

realize there are two ways they are regarded. As a motorist, perhaps we take the highway for granted. We regard the traffic it carries as just a great number of cars and trucks, some of which, during rush hours particularly, delay our trip. As a public official, however, and particularly as Governor, you begin to look at highways differently. You realize—at least I do—the vast responsibility government has in order to satisfy the desire, the great need of people and goods to move from one place to another.

The contracting industry also has a double image. To the motorist, the roadbuilder is a man in a hard hat operating earth movers, bulldozers, and other large machines. To the public officials however, the highway contractor is the man to whom government passes on the responsibility of providing adequate surfaces on which the traffic of the nation can move safely and efficiently. It is not a small responsibility and perhaps I can mention a few reasons why. A road is more than a ribbon of pavement through the countryside. It is more than a street, boulevard or expressway which traverses urban or rural regions of the State. It is a lifeline. Through the years, government has been given more and more responsibility in the transportation field. The movement of people, in particular, has become almost entirely a governmental function since the railroads have virtually abandoned this type of transportation. By safe and efficient movement of people and goods, the modern highway stimulates the economic growth of the State and the nation. The state which is traversed by a modern highway system enjoys the opportunity to attract more tourist dollars. The modern highway system opens up new markets and creates a climate for expansion of industry and commerce. This means more jobs for our growing population.

Safety is another feature of the modern highway system. While we hear a lot about the number of accidents occurring on our streets and highways and while we want to eliminate all accidents, if possible, I don't think we can lose sight of the fact that the rate of accidents is reduced almost in direct ratio to the number of miles of modern highways added to our system. This is part of the responsibility which has been thrust upon government and a part of the responsibility we pass on to you.

I think Maryland is facing up to its responsibilities of the highway field. In the past three and one-half years, for example, we have constructed, modernized or otherwise improved approximately 640 miles of road in every section of the State. Perhaps the public is aware principally of the expressway construction we have achieved, big roads like