

Book Review: Unsafe at Any Speed, by Ralph Nader

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Book Review

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UNSAFE AT ANY SPEED. RALPH NADER. Musson Book Co., New York: 1965. pp. 365. (\$1.00)

Ralph Nader's "Unsafe at any Speed" is a book that has affected the lives of thousands of people, has resulted in drastic changes in automobile manufacturing and sale methods and directly resulted in U.S. legislation to control the manufacture and importation of automobiles.

It is indeed amazing because "Unsafe at any Speed" is largely a rehash of comments about automobile construction that have been heard from critics of the industry for a decade. Where Mr. Nader adds new facts or opinions he is largely wrong. It is especially interesting that he makes exactly the same error as that of which he accuses the industry, but in reverse. He states that the auto companies disregard the automobile when considering the cause of accidents and injuries and place the entire blame on the highways and the driver. On this he bases his entire attack. Ralph Nader then goes on to disregard the role of the driver and the highway and to place the entire blame on the automobile. I believe that he is a little more in error than are the manufacturers.

In any case one must excuse his exaggeration for he has succeeded where so many others have failed. His book appeared at a time when the American public was receptive because of a growing awareness that something was amiss in the industry and that something should and could be done to mitigate the unhappy results of accidents. The sales for a book of this type were phenomenal and legislators like Senators Ribicoff and Speno utilized the public concern which developed to bludgeon the auto companies into making changes which otherwise might not have come for 10 to 20 years. These changes will not reduce the number of accidents but they will definitely reduce the mortality resulting from those accidents. So I say "Three Cheers for Ralph Nader" and read his book—it's easy to follow and nontechnical.

At the time of writing Canada unfortunately has not followed the U.S. lead. Until we do we shall continue to have substandard cars on our roads. Perhaps we need a Canadian Ralph Nader.

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