

Drive Geared to Complicate Driving

THE AUTOMOBILE is the most efficient and economical means of personal transportation mankind ever has enjoyed, romances with ships, trains, horses and planes notwithstanding.

The automobile made it possible for members of a family to dash off in different directions for work, fun, education or public service in minimum time, at reasonable cost.

The United States has one or more cars for every two people, and other nations are trying hard to attain this people-car ratio.

Why is there so much opposition to and criticism of cars? It looks like there is either a conspiracy to make cars obsolete and illegal, or a campaign to force motorists into economic and political subservience in order to keep driving.

In a book published a couple of years ago, a writer named Barry Bruce-Briggs challenged the idea that cities should be for people, not for cars. He refuted arguments that the automobile has destroyed our cities and ruined our mass transit

systems.

Apparently his book, titled "The War Against the Automobile," got lost in the battle, because there still are lots of cars, they cost more to buy, are assessed heavy taxes and cost more to drive.

As recently as five years ago, you could have your tank filled and get enough change from a \$10 bill to buy a hamburger. Now prices hover near \$1 a gallon and you don't get much change from a \$20 bill after you have serviced your own car.

High prices for gasoline were the brain-child of a bureaucrat who argued that encouraging fuel prices to rise would cause motorists to use less and make us less dependent upon imported oil.

It hasn't worked out that way. Our society depends upon cars and people have no choice except to keep driving.

Congress got into the act, enacting laws intended to produce cars that would use less fuel, pollute less and be safer.

You might argue any of these

points, but there is general agreement that everything Congress has done has added to the cost of cars, including preferential legislation that empowers labor unions to get just about whatever they demand in wages and benefits.

Ecological fanatics have demanded elimination of cars from downtown districts or wherever congestion develops, meaning wherever cars prove most useful. They want them replaced by larger vehicles that presumably do not emit objectionable fumes or noise.

Proposals have been made for rail or monorail transportation into Oklahoma City from suburban towns. This idea may have merit, but it could take well into the next century to authorize, design, fill out required permit forms, obtain rights-of-way and build.

Latest developments to retard usefulness and convenience of automobiles are proposed legislation to ban automatic transmissions and a drive to eliminate spare tires.