

THE MUNICIPAL WORLD.

The Township System

Not an increased expenditure on the roads, but better methods of applying the present outlay is the great object to be attained by the good roads movement in Ontario. The townships of this Province are, as a rule, dealing very generously with their roads in so far as the amount of money and labor spent on them is concerned. The great difficulty is that this money and labor is not so directed as to secure the greatest and most lasting results. It would appear that the farmers of this country have been so actively engaged in improving their methods of farm work, and in advancing what seem to be their more personal interests, that the importance of making similar progress with regard to road management has been overlooked.

The advantages of methodical and systematic management are becoming more and more recognized in all departments of industry, from the most simple and common place, to the most complex and comprehensive. In none is it more noticeable than in farming, and in the sowing and rotation of crops, the handling of stock, the use of machinery, every farmer can, from his own experience, find instances of new and better method and system. Between good management and bad, between suitable methods and unsuitable, between system and the absence of system, there is all the difference between the successful and the unsuccessful farmer. Good management and bad management, good roads and bad roads, stand on precisely the same footing.

While in a number of instances, and with excellent effect, county councils take charge of the main highways, yet the great body of roads must still remain under the exclusive control of township councils, and the township methods with respect to road improvement, are therefore in the highest degree important. In the township system the general rule has been, for many years, that the roads are maintained by statute labor, together with money grants made annually by the council. The roads of each township are divided into beats or divisions, and a pathmaster is appointed to each. The average length of road divisions varies in different townships, but is commonly one or two blocks in length, thus ranging from about one and a quarter to three miles. The number of pathmasters thus varies in accordance with the size of the township and the length of road beats, there being ordinarily from 50 to 150 in each township. A pathmaster is appointed for one year only, and rarely does he hold office for two years in succession. It is considered that by appointing a different man from year to year, it enables each to make such improvement as he thinks desirable in front of his own farm.

Early in the year, after his appointment, each pathmaster receives from the

township clerk, a list of those required to do work in his division, with the number of days each should perform. This number of days is fixed by the Assessment Act, according to the assessed value of property, but each township council has the privilege of adopting a schedule of its own. This many have done, and in place of using the assessed value as a basis for levying the statute labor, some determine it according to acreage.

After receiving the statute labor roll for his division, the pathmaster "calls out" for a certain day or days those on his list. Each man appears with such implements as he wishes to use. If he brings a team of horses, this with a driver, is estimated as the equivalent of two days. Under the direction of the pathmaster, who is not himself required to work, the labor is performed.

The statute labor system, as thus outlined, was in keeping with the spirit of pioneer days, when the need for roads was urgently felt, when the work consisted of cutting down trees, clearing the road allowance of logs and stumps, of corduroying swamps, and throwing up a dirt grade. For such conditions, and for such improvement, statute labor was admirably adapted, and did a vast amount of good.

To day, circumstances are very different. The need of roads is not so keenly felt as in the time of early settlement, and there is not the same incentive for hard and careful work. Men work on the roads very much as they work on their farms. Some are shiftless, some lazy, some stupid, some careless, and so the list might be carried on. Each works, plans the work, or oversees it according to his own ideas. The statute labor system in this respect, is not so much a system as entire absence of system.

Township roads, however, are not kept up by statute labor alone. The rate payers of many townships who know only of the grants for small repairs, scattered here and there over the township, do not realize how much money is, in the aggregate, spent on their roads in the course of a year. The amount is in no sense objectionable, and if the money were applied to the best advantage there are few townships which could not spend even more than they are now doing on road improvement.

The difficulty arises from the fact that this money is spent on the statute labor basis. The making of money appropriations was commenced many years ago, with a view to supplementing statute labor. They were then very small amounts, but with the growth of the Province, this practice has increased, until in many instances, the total money appropriation exceeds the statute labor for the year valued at one dollar a day. Thus the money spent has constantly increased until it is of greater consequence than the statute labor, but the latter is permitted to govern the expenditure of the former. It has become a case of "the tail wagging the dog."

Ottawa Good Roads Convention.

The good roads convention held at Ottawa on March 12th and 13th, as with the two previous annual conventions of the Eastern Ontario Good Roads Association, was a pronounced success in bringing together experienced and enthusiastic municipal men, each with a fund of practical information brought out in interesting addresses and discussions. The different sessions were presided over by Ex-warden Cummings, of Carleton county. Mr. F. E. Caldwell, of Manitowick, was one of the first speakers, and in detail related the experience of Gloucester township, where statute labor has been commuted during the past two seasons, and the work done under five road commissioners. The result has been a saving of money under the new system, while the roads are 75% better.

Mr. D. R. Reid, of Hamilton, addressed the convention with reference to the new county road system of Wentworth, and the abolition of toll roads in that county. Mr. W. H. Kerr, warden of Huron county, told what is being done in Huron in behalf of better roads. Major Jas. Sheppard, of Queenston, discussed road-making machinery, and W. J. Hill, Ex-M. P. P., of York, dealt with the use of concrete in municipal work. Bridge construction was dealt with by County Councillor MacDonald, of Carleton, and County councillor S. B. Morris, of Elgin. The secretary of the Association, Mr. H. B. Cowan, outlined last year's work of the association, and of the "Good roads train."

It was decided to hold a Dominion good roads convention next March, and every municipality in the Dominion will be asked to send representatives. The following motion was carried unanimously:

"That this convention, realizing the great need for a Dominion division for good roads as a means of instruction and of bringing about a more uniform system of road construction, good road laws, etc., would earnestly recommend the establishment by the Dominion Government of such a division. With the object of showing the necessity of such an appointment, we would further recommend that this association co-operate with the various good road associations in Canada in the holding next year at Ottawa of a Dominion good roads convention. This association endorses the appreciation of the services of Mr. H. B. Cowan in connection with the good roads movement since its inception."

The ratepayers of Midland on March 14th, approved of a by-law authorizing the council to purchase and extend the local electric light plant, \$20,000 to be raised for this purpose. The town is now paying \$1,000 annually for street lighting. A similar by-law was carried two years ago, but was not acted upon.