

Editorial

OTTAWA AND GOOD ROADS.

Federal aid is urgently needed in the building of good roads in Canada. It is appropriate, therefore, that the fourth annual meeting of the Canadian and International Good Roads Congress be held in Ottawa next week.

Not since Confederation has the Dominion of Canada contributed to the construction or maintenance of the King's highway. A bill allowing \$30,000,000 for federal aid was defeated by the senate a couple of years ago on account of the senators not being able to agree as to how the money was to be appropriated. A new bill should be brought down for this amount, or even more, to be granted to the provinces *pro rata* according to population. Both the sentimental and practical value of roads, not only in peace but also in war, have been established beyond dispute. The good roads of France saved Paris.

Looking at the matter strictly from a business standpoint, it is easy to demonstrate that the expenditure of \$30,000,000, or many times that amount, on good roads by the federal government would be a mighty good investment. Experience in the United States, and also upon a smaller scale in Ontario and Quebec, shows that production increases and farm properties improve in value with the construction of good roads. A few statistics taken from the last census (1911) will show just what these increases in value would mean to Canada. There were then about 703,000 farms in this country valued at approximately $4\frac{1}{4}$ billion dollars. An increase of fifty per cent. in this value—an increase attainable by an adequate system of good roads—would mean that the wealth of the nation would be enhanced by over two billion dollars.

Besides the increases in regard to improved land there is also to be considered the influence of good roads upon the farming of unimproved land. At the time of the last census the unimproved farm land in Canada was worth about \$13.50 an acre compared with \$51 an acre for improved land, a difference in value of \$37.50 an acre. There are about 61,240,000 acres of such land in the farms of Canada. The building of good roads which would allow for the marketing of sufficient products to make it profitable to cultivate this land, would mean the addition of another $2\frac{1}{4}$ billion dollars to the wealth of our country.

These figures deal merely with direct additions to the nation's wealth caused by increases in value of farm property, and, stupendous as they are, amounting to $6\frac{1}{2}$ billion dollars, they are no more important than the other benefits derived from good roads, such as the large increase in manufactured products which would result from greater facility in marketing same among the agricultural population, the improvement in the affairs of schools and churches, the greater health and pleasure of the entire community, the advertising which Canada would get among tourists from United States and other countries, and the advertising which the various sections of the Dominion would get among the tourists from the other sections.

Neither does it take into account the considerable improvement which would be made in our railway freight statistics, and in immigration. One of the causes of the present railway situation in Canada is the lack of sufficient good roads as feeders to the railways. In preparing for

after-the-war problems and for attracting a fair share of American immigration, what stronger factor could there be in inducing these new people to settle on the land instead of congregating in cities, than for the Dominion Government to help in providing an adequate system of roads which would enable them to get onto the land, to market their products, and to be willing to remain in farm life contentedly, owing to easy access to towns and cities whenever desired?

ONTARIO AND QUEBEC ROADS.

Besides the question of federal aid, there is another reason why Ottawa is the ideal city in which to hold the Canadian good roads congress this year. On the borderland of both Ontario and Quebec, forming a federal district which virtually and practically is not distinctly a part of either province but a link between them both, Ottawa is an ideal place for a congress which will exemplify work that has been done by Ontario and Quebec in the good roads movement. These two provinces have been the leaders in the movement in this country.

This is the tenth anniversary of the passing of the law which marked a new era in road building in Quebec. This law has since been amended and during the last five years far greater sums have been spent by that province than were spent in the initial half of the past decade. The first time the million-dollar mark was reached in Quebec Province road expenditures was the year 1912-13. This increased to over four million dollars the following year, and to over six million in 1914-15.

The laws relating to highways date from the founding of the French colony in Canada. Under the French regime the highways were all under the control of the Grand Voyer. After the fall of the gallant Montcalm the highways were practically neglected until 1840. Thirty years later municipalities were given sole control of the roads, and while this control has continued during the last ten years, assistance to these municipalities—even to townships and parishes—and the creation of an able provincial roads department to co-operate in the work, have helped the municipalities in building and maintaining good roads.

During the past decade over 2,000 miles of macadam and gravel roads have been constructed or improved in Quebec. The King Edward Highway, the Sherbrooke-Derby Road, the Montreal-Quebec Road, the Chambly Road and the Levis-Jackman Road have been built. Several other roads are proposed, including Montreal to Hull, Three Rivers to Grand-Mere, Levis to Nicolet, and Nicolet to Rimouski.

While Ontario as a province has been behind Quebec in road development, it has been a close second, and if total expenditures on all pavements, both streets and roads,—by all parties, both provincial and municipal,—are considered, Ontario probably leads, as over ten million dollars a year has been expended for many years past for streets and roads in Ontario.

For several years approximately a half million dollars per annum has been spent on trunk roads in New Ontario, and another half million dollars on colonization roads. During the last calendar year about \$300,000 was expended