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## Unsafe At Any Speed. Ralph Nader.

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For readers who enjoy classic stories for the changeless problems they present, there is Robert Bristow's "Beyond Any Doubt," an exploration into the minds of jurors during deliberation of a murder case; Steen Steensen Blicher's "The Rector of Veilbye," involving the execution of an innocent man as a result of the perfidious fabrication of circumstantial evidence; and Anatole France's "Crainquebille," the classic reflection on how justice is administered to the poor. In all of these stories, whether the central issue concerns jury deliberation, the execution of the innocent, or legal treatment of the poor, law is treated as a social dynamic, rather than as an intellectual discipline.

Aside from the intrinsic delights of each of the stories collected by Mr. Koessler the book has a further advantage: it does not have to be read from cover to cover to be enjoyed. The reader can enjoy it whether he reads for an hour or an afternoon. The final test of a good anthology is not whether you cannot put it down but how often you pick it up. This book should be picked up often.

MARK FERDINAND

**UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED.** Ralph Nader. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1965. 365 pp., \$5.95.

When the Senate Commerce Committee opened its hearings on the Highway Safety Act of 1966, Ralph Nader as author of *Unsafe At Any Speed* was among the first witnesses. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Princeton and a graduate of the Harvard Law School, this Washington, D. C., attorney has become the principal crusader for compulsory automobile safety standards. Before the Commerce Committee, he acted as the prime antagonist of the automobile manufacturers in calling for safety engineering legislation to take effect immediately. Nader's testimony received much publicity for himself and his book, which, on July 17, 1966, was 8th on the New York Times Book Review "General Best Seller List," its 13th week on the list.

Both the Commerce Committee and the author are concerned with the prevention of the shocking number of automotive deaths and injuries; in 1964 there were 47,700 deaths and more than 4 million injuries. Automobile crashes are the 4th leading cause of death in the United States and are responsible for 1/3 of the hospitalizations for injuries. Nader accuses the \$25 billion automobile industry of ignoring safety in spending only 23¢ per car on safety research,<sup>1</sup> compared to \$700 per car on the annual model change, mostly styling.

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<sup>1</sup>In the absence of company figures, federal highway safety researchers

The author believes that the lack of safety information and the companies' failure to report available adverse safety information have made possible public acceptance of unsafe cars. He denies that all cars are equally safe. Until Nader's book, criticism of auto defects centered on the automobile in general without identifying particular models. A leading investigation, Cornell's Automotive Crash Injury Research, has only twice publicly compared companies, and then only companies, not models. In 1 case, publication of the facts had quick results: General Motors apparently redesigned its defective door latches, for within a year after a Cornell report showed General Motors cars to have 6 times more door loss than the next highest manufacturer, General Motors had reduced that loss to approximately that of the other manufacturers.<sup>2</sup>

What little automobile crash research there is results either from the small efforts of the manufacturers themselves or from federal and industry grants to universities. The effort is small: compare the \$53,000 spent to investigate each airplane death to the \$166 spent in highway traffic research for each automobile death.<sup>3</sup> Nader wishes to change the researcher's present policy under which the manufacturers—but not the public—receive an analysis of model deficiencies. The author calls for the publication of these specific crash research data in order to expose the weaknesses of certain models. With knowledge of structural defects the car purchaser would—if rationality prevails—become more selective and the automobile manufacturers would be forced to compete in safety as well as styling.

The author cites many examples of insufficient spending for safety engineering. Particular attention is given to the first mass-produced American rear engine car, the Corvair, especially the 1960-63 models. He finds that the cost-cutting produced a car subject to oversteering and loss of control because of a poorly designed rear-end suspension system. General Motors is now a defendant in more than 100 law suits,

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estimate that the automobile manufacturers allot a total of two million dollars a year to the design and evaluation of crash safety improvements. This amounts to about twenty-three cents for every car sold." p. 187.

<sup>2</sup>"On only two occasions has Cornell named the brands of cars involved in ACIR [Automotive Crash Injury Research] reports. In 1964 ACIR's B. J. Campbell reported that an analysis of door latch effectiveness on very late model cars showed little difference between General Motors, Ford and Chrysler." p. 136.

<sup>3</sup>"With some 1200 or less fatalities annually in civil aviation, the federal government spent between thirty-five and sixty-four million dollars each year from 1960 to 1965 on research and development for greater air safety. This was in addition to what was spent for safety work by the aircraft industry itself. Expenditure of sixty-four million dollars for 1200 fatalities means over fifty-three thousand dollars spent in safety research per fatality." p. 338.

totaling demands of \$40 million, involving these Corvairs. Without competitive safety, the industry has had no incentive to produce a safer car. The current request for an anti-trust exception for automobile manufacturers' safety programs shows that the car industry has learned little. In fact the Anti-Trust Division of the Justice Department is investigating agreements to cross-license car exhaust developments. Such agreements would seem to insure that no company would put forth a major inventive effort on car exhaust.

Nader seeks to alert the consumer to the hidden dangers in automobiles. Automobile designers have failed to protect the fragile human body from collision with the surrounding interior. He sees a car filled with danger from rigid steering columns and sprung glove compartments capable on impact of penetrating an occupant. The automobile manufacturers have generally omitted protective padding and have allowed door handles and instrument panels to project in a manner which can result in serious injury. According to Nader, numerous Wayne State University crash tests have found the standard windshield to be penetrable on sudden stop at speeds as low as  $12\frac{1}{2}$  mph. Nader notes that seat belts, optional in 1955, were not uniformly installed until 1964, when they were required by legislation.

The reformer-author's attempts to force out hidden facts and to move an indifferent society sometimes show frustration and anger. Loss of credibility, resulting from the author's emotional involvement with the subject, is heightened by his failure to cite research sources. The reliability of Nader's findings, however, has been supported by the Commerce Committee hearings. The success of this book can be measured by the increased public awareness of defective automobile design and of the obvious need for safety engineering. The book is well written and is recommended for lawyers and anyone who drives a car.

CONRAD M. CUTCLIFFE

**CONTRACEPTION.** John T. Noonan, Jr. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965. 533 pp., \$7.95.

In *Contraception*, the entire historical position of the Catholic Church on birth control from the first century of the Roman Empire to the latest Ecumenical Council has been analyzed and presented in language easily understood by laymen. The Catholic doctrine opposed to birth control is in a formal sense based on the Bible, thus Biblical passages are examined.