

ROADS RULE THE WORLD*

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DURING the war, public works of all kinds have been at a standstill and as a result much needed works have been left over until they have piled up in heaps. This seemed at the time to be a great misfortune, but may now be turned to splendid account. Public works must be speeded up and will thus form one of the greatest factors in tiding over the reconstruction period. The federal and local governments, together with the municipal governments, by co-operating in this work, can do much in the way of providing employment. The work to be done and material supplied will give employment to all classes—laborers, skilled mechanics, farmers, professional men and manufacturers.

There is probably no public work that offers as great advantages along this line as the construction of our public roads. It will give employment to all classes in all parts of the province and allows co-operation of the governments and municipalities in the work, and besides there is no public work as necessary for our progress at the present time. That there has been an awakening to the advantages of better roads is shown by the interest now taken in all road matters. There never has been a time in the history of the country when good roads was such a live question. It is a live issue in the politics of the Dominion and province, the county and township, the city, town and village, and is heard from every platform and from the pulpit and the press.

Active Programme This Year

That there will be an active and progressive programme of road-building this year in all parts of the province seems to be admitted. Even the few who have not vision to see the advantages that will result from a good provincial system, or perhaps have not taken the trouble to investigate, have been able to read the signs of the times and, as they express it, there is to be "an orgy of road-building." If a progressive programme of road-building, every detail of which has been carefully thought out and carefully planned in the most sober and sane manner, can be called "an orgy of road-building," then we are certainly going to have "some orgy,"—an orgy that will do much in repatriating our gallant soldiers from overseas, an orgy that will do much in giving employment to the unemployed during the period of reconstruction.

The Ontario Highways Department has been engaged in devising well-considered road systems and in making surveys, plans and specifications, and those roads will be selected for improvement which are of the greatest economic importance.

Every mile of good road is a benefit to the farmer, increases his opportunity to expand his farming operations, increases the possibility of profit in farming, enables him to reach out to better markets, to distribute his products direct to the consumer in the shortest possible time, and to have the products of the factory delivered at his gate. There is not an industry in the province that does not have to pay tribute to bad roads, nor is there one that is not benefited by good roads.

Classified According to Traffic

Roads must be classified according to traffic, and must be built for the traffic they are to carry. The cost of construction and maintenance is in proportion to the traffic. And the most economical system of roads for a province, a county or a township will be the system that has its roads most intelligently classified and constructs the type of road suitable for the traffic. It is no economy to build a cheap road, suitable only for light traffic, on a road that has to carry heavy traffic; and on the other hand, it would be extravagance to build the more expensive types of roads for light traffic. Ontario's highway organization provides the following classification for her roads:—

(1)—Provincial highways, consisting of a limited number of trunk highways to provide for the heaviest class of through traffic in the province, connecting up our large cities and important terminal points.

(2)—Provincial county roads, consisting of the main through roads on county systems, connecting with adjoining county roads and forming the connecting links with all the counties and towns of the province.

(3)—County roads, consisting of main roads to local markets, that meet the needs of accumulated farm traffic.

(4)—Township roads, consisting of roads for the ordinary local traffic of a township.

(5)—Suburban roads, consisting of the roads of a county system adjacent to a city and being the leading roads radiating therefrom.

Basic Principle of Apportionment

This classification is complete, comprehensive and workable, and covers all the rural roads in the province. The government aids in different degrees the improvement of all classes of roads. The basic principle in arriving at the division of cost between municipalities benefited and the amount of the subsidy or assistance given by the government, for each class of roads, seems to have been that the cost of a road to a municipality should be in proportion to the amount of traffic for which such municipality would be fairly and justly liable.

As an example, take a road such as the Toronto and Hamilton Highway, with an average traffic of say 2,000 and a maximum of 5,000 vehicles a day, carrying inter-city and long distance, together with a comparatively small amount of local traffic. It would manifestly be unfair and unjust to leave the whole burden of this road on the rural taxpayer. The cost, therefore, is divided between the adjoining rural municipalities, the cities of Toronto and Hamilton, and the government. The government's portion, paid from the revenue derived from motor licenses, covers the proportionate share of the traffic for which the general public are liable.

It would seem that this scheme for apportioning the cost has been very carefully thought out and results in a fair and equitable distribution, and I am proud to say is along the lines that have been advanced and advocated by this association. It provides for payment by cities of a fair amount for traffic originating therein and passing over rural roads, and also provides for a fair distribution of the revenue from motor vehicle licenses, over all the roads of the province.

600 Miles of Provincial Highways

An attempt has been made to condemn the construction of trunk roads on the ground that they are built for "speedways for millionaires and pleasure-seekers." I do not think that this statement could have been made after a careful consideration of the facts. These main highways are the most important links in a provincial system of highway transportation. They relieve rural municipalities of the greater part of the upkeep of these roads which up to a few years ago fell entirely upon the rural taxpayer. Roads must be built for the traffic they are to carry, and if the heavy traffic can be concentrated on a few hundred miles of main roads, thousands of miles of ordinary country roads will be relieved of building the more expensive types which would otherwise be necessary. An ordinary gravel road would be destroyed in a few days by the traffic which the Toronto-Hamilton Highway carries.

The provincial highways designated by the government up to the present are less than 600 miles. The rural roads of old Ontario total 55,000 miles. Of this total, 9,200 miles have been assumed by county councils as county roads. A complete system of provincial county roads has not yet been designated by the highways department, but when completed will probably cover not less than 2,500 miles of the county roads.

The three elements of transportation are waterways, railways and highways, and the three must be linked up to

(Concluded on page 326)

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