

THE FARMER AND THE GOOD ROADS QUESTION

At a convention of the American Interstate Good Roads Association, W. H. Moore, in discussing road problems, said in part:

A road is defined as "a public thoroughfare, or that on which one rides or travels; a road or avenue cut in a wood or through grounds to be used as a place of travel." The word is generally applied to highways, and as a generic term it includes highway, street and lane. It has been estimated that 99 per cent. of every load hauled by railroad, steamboat or express must be carried in a wagon or a truck over a highway. We need no more convincing proof than this to indicate that cities, manufacturers, corporations and laborers are interested with the farmer in the great problem of rapid and economic road improvement.

The advent of horseless carriages and other mechanical improvements will have a tendency to change the modes of farm life as greatly as electric cars have changed the conditions of modern city life. Laboring classes are no longer compelled to live in the congested districts of cities, but can go twenty miles into the country for five cents, buy a comfortable home from the savings that formerly went for excessive rents, enjoy pure air, and cultivate the growth of vegetables, fruits and flowers. In the future thousands of farmers will live in the suburbs of cities, enjoy educational advantages, breakfast at home, do a day's work on the farm forty miles away and return at night to enjoy supper with the contented family.

The common roads of a country are not only necessary to its development but their condition is a measure of its civilization. The highest type of mental and moral culture and development cannot be attained without the means of easy and rapid communication between all parts and sections of the country. The railway and telegraph lines are the greatest modern civilizers of the world; but they are limited in their sphere of usefulness, because they do not reach the farm, the home, the country schoolhouse, and the church. The rural highway is the connecting link between these, and without it the progress of a widespread civilization must be greatly retarded. They are the foundation stones upon which the superstructure of society is erected and upon which its symmetry, beauty and stability must rest.

It has been stated by eminent writers that railway and telegraph lines, with the wonderful commercial enterprises they make possible, are in the end detrimental to a country that has no proportionately adequate system of common highways, because of their tendency to congest the population by drawing the intelligent and ambitious portion of the country youths to the cities and centers of commercial enterprises, until the avenues of that class of labor are overcrowded, the wages of labor decreased by undue and unnatural competition, and the surplus set adrift without the means of a livelihood, to become beggars or criminals, instead of delving in the soil from which the primary wealth of the world is secured, and in which vocation there has never yet been a surplus of labor. Then, too, it is the youthful, intelligent, rugged, and ambitious who are thus being coaxed from the farm, whose society is needed to stimulate the sluggish, who are always content to see the world's great cavalcade go by while they remain in slothful isolation. If these conditions continue there is danger of a barrier being built up between the different classes of our people that will destroy that sympathy, intelligence and co-operation that is so necessary in our mutually dependent condition.

Neighborhoods, counties and states, separated from each other by the barriers of practically impassable roads, in their loneliness degenerate into a condition of moral stagnation from which it is difficult to arouse them to a common and mutual interest and understanding. Professor Shaler, of Harvard, says: "It is doubtful, indeed, whether a sound democracy, depending as it does upon close and constant interaction of the social life, can well be maintained in a country where the roadways put a heavy tax on human intercourse."

These words are prophetic and worthy the consideration. We must not stifle our civilization through commercial blindness and neglect.

There is a phase of the question of improving our common roads that has not yet been given much public agitation, and which from a moral and social standpoint affects our rural population as much as any other phase of this important problem. It affects them in scarcely a less degree from a financial standpoint. This is the necessity of better highways in the country districts as a means of securing rural free delivery of mails. What greater benefit could accrue to a farmer living a number of miles from a town or post office than to have his mail delivered daily at his door? How much of the monotony of his isolation would be removed if he could receive his daily paper, read the news of the outside world, watch the markets for his products, and be able to take advantage of prices that are often lost to him, and see his children happy and contented instead of restless and dissatisfied, or else growing up in the stolid indifference that is the outgrowth of mental lethargy and ignorance.

But let the rural population not fail to observe that the statement is made that "the construction of good roads has been a prerequisite to the establishment of the rural free delivery service," and it will be continued as a pre-requisite in the future. It is an old adage that "The Lord helps those that help themselves," and the government seems to think it a rule worthy of emulation. This great boon of rural free mail delivery with all of its conveniences and educational and moral influences, will be denied those communities that lack the energy and spirit of progress to pave the way for it by paving the ways over which the mail must be carried to their homes.

DRY FARMING CONGRESS

Secretary John T. Burns announces that the fifth annual session of the Dry Farming Congress will be held at Spokane, Wash., October 3, 4, 5 and 6 next. The objects of the congress are outlined as follows:

For the purpose of discussing technical and commonly utilized methods of improving agricultural operations in the districts where geographical and topographical location makes special methods necessary to insure increased yield.

To exchange reports of the actual results obtained under various methods employed to conserve moisture and master the soil and seed problems confronting farmers in regions of slight or irregular rainfall.

To discuss plans for the rapid enlargement of the dry land farming educational propaganda through channels of legitimate publicity, and the study of the subject in the primary or intermediate schools in agricultural districts.

A free and open discussion of proposed or already-existing legislation favorable to the further development of the dry lands of the world, and legislation looking to increased appropriations from state and federal governments for establishing an adequate number of demonstration farms and experiment stations; the employment of a sufficient number of field or station experts to carry on experimental work and the publication of official reports of this field work in a form designed to keep actual farmers continually posted as to the progress made in official demonstrations.

For assembling the world's expert agriculturists to discuss and establish more thoroughly the methods by which the now-unoccupied acreage may be made to produce profit-bearing commercial crops by the use of thorough tillage, adaptation of crop to soil and climate, etc.

For conducting an "Open Forum" for farmers to bring before the congress their experiences and problems in dry land farming.

For the completion of plans for a great world co-operative movement by which nations and states may join in this remarkable agricultural uplift.

American farmers are again crying for help. Wages are high, but they are said to be freely offered and promptly paid.

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