

March 16

NO BAN ON HITCH-HIKING; HENRY EXPLAINS ROAD BILL

Signals Must Be Made From Side of Highway in Order to Eliminate Accidents

The Ontario Government is placing no ban on hitch-hiking, and Premier George S. Henry made that point perfectly plain over the week-end.

People will be able, as before, to solicit rides from motorists on the King's highways of the Province. Misinterpretation by the Mail and Empire of Mr. Henry's new Highway Traffic Act amendment has created the impression that any one asking a lift in future—farmer, gas-stalled driver, hiking Boy Scout or old lady—would be penalized for his or her action. Such a situation is as far removed from the actual meaning of the new legislation, and from Mr. Henry's own point of view, as one pole is from another, and the Prime Minister has asked that the matter be clarified.

Must Signal From Side.

Henceforth, hitch-hikers, professional or amateur, can beg rides, but they must get off the driving portion of the highway to signal—in other words, do their hand-waving from the side of the road, and not from the actual pavement, as has been the habit of many of them in the past.

Frequent accidents, according to Highways Department records, have occurred because of the tendency of pedestrians to suddenly signal cars from the middle of the highway, with occasional serious consequences to the signaller, but, more often, with resultant damages to the motorist's

machine. It is at elimination of such accidents—at the abolition of such traffic interference, so to speak—that Mr. Henry's new amendment to the act primarily and almost completely aims.

Premier Henry Explains.

"We would no more think of stopping everybody from asking for rides," Mr. Henry stated, "than we would think of stopping a motorist from offering a lift to a weary foot traveller. All we ask in future is that, as a further safety measure, a person signalling for a lift shall do it from the shoulder of the road—or, even better, from the side of the highway—so that, if turned down, he won't, by his nearness, encumber the progress of the car."

Warning Is Issued.

The Premier stated that his department hoped, in time, to dissuade motorists from the practice of picking up questionable individuals, and that the new legislation would have some effect in this direction.

"For myself," said he, "I wouldn't pick up any one after dark, and I see a lot of fellows on the road that I wouldn't give a lift to in the daytime. But, of course, the onus in giving a ride to anyone rests entirely with the motorist. He can either turn down a request or grant it; keep on going, or stop. It's up to him."