certificate. However, the executive committee of Cape Town City Council declined to prosecute on the irrational grounds that nothing terrible had happened anyway despite the contravention. What price vigilance and common sense?

Such disasters and near disasters as described above may raise legitimate questions about the role and accountability of governmental watchdogs, particularly in South Africa where regulation of enforcement of existing statutes may be softened in the name of our new found democracy. However, a partial solution to this state of affairs may emerge in CAPFSA's heartland; a regional constitution recently drafted by the Western Cape Legislature proposes the election of an environmental commissioner or ombudsman whose brief would include regional planning and urban and rural development. Needless to say, CAPFSA welcomes such an appointment and would exploit every opportunity to interact with the appointee on environmental and developmental issues which impact in any way on the safety of children.

Finally, as I write, the holiday road death toll in South Africa has just exceeded the total reached this time last year (900 fatalities) and we are only halfway through the summer school vacation. Those of you living outside of South Africa will not hear of such statistics from any other source than myself. Now, had an airliner crashed ainto a school playground resulting in the death of half as many people, the report would have been splashed across the newspapers of the world and the appropriate sense of horror would have been expressed by one and all. So what is the difference?

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Crash helmets in Bali, Indonesia

EDITOR,—The Indonesian island of Bali (population estimated 2.924 million) has introduced a law requiring the use of crash helmets by motorcycle riders and passengers. The law is administered by traffic police attached to administrative regions of the island. The fine for not wearing a helmet is officially 15 000 rupiah (\$6.50), although police suffer a bad reputation for extracting whatever they can from traffic offenders. Motorcycles are the most popular form of transport in Indonesia, with 8135 registrations in 1994 (compared with 1.89 million cars). Since 1975, motorcycle registrations have increased 5.8-fold, while car registrations grew 3.9-fold (data from Indonesian State Police).

In July 1996, with the help of two assistants, I conducted an observational study of helmet use at three locations in Bali. Using a hand held counter, I counted 500 consecutive helmet wearers passing on one side of heavily trafficked two way streets. This procedure was repeated on two occasions in different locations. Drivers and pillion passengers wearing helmets were counted. A

Helmet use in Bali (% in parentheses)

Location	Total riders, pillions	Wearing helmets	Straps undone	No helmets
Ubud	612	500 (81.7)	155 (31.0)	112 (18.3)
Denpassar	521	500 (96.0)	67 (13.4)	21 (4.0)
Batubulan	523	500 (95.6)	59 (11.8)	23 (4.4)

second observer simultaneously counted those wearing helmets but who did not have them secured with a strap. A third observer counted those who passed during these observational periods who did not wear a helmet. Results are shown in the table.

A Balinese resident explained to me that the lower rate of helmet use and higher rate of strapless use observed in Ubud would be most likely explained by the later observational time (5pm v 2pm in the other two cases): most traffic police went off duty after 4pm. A large proportion of non-helmet users, particularly in the Denpassar and Butubulan sites, were people dressed to attend religious ceremonies who are apparently exempted from wearing helmets. Small children carried as pillions were invariably helmetless, and often wedged between adults with the result that three, four, and occasionally five people rode the one motorcycle.

While the law requires helmet use, no standards have been set for helmet construction. A cheap helmet in common use resembles a bowl constructed of poor quality plastic; it is easily cracked by slight hand pressure. Clearly, it provides virtually no protection to the wearer. The prevalence of such helmets, together with the common practice of simply perching the helmet on the head with the straps flapping in the breeze, suggests widespread cosmetic adherence to the law.

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CALENDAR

The Third National Violence Prevention Conference will take place in Los Angeles, California 1-4 June 1997. Further details: Anthony D Borbon, Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles, 313 N Figueroa St, Room 127, Los Angeles, CA 90012, USA. Fax +1-213-250-2594.

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Consolidating Communities Against Violence (Sixth International Conference on Safe Communities), 15-19 October 1997, Johannesburg, South Africa. Further details: Safe-comm6 Conference Secretariat, Conferences and Promotions, PO Box 411177, Craighall, Johannesburg 2024, South Africa.

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Safety in Action: International Safety Exposition, Melbourne, Australia, 25 February-1 March 1998. Further details: http: // www.sia.org.au.

Doctoral training in injury prevention

The William Haddon Jr Fellowship in Injury Prevention will provide a \$12 000 scholarship to one doctoral candidate admitted to the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health in the Department of Health Policy and Management.

Contact Susan P Baker, MPH (subaker@phnet.sph.jhu.edu) for information about the training program and the scholarship, or call +1 410-955-3543 for admissions information.

JOURNAL CITATIONS

Editor's note: your comments are welcome, as are your suggestions about other databases of interest. At present the search includes the following: Index Medicus, Medline, Current Contents, Social Science Index, PsychInfo, CINAHL, ERIC.

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