

distinct policy of the department to extend the service and keep pace with the demand for it (which is constantly increasing,) we may look forward to the time when all sections of the country in which this service may be feasibly maintained will be covered by a network of rural routes.

Wherever there is a systematic extension of the service throughout a whole county it is found that fully nine-tenths of the public highways are covered by rural free delivery. If, therefore, reliable statistics were at hand showing the total number of miles of public roads in rural districts of the United States, an interesting estimate might be made showing the total number of miles of the United States that will eventually be covered by rural free delivery service, and consequently become good roads. All, I think, will agree that the rural free delivery is proving a potent factor in the construction of good highways and proper maintenance. It is obvious, too, that the people, by insisting upon a universal extension of the service, have in their hands the most effective means possible for bringing about the general improvement of nine-tenths of the public highways of this country. This has been the object for which good roads commissions and other kindred organizations have been working for years, and a propaganda is still being vigorously carried forward not only by these organizations, but by the government itself, through the efficient management of the office of Public Roads Inquiries of the Department of Agriculture.

While it is true that the good roads movement has received a great impetus, and made rapid strides during the past few years, on account of the very efficient support it has received from the Department of Agriculture through the publication of literature on road building, securing the construction of object lesson roads, etc., I think all will concede that the Post Office Department is not overstepping the bounds of modesty when it claims that the solution of the whole question lies largely in the rapid and systematic extension of the rural free delivery service.

#### County Roads.

In seeking to take advantage of the million dollar grant the preliminary step taken by county councils has been to hold a conference of all municipal councillors, or representatives of councils, within the county. At these conferences, the majority of which have been attended by the Commissioner of Highways, the meaning and intention of the Act has been discussed, and to some extent a plan of roads considered.

It then rests with the county council to pass a by-law definitely laying down a system of county roads. A copy of this is sent to each township council within the county, and they have three months in which to consider the by-law. Each council will, within the three months,

report to the county council their acceptance of the plan, their rejection of it as a whole, or such alterations in the system of roads as would meet their approval. If a township wishes roads taken other than those proposed by the county, in case of failure to agree, the matter will be submitted to arbitration. If more than a third of the municipalities oppose the by-law as a whole, the question must be submitted to a vote of the people. If the by-law meets the acceptance of the municipal councils, or two-thirds of them, the county council may, at the end of three months, proceed to perfect their plans for the improvement of the roads.

The aim of the Act is not so much to oblige the building of an expensive system of complete roads as it is to secure uniform and systematic work, employ and properly operate modern and economical implements, and provide careful, constant and methodical supervision in maintenance; to provide object lessons in the care and treatment of roads, and set examples for those having charge of the remainder.

The Act as it stands has the alternative plan, whereby townships may individually carry on the work, but it is urged that the best results can be accomplished by a county council, they would have charge of these particular roads only, would have sufficient work for, and would naturally employ a competent man to supervise and care for them.

Whereas, under township control, the township council having charge of all the other roads in the township, as well as these special roads, will be influenced, after the first expenditure, to make future municipal expenditures on other roads, and those which have received government aid will be neglected. While other roads in a township remained unimproved, many councils, after once improving a road under this Act, owing to local jealousies, would find it impossible to make a sufficient yearly expenditure to properly maintain it, and, under such circumstances, the first outlay would be little better than wasted. There are other reasons, familiar to most experienced councillors, why the principal roads, those subjected to extremely heavy travel, can be better and more economically maintained by the one larger body in the county, rather than by the half dozen separate townships working independently of one another.

It cannot be doubted that the county councils, constituted as they are now, will take a deep and intelligent interest in this work and will strive to create such a distinction between their roads and those under township management as to stimulate a friendly rivalry which must naturally do much in the interest of improved highways and economical management.

One chief object in recommending that certain roads be cared for by the county council is to obtain from the towns and villages in the county a fair share of assist-

ance in keeping up the leading roads. There can be no question as to the justice of requiring the towns and villages to contribute towards the cost of this work. Towns and villages are benefited by the improvement of roads, and the county should not hesitate to assess them. This can be done through the county council only. It is not the intention that any of the money should be spent in the towns, but that all should be spent in the townships. Where the county has to raise two-thirds of the total amount, such a percentage of this will be contributed by the towns as to make their contribution, added to the government grant, equal to one-half the cost of the work. Where the townships instead of the county take advantage of the Act, towns and villages cannot contribute in this way. Under a county system a portion of road building is levied, in the county rate, against the towns and villages within the municipality for road purposes. At the present time, under township system, farmers bear the entire cost.

All the expenditure placed on roads would be spent in the county, and thus returned in a great measure, to those who contributed it in the first place, together with the provincial grant.

Under county control a properly organized corps of men can be employed to build and repair the roads. As at other employments, they become experienced and do better work, and in the matter of repairs are ready to make them as soon as signs of wear appear.

By a county plan, uniformity of work and system will be secured throughout the various municipalities. Under township control, a diversity of plans is certain to be adopted.

In a county plan, an experienced and properly qualified man could be employed to have constant supervision of the work, whereas, under township control, each municipality cannot afford to pay the salary of such a man. Under every good system it is necessary to have responsibility centralized and defined, not divided and easily shifted from one to another, as it now is under the statute labor system.

Under county control modern machinery, too expensive for individual townships, can be purchased and handled to advantage. An experienced operator can be employed for each implement, and a better and more uniform class of work will be secured.

A township can manage its roads properly only by adopting a plan similar to that outlined under a county system, but by extending it over a county it becomes more cheaply operated.

It is urged that while there may be some feeling adverse to townships parting with the control of any of their roads, it is nevertheless impossible, under a township organization, in the case of heavily travelled roads, to levy the necessary taxation equitably, or employ the most economical and at the same time serviceable system. The trend of opinion