

## *Drowning in the Flood of Progress*

Every year at this season things change. Some changes are timeless. The long lazy hazy days of summer lie behind us; the humidity of dog days is but a sticky memory; tomatoes are ripe; corn-on-the-cob has peaked; in the woodlands, bracken turns golden, then brown; climbing vines of woodbine show crimson; sumac's brilliance splashes red and orange light on the hills. As long as the good earth spins on her axis, as long as our sun holds our galaxy together, these changes mark the turn of summer to fall.

Some changes seem timeless but are man-made. When schools open in September, everyone's life follows a more defined pattern; the clock instead of the tide regulates our actions. Mother's warning, "It's almost time for the bus!" sends dawdling youngsters scurrying. Sweaters and jackets replace light summer clothing. Beaches are deserted. Fewer boats swing at their moorings in the bays.

Rhythms of highway traffic change, too. On most stretches of most roads, traffic thins somewhat. Not drastically, as it once did right after Labor Day, but to a noticeable degree. It's possible to stop at the post office and mail a letter, to park where an errand must be run, to wave at people you recognize as you drive through the village.

On Route 28, though, little change is discernible. We all know the highway carries far more traffic than it was designed to handle. Half-a-century ago, planners couldn't imagine the growth that would come in such a short time to overload the highway. Those of a quarter-century ago had an inkling of possible population increases, but even they

couldn't anticipate the speed with which development would come.

Recommendations were made by Barnstable County Commissioners 20 years ago with regard to Route 28. The state, the entity responsible for the highway, should plan... they said...to widen the road and rebuild it as a dual highway between Falmouth and Hyannis. The state took no action. No land was purchased for future widening of the roadbed. Land-acquisition costs, now, would be prohibitively high... but never again will they be lower.

All who use Route 28 realize it is already overloaded. How long will it be before the highway is virtually a two-lane-wide, 20-mile-long parking lot between Hyannis and Falmouth? How long will it be before traffic, seeking an alternate route, finds its way into our already traffic-snarled villages?

Opportunities to construct supplemental highways through woodlands... opportunities that remained viable until quite recently when most of the open land was approved for subdivisions... have been lost. Change must follow as those subdivisions take shape, more people arrive, and traffic redoubles.

Traffic is but one of the pressures of higher population density. Some people still say, "You can't stop progress..." And to that, there's but a single logical response.

"Not all change is progress. Some changes are regressive."

We need to plan before we drown in the flood of changes made in the name of "Progress."