



U.S. SAVINGS BONDS

Auto Dealers Of State Favor Inspection By Licensed Dealers

The North Carolina Automobile Dealer's Association has gone on record as favoring the inspection of motor vehicles by licensed garages and service stations, rather than by state-operated inspection lanes. This system is essentially the same as the one now in operation in the State of Pennsylvania. In general, its provisions are as follows:

1. Administration — Department of Revenue — Bureau of Highway Safety — with power to promulgate rules and regulations under which official Inspection Stations would be appointed and operated.
2. Eligibility for Appointment as an official inspection station — any firm — whether automobile dealer, independent repair shop operator, or fleet operator such as a public utility or municipality — complying with the requirements as to space, tools and equipment, and mechanically experienced personnel.
3. Number of Inspections — Semi-annual, with designated inspection periods of May-June-July and November-December-January.

4. Fee for inspection — nominal charge — as a rule, 50c plus the cost of any repairs or adjustments.

5. Supervision of official inspection stations — by specially trained State Highway Patrol, supplemented by checking of inspected automobiles by members of Highway Patrol.

6. Financing of inspection program — through sale of inspection stickers to official inspection stations to pay cost of supervision, 5c per sticker twice a year would provide more than \$100,000.00 — 10c, over \$200,000.00, etc. This would make the whole system practically self-supporting.

No attempt has been made to give more than a very brief outline of this system, since all the details are contained in a pamphlet issued by the State of Pennsylvania, known as "Official Inspection Station Rules and Regulations."

At this time it might be well to examine the merits of this system to determine its advantages, if any, over State Operated Stations.

1. It is cheaper — since dealers would bear cost of tools, equipment, and personnel, and supervision would be paid for by sale of stickers.

2. It is more convenient for car owners — with inspection stations located in practically every city and hamlet in the state, no car owner would need drive more than a few miles for his periodic inspection — any necessary adjustment or repair work could be done on the spot — and inspection could be made at any time during a full three month period of time at car owner's leisure and without losing time from employment.

3. It is more likely to win public acceptance, and, thus, more likely to survive on a permanent basis — due to advantages enumerated in No. 2 and since car owners would be treated more courteously and tactfully by personnel who depended on their goodwill for a means of livelihood, than by State employees on generally low salary schedules who are responsible to no one but their superiors — such personnel are prone to become autocratic and indifferent of the feelings of the public, when given a little authority. A complaint is a very rare occurrence in Pennsylvania where the system has been in operation for thirty years.

4. It is as easily supervised as any other system — favoritism could be controlled by strict supervision and by impartial and swift penalties for infractions of rules — stations could have their inspecting privileges suspended or withdrawn altogether if circumstances warranted such action. Car owners could report any gouging or over-charging to State Inspectors, or any member of Highway Patrol, for investigation and possible redress.

5. It would eliminate much duplication of effort. A very high percentage of motor vehicles are safety checked periodically already as a part of regular maintenance.

One would find it very difficult to make out as strong a case for a system involving State operated Inspection Stations. The principal objections advanced to having automotive service establishments handle the inspections are the fear of corruption and favoritism in the issuance of stickers by unprincipled operators, and the fear that car owners would be made victims of gouging practices and over-charging in general.

The answer to that is that no system will work very long unless properly supervised, and anyhow, the car owner will end up in some dealer's service station eventually no matter what kind of system the State has. Garage operators have ample opportunities for such practices if they care to indulge in them, regardless of the inspection privilege, and the fear of loss of customer goodwill would act as a very effective safeguard for the car owner's welfare.

Perhaps the major source of the distrust on the part of many as to the integrity of automobile dealers springs from the questionable treatment accorded some people by a small majority of new car dealers during the rare shortage of automobiles. However, the great majority deserve to be commended for being

as fair as they have been, and have not succumbed to temptations that many of their accusers would not have withstood. Surely the average automobile dealer is as trustworthy as the average business man in any other line, and proper policing would take care of the bad actors in their group — and the industry would almost certainly help do this policing. A casual examination of the facts would show, anyhow, that the job of making periodic inspections of motor vehicles would be a source of headaches rather than of additional income. After all, repairing big wrecks is far more profitable than the meager income from inspections performed for nominal fees. They would be rendering a public service resulting ultimately in the betterment of the automobile industry.

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