

## DISCUSSION OF PROVINCIAL ROAD POLICIES IN WESTERN CANADA\*

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**R**OAD construction in Western Canada is a problem in which, until recently, the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, as a body, took very little interest. Nearly all forward movements have been due to outside bodies, while the engineer generally follows. In the meeting held at Saskatoon, the problem was given a prominent place and the interest displayed by those present shows that the members of the Institute were alive to the importance of road development and that the Institute would in future be a leader rather than a follower in this matter.

The papers read at the Saskatoon meeting present an opportunity to compare the different lines which road development has taken in the three western provinces, where one would think that the problems would be quite similar.

### General Provincial Policies

In Alberta, under the Public Highways Act, assented to on April 13th, 1918, the Minister of Public Works is required to place all highways in one of three classes: (a) Main highways; (b) district highways; (c) local highways. Main highways are denoted by the minister after consultation with every municipal authority through whose area the highway runs. District highways are denoted by the minister after agreement made with and ratified by by-law of every municipality through whose area the highway runs.

On main highways 75 per cent. of the cost of construction is borne by the department and 25 per cent. by the municipalities. The cost of maintenance is borne by the department, which also has full charge of the construction. On district highways, the department bears only 25 per cent. of the cost of construction and the local authorities maintain the road. On local highways the local authorities pay for construction and maintenance.

In Saskatchewan, a system of main highways was drawn up on paper and the cost of construction of those built was borne by the government on other roads, and the cost of construction was borne equally by the municipality and government. Saskatchewan has now under consultation the preparation of an act along lines somewhat similar to the Manitoba act. In Manitoba, roads on which the government give assistance under the Good Roads Act are divided into two classes, provincial highways and main market roads. Provincial highways are selected by the Good Roads Board and confirmed by order-in-council. The government pays two-thirds of the cost. Main market roads are selected by the municipality and approved by the Good Roads Board. Main market roads are divided into two classes, gravel or other surfaced roads (on which the government pays one-half the cost), and earth roads (on which the government pays one-third the cost).

Under "Aid to Municipalities," the government also makes direct grants to municipalities for road work.

### Organization

The Alberta Act makes no provision for organization for the carrying out of the act, nor was this organization mentioned in the papers from that province. In Saskatchewan, up to 1917, the main roads were constructed

by a government construction organization working directly under the control of the department. Other roads on which the government pays a portion of the cost are carried out by the municipal organizations. I should imagine that very little, if any, of the work has been done by contract. In Manitoba the engineer is given a more prominent part than in the other provinces. A staff of engineers is provided for by the act and all work must be done under the direction of, and to the satisfaction of, the engineer. All works must be done by contract unless a special arrangement is made between the Good Roads Board and the municipality.

The three provinces agree in that the great majority of roads will for some time be earth roads and that the most of the energy should be concentrated in a study of the proper method of their construction.

The great waste incurred through methods used in municipal road construction by municipal authorities was strongly emphasized and the need for proper engineering supervision was strongly brought out. More than one member emphasized the need and duty of the institute to take up the question of road construction and lead the way, not only in actual construction but in general road policies. A committee of three was appointed to make a study of road specifications and road policies and to report to the next western professional meeting.

### PORT OF ST. JOHN WILL DEVELOP, SAYS INSTITUTE SECRETARY

**O**N his way back to Montreal from Halifax, N.S., where he attended the general professional meeting of the Engineering Institute of Canada, Fraser S. Keith, secretary of the Institute, gave an interview to the St. John newspapers in which he emphasized the importance of that port and its prospects for development. "Canada," said Mr. Keith, "is regarded by the Engineering Institute as comprising four great divisions for technical consideration, the respective centres of which are St. John, Halifax, Montreal and Vancouver. These four cities are certain to be the big commercial centres of Canada. Of these, St. John has the advantage over Montreal of being an all-year-round port and for this reason should participate to a marked degree in the greatest industrial development the world has ever seen in the after-the-war period.

"There is a real harbor here," said Mr. Keith, "and the Federal government has approved of a greater contemplated expenditure for St. John than it has for any other city in Canada. I have travelled east from the Pacific Coast, and despite only a brief and hurried observation of conditions here, I am convinced that St. John is enjoying an excellent period of activity and is certain to develop to a remarkable degree among the leading cities of the Dominion during and especially after the war.

"The Engineering Institute of Canada is going after legislation in New Brunswick, as elsewhere, through the University of New Brunswick and other universities, in order to protect the public from reckless expenditure due to unskilled engineers, and will endeavor in every way to bring the public to realize the importance of the engineering profession as represented by the responsible and thoroughly competent engineers who aim and who are working with might and main through the Institute to raise the engineering standard, to get for Canada in the most efficient, quickest, most reasonable and most economical manner, development and results proportionate to the

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