

## Engineering Department

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### Meeting of Western Ontario Good Roads Association.

The annual meeting of the Western Ontario Good Roads Association was held in the directors' building on the grounds of the Toronto exhibition, on the 8th and 9th of September last. The meeting was well attended, about one hundred municipal councillors were present, twenty-seven counties having been represented by from one to five delegates.

The programme was a lengthy one and as usual, too lengthy, for the importance of the different subjects and the time allotted for each.

Necessity, however, centered on the question of the best way to control and manage leading roads. This is a very important problem, and one in which every municipality is at the present time interested, and this was clearly apparent from the deep interest which was taken in the discussions.

There seems to be no difference of opinion as to the wisdom of county councillors controlling and managing the principal thoroughfares, leaving township councillors to control the remainder of the roads.

A few years ago the feeling against county councils having anything to do with the management of roads, was very strong, but this was, no doubt, due to the fact that careful study had not been given to the fairness and economy of the larger system, as compared with that of a purely local or township nature.

For several years past, sentiment has been along the line of localizing these works, until it is now realized that the forces at work, in connection with road making have become so scattered that sufficient money cannot be controlled in any one section to undertake any work of a substantial and finished nature.

People are beginning to realize that business methods must be employed in road making as with any other work, that the expenditure must be concentrated and contracted along carefully prepared plans, and that work of a more substantial nature must be undertaken. That modern implements to do work cheaply and well, must be employed to supply the deficiency in labor, and to bring about improvements more rapid. That experienced supervision is necessary and that in order to control these, the township system is too small to incur the expense, and that a combination of townships is necessary in the interest of good organization and economy.

This can be accomplished only through county councils.

The appropriation of one million dollars to aid in the improvement of public high-

ways, by the Provincial Government, has already served a most useful purpose in arousing interest in behalf of better roads.

The aim of the Act is not to oblige the building of an expensive system of complete roads, but to secure uniform and systematic work, to employ and properly operate modern and economical implements, to provide careful, constant and methodical supervision and maintenance; to provide object lessons in the care and treatment of roads, and set examples for those having charge of the remainder.

The measure is not one that demands a large expenditure from the municipalities acting under it, but it is designed to do the greatest amount of good by aiding the counties and townships to help themselves. All the expenditure placed on roads will be spent in the county, and thus returned, in a great measure, to those who contributed it in the first place, together with the Provincial grant.

This Legislative grant is for country road construction only, and is a means of requiring the urban municipalities to aid in the maintenance of the common highways, from which they derive a great benefit, without heretofore, sharing in the cost. As an illustration, the city of Toronto, containing about one tenth of the population and wealth of the Province would ordinarily be entitled to one-tenth of the \$1,000,000, or \$100,000. None of this grant, however, is spent within the limits of Toronto, but all is spent on the roads of rural or township municipalities.

It is objected to township control that the township council, having charge of all the other roads in the township, as well as these special roads, will be influenced after the first expenditure, to make future municipal expenditures on other roads, and those which have received Government aid will be neglected. While other roads in a township remained unimproved many councils, after once improving a road under the Act, owing to local jealousies, would find it impossible to make a sufficient yearly expenditure to properly maintain it, and under such circumstances the first outlay would not accomplish its chief mission.

County councils, on the other hand, would have charge of these few leading roads only, all of the one class so that the most economical but efficient system of maintenance could be adopted with respect to them.

Under county control a properly organized corps of men can be employed to build and repair the roads. As at other employments, they become experienced and do better work, and in the matter of repairs are ready to make them as soon as signs of wear appear.

In a county plan an experienced and properly qualified man could be employed to have constant supervision of the work, whereas under township control each municipality cannot afford to pay the salary of such a man. Under every good system it is necessary to have responsibility centralized and defined, not divided and easily shifted from one to another as it now is under statute labor methods.

Under county control, modern machinery, too expensive for individual townships can be purchased and handled to advantage, an experienced operator can be employed for each implement, and a better and more uniform class of work will be secured.

A greater cost to the individual citizen need not be feared, as no greater road mileage is to be maintained. The effect of a county system is merely to group the most heavily travelled roads under one management, where they can be most economically maintained.

By a county plan, uniformity of work and system will be immediately secured throughout the various municipalities. Under township control it is by no means likely that the various townships would act in unison, at best there must be delay while here and there a township will not take advantage of the Act.

One chief object in recommending that certain roads be cared for by the county council, is to obtain from the towns and villages in the county a fair share of assistance in keeping up the leading roads. There can be no question as to the justice of requiring the towns and villages to contribute towards the cost of this work. Towns and villages are benefited by the improvement of roads, and the county should not hesitate to assess them. This can be done through the county council only. It is not the intention that any of the money should be spent in the towns, but that all should be spent in the townships. Where the county has to raise two-thirds of the total amount, such a percentage of this will be contributed by the towns as to make their contribution added to the Government grant, equal to about one-half the cost of the work. Where the townships instead of the county, take advantage of the Act, towns and villages cannot contribute in this way. Under a county system, a portion of the cost of road-building is levied in the county rate, against the towns and villages within the municipality for road purposes. At the present time, under township systems, the farmers bear the entire cost.

While there may be some feeling adverse to townships parting with the control of any of their roads, it is, nevertheless, impossible, under a township organization, in the case of heavily travelled roads, or levy the necessary taxation equitably, or employ the most economical and at the same time serviceable system. The trend of opinion has turned towards collecting the most important roads of