

Commuting Road Tax.

"Farmer Hopeful" writes to the Woodstock *Sentinel-Review* offering the following detailed plan, for providing better and permanent country roads:

1. A division of the township into districts. 2. Appoint in each district a commissioner, who shall be paid by the corporation a reasonable sum for services rendered. 3. The council to instruct the commissioner in each district to prepare plans and specifications for making permanent roads on certain roadways which they will designate in his district. 4. All statute labor, formerly employed on the said lines or roadways, to be commuted at the same time and in the same manner as the general tax. 5. The commissioner to have jurisdiction only over such roadways as the council may set apart from year to year. All other portions of each district to continue the present system of statute labor until the corporation can reach them, a portion being taken under the new system each year (I believe five years would be required to take over every road in an ordinary township). 6. All roads under the management of a commissioner to be graded and gravelled or macadamized so as to be a permanent road. Bridges and culverts to be built as at present from the general tax. Any job of work to be performed on a public road, involving an expenditure of twenty dollars or more, to be let by tender.

This plan will necessitate the council providing funds for immediate use to be repaid from year to year by the commutation tax. To illustrate, suppose the statute labor amounts on an average to twenty days per mile. Reduced to cash that means fifteen dollars. Now we will take one mile of roadway to grade, gravel or macadamise. This will cost say sixty or forty-five dollars more than our tax for one year. That sum to be provided by the council and charged against the district in which it is used. The next year the road will only need slight repairs by a few loads of gravel or broken stone applied in depressions on new grading, costing say \$5, leaving from the second year's tax \$10, to be applied as follows: Interest on \$45 advanced, \$2.70; balance \$7.30 to be applied to reduction of indebtedness, which would leave our liability in the third year \$37.70. As the cost of repairs would be less each year, in the course of ten years we would reimburse the council, and have every road in the township a first-class gravel or stone one.

Then why not at the end of ten years reduce our statute labor tax to twenty-five cents per day, which would be sufficient for repairs. Or if the present rate of seventy-five cents per day were collected for twenty-five years, not only would our roads equal the celebrated stone roads of Scotland, but we would have a sidewalk on every public road in the township.

Proposed By-Law.

TO PROVIDE FOR THE COMMUTATION OF STATUTE LABOR IN THE TOWNSHIP OF—

The Municipal Council of the Township of—in council assembled, under the authority of section 521 of the Consolidated Municipal Act, 1892, enacts:

1. That from and after the passing of this by-law, the sum of—cents per day shall be paid, as commutation of statute labor required to be performed by persons liable, according to the schedule laid down by the said township.

2. That the commutation tax shall be entered in a separate column of the collector's roll, and shall be collected and accounted for like other taxes.

3. That the clerk be required to furnish annually, on the direction of the council, a statement showing the amount of commutation taxes paid in each statute labor division of said township.

4. That the statute labor divisions within the said township shall be those now existing, or the same as they may be hereafter modified by this said council and such new ones as may from time to time be established by by-law or resolution of the said township.

5. The said council shall annually appoint a pathmaster to each statute labor division of the said township of—

6. The said pathmaster shall expend such commutation tax in his division subject to the direction of the council of the said township or commissioner appointed by them.

7. That the said pathmaster shall collect from each person between the ages of twenty-one and sixty years of age, who resides in his division and who is not otherwise assessed, the sum of—cents in lieu of statute labor required to be performed by section 91 of the Consolidated Assessment Act 1892.

8. That all by-laws or as much of said by-laws as is inconsistent with this by-law be and is hereby repealed.

NOTICE.

NOTICE is hereby given that the above is a copy of proposed by-law to provide for the commutation of statute labor in the municipality of the township of—

and that the votes of the electors will be taken thereon on.....
.....
at the usual polling places, being the places at which the municipal elections of the said township are—

Dated this—, day of—, 189—.

.....
Township Clerk.

Government Bonus and Good Roads.

"The Canada Farmers' Sun" recently published an article on *Public Highways*, which included the following reference to the Government of Ontario, granting bonuses to Ontario municipalities to assist in building *Good Roads*:

Every dollar invested in improving our roads and concession lines is a good investment for the province. In ancient Rome the building of those magnificent Roman roads through the empire, which can be seen after the lapse of centuries to-day, was the work of the central government. And why not? Why should the Government of Ontario not invest some portion of the \$3,000,000 annually expended by the province in the building of good stone roads through our townships? It is considered the correct thing for the Government of Ontario to grant Government aid to any railway that can get a sufficient pull upon the Government to justify the grant; many of which would have been built whether aided by the Government or not. The benefits of some of these roads to the country have often been of a most problematical character.

We would propose that any township should, on application to the Legislature of Ontario, be allowed a bonus of a fixed sum per mile for every mile of necessary stone or gravel roads built by them in the township, such bonus to be paid on the certificate of a Government inspector, and that the farmers with all horses required on their own concession lines have the first right to be employed in the laying of these roads. By this means a direct benefit would be derived from the expenditure of this money by the farmer, and every citizen in the country who has to travel over our roads would be benefited, and instead of our highways being a disgrace to our country, they would be a credit to us. The Government that would give such a boon as this to the people of Ontario would place the country under an everlasting debt of gratitude to them, and generations yet unborn would bless them.—*Farmers' Sun*.

President Pattullo, of the Provincial Good Roads Association, in an able letter published in the following issue of the "*Sun*," showed that the foremost advocates of reform in roadmaking are not in favor of "*Government Bonuses*," and stated that:

"There was a time when the public highways belonged to the whole country, but with the introduction of the railway this time has long since passed. They are now no longer national, or even provincial in their character. They are simply local mediums of transport to the various centres of population situated on the railway lines of the country, the latter being the real national mediums of communication in the present day. Therefore, I have never been able to see on what principle either the Federal or the Provincial Governments could be asked to make or maintain these rural highways, any more than they should pave the streets of our towns and cities, or provide for the disposal of sewage therein. Believing that rural roads are local, not provincial or national in their character, they should be made and maintained under local authority and out of local funds, just as civic thoroughfares or other local objects.

Legislation will not make good roads, neither would government bonuses, until there is an intelligent public opinion behind it. Under a bureaucratic system in some countries of the old world, good roads are made without the people who share the blessings of them knowing very much about how they come. But we live in a democracy in this Canada of ours; and before we can get good roads or efficient government in any direction, we must educate the people. But this education must rest on a spirit of self-reliance, out of which will grow intelligent self-help, rather than reliance on the paternalism of government which has been the fertile parent of inefficiency and corruption in this and other countries. Our municipal machinery can be so improved as to secure the great boon of good rural highways in all the older and well organized parts of the country at least. And the resources and credit of these older municipalities are such as to enable our people to be self-reliant in this as in other respects.