognise the right of every citizen to transport himself in his own private vehicle (I did not say coffin); and if the taxi driver must make enough money to pay his bourgeois motor owner at the end of the day and still have enough to feed his family and give la-

Contradictions Of Traditional Solutions And The....

Economics Of Accidents

It has since taken the dimensions of an epidemic. Everyday, indeed, every hour, an increasing number of people get killed in road accidents in Nigeria. And the slaughter list includes popular names like former Lagos University Chancellor, Chief Jereton Mariere; musicians, Ce-

Between September 1975 and September 1976, some 350 people lost their lives in motor accidents in Anambra State. And within the last three months alone, 83 have died on two roads. The road from Abeokuta to Ibadan and the one that leads from Ibadan to Lagos.

no avail. Kill yourself if you don't care!"

The search for solutions runs deeper than an occasional newspaper article or a series of admonitions from government functionaries. It is, at bottom, a helpless cry to God for help.

The Cross River State Commissioner for Works, Mr Lawrence Neji, underscored this underlying platitude when he threatened to take the matter of accidents to church. "Since all measures by government to counteract the danger of frequent occurrence of accidents in the state have failed, we are now going to take road safety campaigns to the churches. Churches will then tell their members the implication of destroying God's handiwork".

Neji's statement is an honest assertion of an official who is anxious to help, who would do anything to reverse the alarming graph of accidents. But it also epitomises a society that recourses to crusades rather than to concrete action to solve its problems.

Like all the other Ni-

One of the cardinal rules of the private enterprise system is that a "business" be located as close as possible to the market. Since Nigeria operates a variant of this system, our economic growth has tended to reinforce the few existing economic and social centres with the result that everyone of us migrates to these urban centres to find employment or to own business. And to die.

The confusion inherent in this population tendency keeps almost everybody on the same roads at the same time. Accidents are incidental to this and one other fact of our organisation for production.

The thing about capitalism is the production and absorption of surplus. Enterprises are primarily for generating profit. Where this

profit and the other components of surplus are not adequately absorbed, the system runs into a crisis through inflation.

One way of absorbing surplus is through consumption. Consumption by the capitalist overlord and (to an in-

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significant degree) by workers in enterprises. There is no denying that a good part of this consumption is in the purchase of private vehicles.

vish parties like other citizens, then we must have accidents.

Anybody who makes his bed must sleep in it!

"THIS doctrine of despair is translated in grim humour by the Road Safety Campaign Committee when, for the benefit of break-neck drivers, they write on their latest set of high-way posters: "For years we warned you to no avail. Kill yourself if you don't care!"

lestine Ukwu, Erasmus Jenewari, Rex Lawson; footballer, Felix Obasuj and a host of others.

Every day, the rising accident graph provides a renewed indictment of both the solutions so far applied and the recommendations of social commentators.

In the 1960's these traditional commentators were very sure they had the answer. How could a government be so blind as not to see that narrow roads were responsible for the accidents!

Come the 1970's and the roads began to expand (tremendously). But so did the scope of accidents. In fact, the new and wider roads tend to remove the ceiling from accident figures. Major General Emmanuel Abisoye is reported to have lamented that "the end result of improvement of our roads by the Federal Military Government is the spilling of our blood on them."

Faced with this embarrassing trend in figures, the traditionalists have changed their plea. The latest is that we have accidents because we are terrible drivers and because pedestrians and cyclists have suddenly been gripped by an unprecedented spell of rural idiocy.

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Committee when, for the benefit of break-neck drivers, they write on their latest set of high-way posters: "For years we warned you to

gerian problems, the accident issue refuses to attend these crusade sessions. And that is because the problem is primarily economic.

The Jos Museum

THERE also exists a woman potter from the Jarawa village of Fobur, about 30 kilometres south-east of Jos. She makes traditional decorated earthenware vessels of many kinds and fires them in the traditional way. Arrangements are under way to introduce more craftsmen of different skills to work in the proposed Museum Craft Centre.

POTTERY

The Pottery Museum is housed in a traditionally constructed compound. It contains about 300 different types of pots selected from all parts of Nigeria. In the Pottery Compound, there is a special Nupe house decorated in the interior

to show the typical way in which Nupe women decorate their houses. The floor of the Pottery Gallery is tiled with red earth tiles produced by the Nupe women.

In the Court Yard of the Pottery Museum also are different species of trees and shrubs which are selected from all over Africa and three fish ponds where one can find different species of fish found in Tropical Africa.

UNESCO-NIGERIA BILINGUAL TRAINING SCHOOL FOR THE PRESERVATION OF THE CULTURE AND NATURAL HERITAGE

This Centre was established in 1963 as a Pilot Project for training museum tech-

nicians but, in 1973, the activities of the Pilot Project was transformed into the new and present Regional Centre for the Preservation of Cultural and Natural Heritage.

The Centre serves UNESCO African member states south of the Sahara and it is Bilingual as lectures are given in English and French.

The Centre seeks to provide the much needed training facilities for the conservation of museum objects and monuments and provide member states with the much needed trained technical staff for their museums. It also offers training facilities on the preservation of cultural and natural heritage.