

[Common Error No. 94](#) [1]

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94. "Business doesn't care about consumer safety, and cuts corners by economizing on safe conditions for its workers."

What private business wants most of all are satisfied customers who will not only come back, but tell their friends. A reputation for unsafe products is the last thing a business needs. A toy company with a reputation for products which injure children is not going to sell many toys. An airline with a bad crash record tends to be avoided by travellers, as does a railway company, state or private, which kills its passengers.

It is often a good thing to have industry-wide safety standards. They help impart general confidence and inform on how safety is best maintained. Best practice can become the norm. The industry itself should be consulted on this, however, because they know better than any outside inspector can. In many cases a voluntary code policed by the industry itself is satisfactory. In others, legislation incorporating their advice may be needed. But the notion that they don't care about product safety is profoundly wrong. And the notion that some bureaucrat sitting in Whitehall or Brussels with no knowledge of the industry is the best person to lay down rules for product safety is equally wrong.

It is also true that a contented, motivated workforce tends to be more productive and less prone to disruption. It is not in the interest of business to have casualties among its workers. Again, it is good to have the industry's input into safety standards, because they know the conditions. As the economy becomes more prosperous, and as technology advances, it becomes possible to achieve and insist upon ever higher safety standards.

State industries in the UK and abroad are not safer for customers or employees than are private businesses. If anything, it is the prosperous private industries which can afford better safety standards, just as it is the rich economies which can do so.

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