

Intoxicated Drivers Kill 70 Every Day

MR. GALLUP wasn't sure whether American citizens really want to stop drunken driving on our streets and highways, so he made a national poll last month to determine public opinion.

There hasn't been any question that intoxicated drivers are the biggest single cause of accidents, the reason for the most highway fatalities and a hazard to other drivers. Recent statistics show 70 fatalities daily due to drunken driving in the United States.

The Gallup Poll reported that four out of five of those interviewed favored stricter laws against drunken driving. Almost as many favored mandatory two-day jail sentences for first offenders.

However, nearly two out of three didn't want police to make spot checks to give motorists sobriety tests. Since we don't have enough police to follow suspected drinkers until they violate traffic laws or have accidents, other procedures are needed if any noticeable reduction is to be made in this ridiculous risk to public well-being.

The most obvious remedy would be for people to stop drinking alcoholic beverages. This has been proposed repeatedly since the time of Noah, who got drunk after he landed the ark (Genesis 9:21) but response to the idea has never been universal.

The next thing would be to shut off the supply, but this seems to be unthinkable since every American taxpayer has been made a participant in the liquor business. Collection of taxes on alcoholic beverages is a part of the system that few, if any, lawmakers would abandon unless equal revenue could be obtained elsewhere.

Supplies of liquor never have been completely shut off by various temperance and prohibition efforts, because many people make money out of selling it. They just won't quit.

Therefore, we are compelled to wage a war against drunken drivers with police able to make arrests only if they can smell the offenders' breath 100 feet away at 30 m.p.h. with windows on both cars rolled up

and air conditioners going.

It probably would be declared unconstitutional to relieve tipsy individuals of their car keys as they reeled out of any one of our many illegal saloons.

It should not be an infringement of rights for saloon keepers to provide sober chauffeurs to transport their customers to the next bar or, if their drinking bouts are over, to their homes.

Another positive step that might be taken would be for district attorneys to discontinue the practice of reducing charges to misdemeanors whenever prominent citizens, public officials or famous personalities are arrested as drunken drivers. Nominal fines that well-to-do people never miss are not a deterrent.

Nobody has to drink alcoholic beverages. Other satisfying and safer beverages are available. No drinker of alcoholic beverages has to drive a car. Other means of transportation are available. Unfortunately, many motorists don't seem to agree, so public safety on the highways is not available.