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Should wearing of cycle helmets become compulsory?

Sir

As a mild to moderate cyclist, (65 miles per week, mostly with a helmet!) I would like to question M. W. Cooke's suggestion that cycle helmet wearing should be compulsory.

Firstly, consider accident cause. In a series of 394 cycle injuries presenting to an A&E department 63% were caused by the cyclist's inability to control the bike – no vehicle or other factors were involved. We need to educate cyclists to ride properly, particularly the children.

Secondly, in the above study only 26% were involved in a collision with a motor vehicle. In a separate study of head injuries to cyclists (Worrell, 1987) 38% were caused by collision with a motor vehicle, but 58% just fell off. Agreed, a collision will produce a more serious injury, but we must educate motorists to look out for cyclists, and also to enforce existing speed limits ($E = 1 \times 2 \text{ MV}^{-2}$). Why should cyclists be compelled to protect themselves from the illegal acts of others?

Thirdly, this law would be totally unenforceable, a fact recognized by a recent meeting of the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport, and surprisingly backed by the Department of Transport!

Fourthly, he may not be aware that the BS for helmets is designed in such a way that the helmet must withstand an impact on an angled edge, which makes the helmet hot and heavy to wear. The 'comfort factor' is one of the most important points in helmet use; those which are poorly ventilated and heavy will not be worn. Even serious racers who agree helmets are needed do not always wear them, *viz*: on the mountain stages of the last Tour de France, where extremes of effort and heat are encountered.

Yes, a helmet will help protect your head, but we should proceed by education rather than legislation.

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