

It's above argument . . . says Chris Jelley

FREEDOM of Speech is the prerogative of every man, woman and child in Britain, and I don't mind telling you that there has been plenty of free speeches made over the new range of 'Zephyr' and 'Zodiac' cars introduced last year by the Ford Motor Company. In fact, I might even go so far as to vote these latest Fords the most controversial cars of 1966. Everybody seemed to have an opinion of them at the time and these opinions, whether for or against, were certainly strong. Nor did there appear to be intermediate shades of feeling. Depending on your point of view, you either loved 'em or loathed 'em!

Meccano Limited have now introduced a Dinky Toy version of the Ford Zodiac Mark 4, and I have no hesitation in saying that this will rise above all the arguments surrounding the real-life car. All fair-minded people, I think, will agree that the model is one of the best die-cast toys of its type on the market today, whether they like the original or not. I, myself, am not greatly

attracted by the original, but I have been quite captivated by the Dinky.

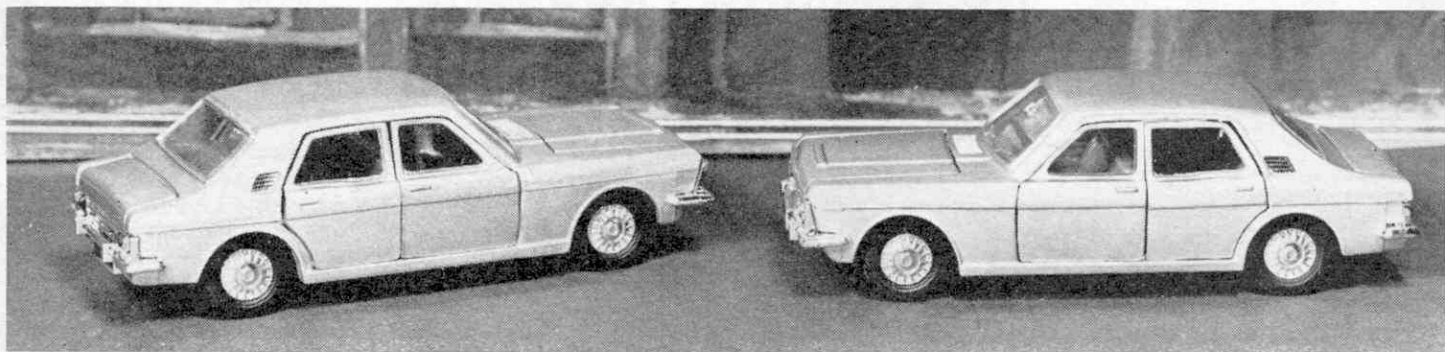
Carrying Sales No. 164, the action features it incorporates are numerous, including the usual opening bonnet, opening boot, Prestomatic steering and 4-wheel suspension, but the most appealing feature of all is the four complete, correctly-shaped and realistically-opening doors. The Zodiac is actually the first Dinky car to be equipped with four complete opening doors, 'complete', here, meaning doors that incorporate the window surrounds as well as the main door panels. The only thing to remember about them is that, if both the front and rear doors are to be opened, those at the front must be opened first.

Action features are all well and good, but they are only part of the story. Also present are a miniature 'engine', windows, seats, steering wheel, plated radiator-grille and bumpers plus twin, amber-coloured jewelled headlamps, red jewelled tail lamps and simulated amber jewelled direction indicators

at the rear. Number plates are also included, while just behind the rear doors appear foil representations of what on the actual car are the exhaust vents for the renowned Aeroflow ventilation system. The wheels, too, are particularly interesting. Besides being plated, they are more or less exact reproductions of the wheels fitted to the original. This means, of course, that they are the new solid type through which the axles do not protrude. Rear-view mirror and windscreen wiper representations appear in the windscreen moulding.

All the above features, alone, add up to make an excellent model, but the final touch is given by a really superb—and authentic—colour finish of metallic silver-grey, off-set by red 'upholstery', including the insides of the doors.

So much for the Dinky Toy. Now, what about the full-size counterpart? As I have already said, this is controversial but, whatever your personal opinion of it, I think you



must agree that it's definitely eye-catching. It's a big car (approximate overall dimensions: 15 ft. 6 in. long by 5 ft. 11 in. wide by 4 ft. 9 in. high) with a distinctive body shape, variously described as 'fabulous' or 'horrible', depending on the point of view of the individual. Power is supplied by a new V-6 engine of 2,994 c.c. capacity that develops a gross output of 144 b.h.p. at 4,750 r.p.m. to give the car a maximum speed in excess of 100 m.p.h.

Transmission on the standard car is to the rear wheels via a 4-speed all-synchromesh gearbox controlled by a floor-mounted lever. A column-mounted gear change, however, is available as an option, as also is automatic transmission and overdrive. Driver/passenger comfort is assured by the extremely spacious and well-upholstered interior as well as the famous Aeroflow ventilation system, exclusive to Fords. All round independent suspension is fitted, this not only making for a very comfortable ride, but also being a very important safety feature, and safety is further increased by power-assisted disc brakes on all four wheels. The spare wheel is mounted beneath the bonnet as far forward as possible—even in front of the engine. Fords claim this forward position also to be 'a major safety factor', but I'm afraid that I don't quite understand why this should be. Taken all in all,

though, the real Zodiac is a very sound and powerful car whether you like the 'look' of it or not.

