

## TOPICS OF TODAY

### Cap-snappers and Concrete Coffins

Maybe the recent "flying saucer" nine-day wonder had something to do with it but it was nevertheless a fact that wheel-caps of late-model cars had been disappearing in Melbourne at a prodigious rate said spokesmen of insurance companies this week. They should know. They had received hundreds of claims during the past two months. During this time about 1,500 wheel-caps have been stolen from parked cars in the city. It was estimated that about 5 per cent. of all metropolitan cars had one or more caps missing.

The mysterious feature of this latest racket is that few caps have turned up at car wreckers. Mostly they have vanished. One auto dealer said that he did not know of any great illicit trade in the caps. They were regarded by dealers as "hot."

This cap-snapping was not worrying the insurance chiefs half as much, however, as the fact that the alarming number of injuries and deaths caused by motor vehicles are making it doubtful whether the recent increased scale of premiums for third-party insurance would be enough.

Premiums for compulsory 3rd-party insurance showed a loss for all companies handling the business for the year ended June 30, 1946, said a spokesman for a Victorian company this week.

a Victorian company this week. During the past two years, companies had dealt with an ever increasing number of cars on the roads. The poor state of road-worthiness of a good many jalopies was a potent factor. Maybe Juan Gomez, former Venezuelan dictator, had something when he tackled the road-toll problem a few years ago. Venezuelan motorists were startled to find that every upright of the concrete barriers at dangerous bends of Gomez's new mountain highways was a replica of a coffin, even to the decorative fringe around the lid. Previously, little wooden crosses were planted by the highways as reminders as the latest casualties. When this failed to stop speeding the more macabre method was adopted.