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Stopping of Public Works

Our contemporary the Municipal Journal of New York has since the United States entered the war been urging the "carry on" of public works, and we are heartily in accord with the propaganda. Even Canadian municipalities with their comparative limited borrowing powers would have been wiser had they have carried on their public works, at least to the extent of keeping those already built in thorough repair. . . There is no doubt that many of our municipal and provincial authorities were scared into stopping all public works, even when necessary, with the result that many, particularly roads and streets, have deteriorated to an extent almost beyond repair. There are a few exceptions, of course, and one in particular is worth nothing because of the impetus given to trade by discarding the croakers' advice. We refer to the policy of the Quebec government who not only did not stop their great new road campaign started two years previous to the war which meant an outlay of over fifteen million dollars, but this last year secured an additional grant of another million dollars from the provincial legislature for the same purpose, as well as additional sums to keep the roads in repair. Already this great expenditure is getting returns for the province in the great army of American tourists whose money is very welcome to the hotels and trades-people. Surely such a spending of public money even in war times might be termed a wise investment.

One of the arguments used against the carrying on of any public work at this time—especially provincial or municipal—is that it is unpatriotic, that every dollar that can be raised should be used for

direct war purposes. This argument would be unanswerable if Canada was limited in her resources to the extent that other belligerent countries are, but she is almost unlimited in her resources. They only want developing and Canada will have to develop them more to meet her war bills. Now public works are just as necessary to the development of these resources as well paved streets are necessary to the shopping centre of a city, and the first step in the successful development of our vast resources to-day is the proper provision of all that makes for decent living, in the form of waterworks, efficient drainage and good roads, etc. Otherwise, the necessary human material will be a negligible quantity. If instead of loans to raise war funds the Minister of Finance had have levied taxes the necessity of carrying on of public works should have been very patent. That necessity is still with us for taxes will have to be levied sooner or later—war loans don't pay themselves—and to meet these taxes every ounce of human energy must be used, and the better the condition of that energy the better position the people will be in to meet the taxes.

Another argument used against public works at this time is the high cost of labor and material, but even this should not stop the carrying on of those improvements necessary to the health of the people.

In the United States they are in a much better position financially to carry on their public works. They have for three years been piling up the wealth of the country and it would be suicidal to stop their economic machinery now, and that economic machinery means public works as well as private industries.