

*Editorial Column: re Trucking*  
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## Pushing Trucks

THE U.S. SENATE likes to be known as the nation's greatest deliberative body. Well, maybe sometimes.

It certainly deliberated little Wednesday when it decided that we should have heavier, wider and longer trucks crowding us off the nation's highways. The proposal was introduced by Sen. John Melcher (D-Mont.).

It was done with a voice vote and with the chamber mostly empty.

It was done with Sen. Jennings Randolph (D-W.Va.), chairman of the Senate Public Works Committee who long has opposed such legislation, 3,000 miles away in San Diego making a speech, because he had been promised the bill would not be considered in his absence.

And it was done despite some opposition to it by the administration.

What was it that the Senate so casually foisted upon the people of the nation? For one thing it was a proposal that trucks carrying 80,000-pound loads be permitted to

rumble across the nation on highways which at best have been constructed to carry only 73,280-pound loads. For another, it voted to allow trucks 65 feet long, which is 5 to 10 feet more than now is permitted, thus opening the way for those freight-train carriers everywhere instead of just in the West.

And finally, they voted to allow trucks to be 8½ feet wide, instead of the present 8 feet, even though many of the nation's highways are not built to accommodate such widths. That width proposal came from Oregon which wants to permit its lumber industry to double the stacks of plywood its trucks can carry.

SOME DELIBERATION. Some legislation. Some consideration of the needs and wants of the people who must share those roads with those behemoths.

The only hope for preventing this atrocious proposal being foisted on us now is in the House of Representatives.

*Ha Ha! Fun! CA, Sept. 30, 1980*  
**Truckers Lose**

ONE OF the arguments of the proponents of heavier trucks has been that the 73,280-pound limit encourages violations and that the load law can't be enforced.

But from Mississippi — and from the winding back roads of Mississippi, yet — comes the lie to that contention. The law does have teeth, if state officials want it to.

Portable-scale crews working for the reorganized state Tax Commission have collected more than \$237,000 in fines during their first two months in operation. The crews are cracking down on truck drivers who try to bypass permanent weigh stations in an effort to avoid Mississippi weight, tag or fuel tax regulations.

Said a scale worker, "We're enjoying enforcing the law now. Politics is out of it."

Until now, truckers have contended that the only way to assure compliance with a load limit was to raise the limit so their trips would be more profitable. Then, they said, they'd be willing to cooperate.

This was not only arrogant. It was also specious, because the trucking industry has demonstrated that its ultimate goal isn't just 80,000 pounds or even 100,000 pounds, but as much weight as it can get regardless of the road damage that would result. The only way, in fact, to stop that movement is to draw the line where it is. And Mississippi has shown it can be done.

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