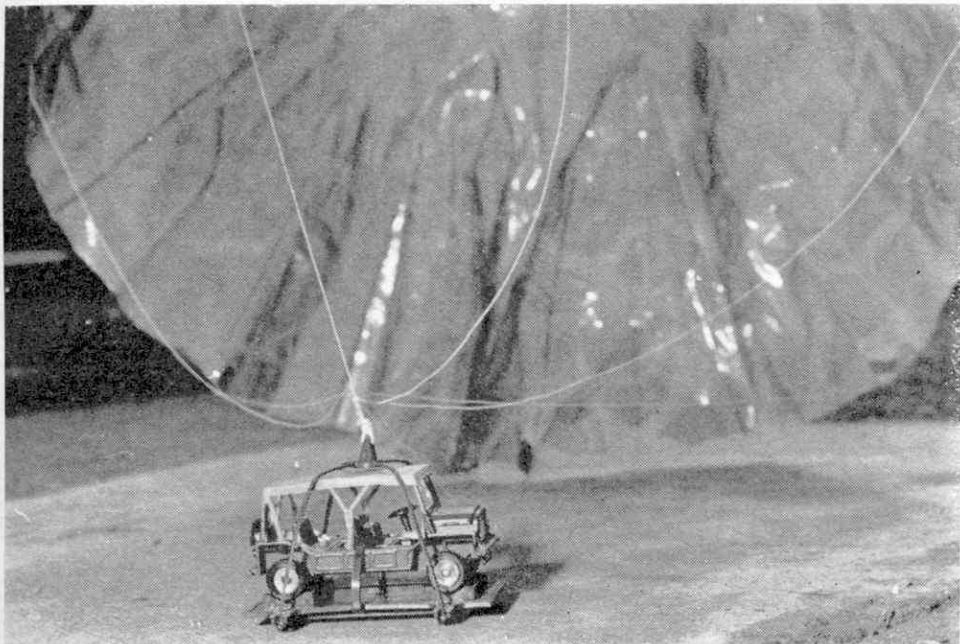
Novel Army Model

Released with the Zodiac is a very unusual army model which certainly combines authenticity with what can be called 'play-value'—Dinky Toy No. 601 Austin Para Moke. As the name implies, it is a model of the Austin Mini Moke, finished in matt army green, that comes complete with a parachute harness and parachute. You may think that this is going a little too far but, if you do, I must strongly disagree with you. After all, the whole emphasis in the modern army is on mobility, and mobility in this case means the ability to transport troops and equipment over long distances at a moments notice. How better can this be done than by air?

It is generally accepted that some of our most important fighting units today are the various Parachute Regiments, and when they go into action by parachute, they take their equipment with them—by parachute! Alternatively, if ground forces are not in a readily-accessible position and they require additional equipment, it's parachuted in to them. You can see, therefore, that the Para Moke is by no means out of place.

What exactly does the model, as a whole, consist of? Basically it's composed of four parts: a Mini Moke complete with removable 'canvas' cover; a rigid unbreakable platform on which the Moke is held by a nylon strap, the wheels of the Moke engaging in four 'Vee' blocks; a removable 'harness' which clips onto the platform; the actual parachute itself. The Moke, incidentally, is a delightful scale model in its own right being equipped with an opening bonnet, detailed engine and wind-screen, but there is no need for me to go into more detail, as I have already described it in a past issue of M.M.

When purchased, the set is ready for operation, except that the parachute must be tied to the harness. I advise you to make a good job of this—I didn't the first time I tested the model and, when I threw it up, the parachute opened with a jerk and pulled clean away from the harness. The Moke came down a lot quicker than the parachute! Luckily, though, no damage resulted. Operation of the set is pretty well self-explanatory but, to be on the safe side, full instructions are given with each model. The best landing or target area to aim for is grass, but both the platform and Moke will stand up to any amount of rough wear so this is not essential. One thing's for sure—you'll have plenty of fun!



Buses for Sweden

THIS picture shows one of 200 special rear-engined Leyland Panther single-deckers which have been ordered by Stockholm Tramways for delivery this year (1967). Stockholm, in common with other Continental operators, is campaigning to attract passengers away from private cars and back to buses by offering them all the comforts of a car, with additional safety devices, without the responsibilities of a car. These new Leylands, with bodywork by Park Royal Vehicles, are just the things to do it. They feature power-assisted steering, fully-automatic gearbox, air suspension, roof level exhaust, public address system, radio telephone and an automatic system for operating the exit doors, controlled by photoelectric cells.

Externally, the bus is reminiscent of those now in use in Continental countries, and is very similar in that it is one-man operated with separate entrance and exit doors, and has room for many more standing passengers than is found on single-deckers in Britain. In fact, it's designed to carry nearly as many passengers standing as seated—32 as against 39! Power is obtained from a Leyland 0.680 diesel engine developing 160 h.p. at 2,200 r.p.m., which is mounted horizontally beneath the floor at the rear of the chassis. The body, overall, is 37 ft. 6 in. long by 8 ft. 2½ in. wide.

It surprised me to learn that Sweden is converting from left-hand driving (British style) to right-hand driving (Continental style) this autumn. A certain amount of confusion is bound to result, making this an ideal time to tempt new passengers onto the buses. It is hoped that the new Leylands will play a large part in persuading car drivers to leave their cars at home and to travel by bus.