

THE GREATEST BUSINESS ENTERPRISE OF ALL AGES

LESTER T. SUNDERLAND.

No factor in human experience, save labor, affects the comfort, happiness, and prosperity of a people to such a degree as transportation, and the greatest factor in the transportation of the future is contained in the modern development and improvement of the countless railless highways of commerce.

This undertaking involves the investment of the people's money in such large sums that it staggers the most vivid imagination. The investments of the railroads, in their palmiest days of expansion, shrink to paltry sums in comparison with the appropriations already made for highway improvement by many of our states and the Federal Government.

Not only has real activity in this great enterprise hardly begun, but it may be truly said the people generally have little conception of either its magnitude or import, and are not sufficiently informed of its potentialities to give it such intelligent consideration as would be imperative to the success of any large undertaking; and if the disastrous consequences of incompetence and mismanagement are to be prevented the people must be awakened to the danger.

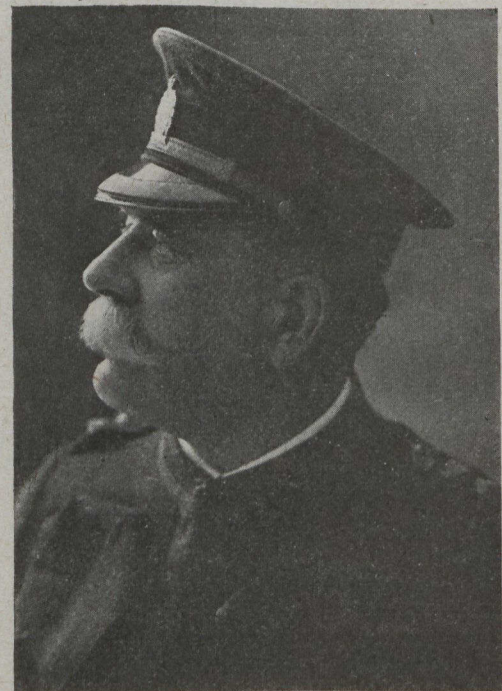
Can one conceive of the vast sum of five billion (\$5,000,000,000) dollars being spent for public highways alone? Yet approximately that sum is to be spent in the United States and Canada during the next ten years in railless-highway development; more than one-fifth of that amount has already been appropriated.

Now, the question is: How is this fabulous sum to be spent? By whom, and for what? Obviously, the greatest business enterprise in the world's history cannot be successfully carried on by novices or the driftwood of society's economic failures. It requires the best character, engineering skill, and ability extant to solve the problems involved, and only such should be employed.

In the world's market for brains, trained ability, and experience, the bids should be for the best that money will attract, to carry on this colossal work; otherwise true progress will be impeded while the people's money is being worse than wasted. Highway-Improvement activities should be divorced from politics; the best men available should be selected, and retained permanently or as long as they render good service; and they should be given authority to build the types of highway best suited to the traffic needs, and held accountable for so doing. What business undertaking could succeed if the management were periodically changed? How important it is that the development of the great modern highways shall not be characterized by the waste and corruption often incident to political changes and interference. The great Lincoln's advice, "It is no time to swap horses when you are crossing the stream," is as pertinent here as in the circumstances under which it was given.

There are many types of hard-surfaced highways, but the test of long experience under the most severe traffic conditions should decide the choice. That type which, under modern truck and automobile traffic, over a stretch of fifteen or twenty years, will afford—whether wet or dry, hot or cold—an even, hard, safe, dependable, all-the-year-round road, for the lowest ultimate total cost (namely, first cost plus maintenance) is the type that will always be chosen by the best-informed and most conscientious engineers, where funds are available to build them, since the best, whatever the first cost, is cheapest in the end. Such are the great modern improved white highways of Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Connecticut, New York, California, in the United States, and the Toronto-Hamilton Highway in Canada, which are not only of national renown and attract millions to ride over them, but in their consummation have created and built into the communities they traverse untold millions of wealth, compared with which their cost has been as nothing and in their processes of development the eminent and nationally-known highway experts of those states are building monuments of such enduring character and permanent usefulness to society that their names will go down in highway history as among the greatest benefactors of the commonwealths which their abilities and expert knowledge have served.

The permanence and utility of a road should be built into it at the outset, both of which can be attained by the adoption of suitable type and design, and honest construction under proper supervision.



CHIEF OF POLICE BELANGER
of Montreal.

1st Vice-President of Chief Constables' Association.