

government. By many it is thought that this money rightly belongs to the roads, irrespective of any grants the province may make, being a tax supposedly for injury done, and as such properly returnable to the roads. This seems to be an ever-increasing source of revenue, and should help materially in the betterment of the roads if used for that purpose.

To this should also be added fees that may be collected from motor vehicles doing a freight or passenger business on any of our improved roads. Until very recently the cities have given little or no assistance to the roads outside of their own boundaries. However, it is recognized now by the government and by most cities that giving assistance towards the betterment of the roads lying adjacent to the city, not only facilitates transportation but brings the producer and consumer closer together to their mutual benefit; for this reason, cities should bear a share of the cost of the building and up-keep of those roads. In Ontario we find that nearly all the counties have now joined the good roads system, allowing them to partake of the provincial government grants. When roads are built to a certain standard, this is good so far as it goes, but there still remains a rather heavy burden for the rate-payers when we consider that they have to pay not only their share of county taxes for road purposes but must keep up all township roads as well.

I might mention here that most counties in going into the good roads system map out a program of road-building that requires considerable money. This is generally raised by a bond issue.

In the past, many counties have made the mistake of issuing bonds for too long a period, the roads being worn out before the bonds were retired. In issuing bonds for work of this nature, the maturity of the bonds should fall within the life of the improvement, thus insuring the taxpayer's value for money expended.

In the township roads we find the source of the major portion of rural traffic. They are without a doubt the most neglected part of the whole road system and yet the most important. At the present time the statute labor tax is the only source of revenue for this work unless a grant be made out of the general taxes. The township road system is so extensive that the statute labor tax is totally inadequate in most townships to keep the roads up to a proper standard. It is here that I contend the effects of federal aid would be felt most, for, in assisting with the building and maintenance of the main travelled highway, it would allow the provinces and the counties to give some much-needed aid to the townships' roads. When we stop to consider conditions as they exist to-day and as they are likely to exist after the war in regard to urban and rural population, it goes without saying that after-war conditions will find the cities and towns over-manned and the rural districts under-manned. One of the great problems will be to get the people back to the land, for our national recuperative powers will be largely governed by the manner in which we develop our natural resources.

The British premier, David Lloyd George, said in one of his great speeches, that never again would the farmers' interests be neglected as they had been in the past; so let us try to remember that neglected roads means jeopardizing the farming industry, the most essential industry in our country. While I would not go so far as to say that bad roads have been the cause of the depopulating of rural Ontario, I will say that it is one of the causes, just as I would say that good roads, and the benefits accruing therefrom, will prove to be one of the remedies for the repopulating of the rural districts.

There are some people who believe that where a more or less permanent road is built, thereby increasing the value of the property fronting it or adjacent to it, it should bear a part of the cost of the road. This is a debatable point, many believing that where a road has increased the value of adjoining property and increased the assessment (which in turn meant increased taxes on such property for all purposes), if the municipality as a whole benefit by the increased assessment and taxes, it should assume at least a part of any frontage tax that may be levied.

In conclusion let me say if we could only unite those different interests I have mentioned in a carefully-thought-out scheme for the betterment of our roads as a post-bellum measure, it would not only create a valuable asset to our country,—one that would bear interest in the progress and prosperity that would surely follow,—but it would be one sure way of providing useful employment for those who might need it in the period of readjustment which will no doubt follow after peace has been proclaimed.

WHO SHOULD PAY FOR THE ROADS?*

By W. A. McLean

Deputy Minister of Highways, Ontario

THE problem of paying for the roads is one to which naturally I have given some attention,—perhaps more to that phase of the subject than to any other. There is one thing that we may accept right at the outset, and it is no use blinding ourselves to any other phase or any other complexion of the situation: Roads must be paid for.

Through Spain and the southern countries of Europe, there are remains to-day of the old roads constructed centuries ago under the Roman Empire. The somewhat superstitious peasantry of those countries, having no information and no historical knowledge of how they were made, have the impression that they were a gift of the gods, created by some supernatural power. I am afraid that there are still people who have the idea that roads can be constructed in some such way.

I believe in the efficacy of prayer and I say it solemnly, but I have yet to find the road that has been constructed solely through the medium of prayer. It means work; it means material; and these have to be paid for, and the people of this country will have to pay. Now, there is no use saying that the Dominion government should give to this work, the province should give, some other organization should give. If they give it they must obtain it from the public, from the people, before they can give. There is no tap extending up to Heaven that the commissioners can turn on and expect the ducats to flow from any other source except the people. There is the fact we must face that the people of this country must pay for the roads. The only problem is to distribute that cost in an equitable manner, one which can reach the results without placing any excessive burden on the people.

In order to do that we must remember that road construction is a slow process. We cannot lay out a system to-day and employ an army on it and before the end of the year see a great completed system of highways throughout Canada. The Toronto-Hamilton highway was undertaken with every good purpose, was carried out as

*Address delivered May 8th, 1918, at Canadian Good Roads Congress, as discussion of Mr. Bertram's paper of the same title (see page 438).