

Editorial

PAYMENT FOR GOOD ROADS.

Under the above title an Ottawa daily newspaper editorially calls attention to the fact that equitable taxation must precede any great expansion of the good roads movement. This is an important point and the Ottawa paper has not laid any too great stress upon the necessity of equitable method of collecting the payment for good roads.

Col. Sohier, the chairman of the Massachusetts State Highway Commission, who attended the Good Roads Congress this month in Ottawa, assured *The Canadian Engineer* that equitable taxation and uniform assessment are vital to the good roads movement if injustice is to be avoided. In Col. Sohier's state, legislation is now being passed which tends to adjust matters of this kind and which will give state aid for maintenance of town roads to the amount of \$3 per annum per thousand dollars of valuation on the road. This amount, we understand, applies only to towns of less than \$500,000 total assessed value.

The necessity of some such aid for maintenance is shown in the fact that the valuation of property on Massachusetts roads varies from \$20,000 per mile to \$2,500,000 per mile, the average being about \$200,000 per mile. One mill added to the tax rate for maintenance of roads would give Boston \$2,500 per mile for maintenance, while it would give some other communities only \$20 per mile, and would give the average town throughout Massachusetts only \$200 per mile. State aid to the smaller municipalities is evidently a necessity. The same lines of reasoning would apply even more forcibly to the Canadian provinces, nearly all of which are much larger than Massachusetts yet with smaller populations.

In the construction of state roads in Massachusetts the necessity of state aid was shown by the fact that the roads are often nearly as valuable as the towns through which they pass. Twenty-four miles of the Mohawk Trail in Massachusetts goes through three towns whose total assessed valuation is less than the cost of the "trail" that passes through them.

With the growth of the good roads movement in Canada, and with our many sparsely settled communities, the same situation will arise in this country unless liberal provincial and Dominion aid is extended upon some suitable plan. The first step in the plan is equitable taxation.

A little over three years ago the Ontario provincial government appointed a commission to report on the public roads of Ontario. The commission consisted of C. A. Magrath, chairman, W. A. McLean and A. M. Rankin, M.P.P. In concluding paragraphs of this report the commission says, "The good roads movement begins with the assessment roll * * * The subject of good roads is closely associated with questions of taxation and taxation methods.

"Good roads mean money, and money for public purposes must be furnished by the people in one form or another. * * * An examination was made of recent sales in certain registry offices in the province, and then the assessed values of these properties were obtained from

municipal rolls. It was found that the ratio of assessment to sale figures varied from 6% to 96%.

"The good roads are to lace together all the townships within the various counties; the people are to be taxed for those roads; the amount of taxation will depend upon the assessment; and if the people within those townships are to be fairly and equitably taxed for such purposes, there should be some method of creating uniform assessments."

INDUSTRIAL CENSUS FOR 1917.

Manufacturers throughout Canada, and all those who have to do business with industrial concerns, will derive satisfaction in the announcement just made by Sir George Foster that a comprehensive census of the industries of Canada will be taken for the year 1917 by the Census and Statistics Office. The period of reconstruction which will follow the war will necessitate the fullest possible data with regard to industrial undertakings of all kinds. Sir George is to be congratulated upon initiating the new census at this time. The figures of the census of 1911 have now become quite useless as a basis for any close estimation.

It is stated that the organization within the Census and Statistics Office has been placed upon a better basis, and that more skilled collectors can be placed on this work than are usually used for the enquiries regarding population, agriculture, etc. Sir George announces that in the future the industrial census will always be taken apart from the census of population and agriculture, and in a different year, so as to equalize the flow of work for the census office and also so as to afford the possibility of better organization with regard to the industrial census.

In the official government announcement it is stated that the enquiry will be the most comprehensive of its kind ever undertaken in Canada, and that the government will co-operate with the various provincial departments and with those of the Dominion departments which have technical experience of industrial processes and conditions. It would undoubtedly be of very great assistance to the census office in this connection if the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, with its large and well-organized membership, extending throughout all of Canada and including men who are familiar with every phase of industrial development, could be persuaded to assist the census department officially in connection with the gathering of these statistics.

GOOD ROADS INCREASE ACCIDENTS.

In an address before the Dominion Good Roads Congress at Ottawa this month, R. B. Morley, general manager of the Ontario Safety League, said that men recently assigned to observe the conduct of people approaching and passing over railroad tracks, on important highways, turned in some startling statistics in their report. Of 17,000 drivers of motor cars and other vehicles, 3,300 ran at a reckless speed, and 11,815 seemingly did