

# THE JOURNAL OF COMMERCE

With which is incorporated

## The Shareholder

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#### THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF GOOD ROADS.

The recent farmers deputation to Ottawa to urge upon the Government the necessity of doing something to aid in the construction of rural roads and in the building of hydro-electric lines is an event of more than passing interest. For a generation or more, we have been accustomed in Canada to seeing railroad magnates going to the Government and receiving therefrom generous aid. Not only has the Federal Government treated railroads in a generous way, but the Provinces and various municipalities have contributed extensively towards the cost of their construction. The total amount paid out to date by Federal and Provincial governments and by municipalities in cash, land grants, bond guarantees, etc., amounts to \$696,142,199; a large sum for a country with a population of less than eight millions.

We have no fault to find in the main with Canada's generous treatment of her railroads. The building of these lines was necessary to the opening up of our great country. The time has come, however, when a more generous treatment should be afforded to the builders of rural highways. All up and down the country, not only in Canada, but in the United States, there is a growing agitation in favor of great

trunk highways which will act as feeders to the railroads and provide an easy means of communication between the farmer and the consumer in the city. With our present style of roads, the cost of bringing farm produce to the railway station is almost prohibitive and adds very materially to the cost of commodities. It has been proven in scores of cases that good roads improve the value of the farms adjacent to them and make for a greater degree of comfort and happiness.

One of the biggest questions confronting the people of Canada has to do with rural depopulation. Despite the fact that Canada is popularly regarded as an agricultural country, there has been a steady decrease in the number of rural inhabitants, especially in Eastern Canada, while there is a corresponding increase in the urban population. Any measure which would tend to make life on the farm more enjoyable or more remunerative should be assisted in every possible way. Undoubtedly, the establishment of rural mail delivery, parcels post and rural 'phones have all contributed to the attractiveness of farm life, but more will probably be accomplished through the establishment of good roads than by any other means. In the United States, the Federal