

FEDERAL AID FOR GOOD ROADS.*

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The present Dominion Government came into power committed to the policy of Federal aid for good roads. On this plank of the Halifax platform we can all stand, no matter what may be our party allegiance. In the past, the Canadian press on both sides of politics has uniformly condemned the old statute labor system. In lieu of this relic of pioneer days, a cash payment system is necessary and Federal aid for good roads will command journalistic support in all quarters and the endorsement of public bodies generally.

Raising Money for Roads.—To build good roads requires money, which must ordinarily be raised by taxation. The tax should be borne by the different sections of the community, as far as possible, according to the benefit received by each. Good roads throughout the country benefit both the producer on the land and the consumer in the city, so a portion of the cost should be levied upon the urban as well as upon the rural municipalities. Moreover, the country highways are used more and more by motor cars from the towns and cities and more expensive roads are required for this traffic. For these reasons urban municipalities should contribute towards the construction and maintenance of the highways in the adjoining rural municipalities. In the Province of Ontario, however, as now organized and administered, there is no tax on city municipalities for country roads. A remedy for this resulting injustice is supplied by Federal aid for good roads. Through it all classes will contribute towards the building of the King's highway. The splendid roads of England, France,



Hon. R. L. Borden.

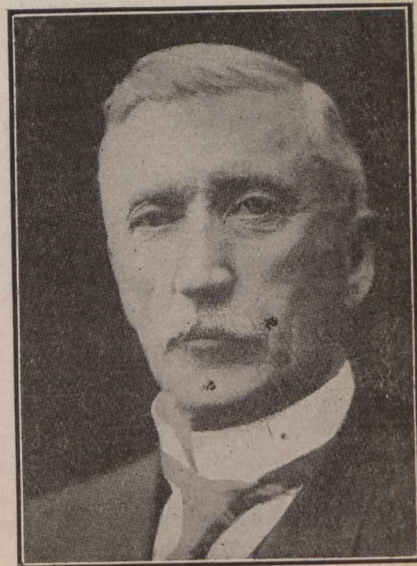
Germany and other European countries are, as a rule, built and maintained by the national governments, under expert supervision. In the United States the Federal Government has for years maintained the Office of Public Roads in connection with the Department of Agriculture. Through this office, expert engineers are supplied free of charge and object lesson roads are built in those counties assuming county road systems. Large sums are voted by different States for building good roads, and the cities, moreover, not being separated from the counties in which they lie, contribute towards the county rates, so that there the farmers do not carry all the burden of maintaining the highways. The city of Buffalo, for instance, has already contributed towards the building of roads in Erie County over a million dollars, and pays besides, its share of the \$50,000,000 voted a few years ago by the State of New York for good roads. For these reasons contributions from the Federal treasury are less necessary in the United States, and yet several bills are now before Congress for this purpose. In Canada, however, no better way can be found to defray the cost of building and maintaining roads than by annual appropriations from the surplus revenue of the Dominion.

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Grants to Provinces.—When the large delegation waited on Premier Borden on February 8th he assured us that the Dominion Government would make substantial grants to the nine provinces for highway improvement. If \$1.00 per annum for every man, woman and child is given for this purpose the total sum to be voted by Parliament would be about \$8,000,000. This amount could hardly be expended to advantage this year as we are not prepared as yet for such extensive operations, probably one half of this amount would be sufficient. However, if one dollar per head of population is considered a reasonable sum, it will be safe to say that \$50,000,000 will be required for good roads within the next six or seven years. To divide this grant fairly between the different provinces should not be a difficult task. Some provinces have greater need of good roads than others. Where agriculture is the chief industry, improved highways are very essential, but where lumbering, mining or the fisheries are principally depended upon, the need is not so great. In the new country, branch lines of railway rather than roads are in great demand. Some of the older provinces have splendid water transportation but require improvements to canals and harbors, the deepening of river channels and other public works. By attention to the peculiar needs of each section Parliament should have no great difficulty in apportioning the good roads grant, those provinces that do not require as much money for improved highway transportation being compensated in some other way.

Effect in Ontario.—On the basis of one dollar per head of population, it would be reasonable to expect the sum of \$2,000,000 per annum as our share of Federal aid for Good roads in Ontario. Half of this sum might be used to build and maintain a system of provincial highways, one great road to connect Montreal and Windsor, with branches touching all the counties to be added as soon as possible. New Ontario would continue to be developed by colonization roads as at present, but on a more extensive scale.

The county road systems in Ontario should receive the benefit of the balance of the Federal grant, namely, \$1,000,000 per year. The provincial grant of one-third for county road work has been found to be entirely too little in the past. Federal aid will enable county roads to be built on a just basis in the future, with the burden shifted from the farmers' backs. In Massachusetts the State Highway Commission builds the roads and the county repays 25 per cent. of the cost. This generous treatment of the farmers, it should be remembered, is given by the State without Federal aid. Surely with Federal aid a certainty, we can better afford to be just to the rural municipalities in Ontario.



Hon. Frank Cochrane.

County Roads in Ontario.—A fair division of the cost of county roads in future would be: One-half payable by Do-