

THE SPEED LIMIT



DELAY URGED BY THE ROYAL AUTOMOBILE CLUB

THE Royal Automobile Club views with grave concern the announcement that the 30 miles per hour speed limit for private motorcars and motorcycles in "built-up" areas is to be put into operation in the near future.

Since the present Minister of Transport took office a number of measures of a very far reaching character have been introduced—pedestrian crossings and beacons, silence zones, cyclist paths, traffic lanes, a large increase in the number of traffic control lights, restricted working hours for drivers of commercial vehicles, whilst the tests for new drivers are to commence on 1st April next.

In the opinion of the R.A.C. it is very desirable that the public generally and the motorist in particular should be given longer opportunity to assimilate and, having done so, to use to the best advantage of safety all of the above measures before further



restrictions, such as the new speed limit, are put into operation. Further, the R.A.C. holds very strongly that it will be impossible for the Authorities to determine the effect of the new regulations, some of which may prove to be undesirable or superfluous, if the whole question is complicated

at the beginning of the motoring season by the introduction of a speed limit.

The driver who commences or resumes motoring in the early Spring will find himself faced with a host of new regulations and signs. If to these are immediately added thousands of new speed limit notices, erected in accordance with a system of which he is totally ignorant and entailing the infliction of a heavy penalty if disregarded, however inadvertently, he may well begin to wonder if the game is worth the candle.

The R.A.C. has always held

that an arbitrary speed limit is far more likely to add to the danger of our roads and streets than to diminish the number of accidents. Speed should be regulated by the circumstances existing at the time. An arbitrary speed limit is a direct encouragement to the reckless driver to proceed at the maximum speed permitted by the legal limit as distinct from the speed appropriate at the moment, and it is submitted that the new limit is therefore likely to produce situations of danger which would never exist were drivers encouraged to regulate their speed solely by the conditions prevailing at the moment.

These and other considerations were urged upon the Government on behalf of the R.A.C. when the Road Traffic Bill, 1934, was under discussion in Parliament. The Government, however, insisted in imposing the 30 miles per hour speed limit in "built-up" areas, although an amendment was accepted limiting its operation to five years. The Act does not lay down a specific date upon which the speed limit shall come into force, and the R.A.C. therefore urges that its operation

should be delayed at least until there has been an opportunity to estimate the respective safety values of the numerous experiments now being made.

