

THE ATTITUDE OF LEGISLATURES TO THE GOOD ROADS MOVEMENT.*

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THE attitude of the Provincial Legislatures toward the important question of road-building is becoming more favorable as the economic value of good roads in the development of our great Dominion is better realized. The Province of Quebec is to be especially congratulated on the wideawake policy that has been adopted by the Provincial Government and which is being so successfully carried out.

For many years the granting of aid from the Provincial treasuries towards the construction of good roads was of the most meagre character, and it is only in recent years that the various Provincial Governments have passed Good Roads Acts under which the various municipalities can obtain substantial grants toward the carrying out of a definite and well-defined plan of road improvement in the country districts.

Under the present Good Roads Act of the Province of Manitoba the government gives a grant of fifty per cent. of the total cost of construction of all roads of a permanent character, including all bridges, culverts, etc., necessary to place the highway in perfect condition.

For dirt roads the grant is one-third of the cost. No provision is, however, made for after-maintenance, and this, to me, would appear to be a weak spot in the Act, as, unless roads are properly maintained, the money expended in their construction is, to all intents and purposes, wasted, and there should be a provision in the Act compelling municipalities to make some provision for after-maintenance for a period of time equal to that of the bonds which are issued in payment of the construction work, such bonds being guaranteed by the Government.

The present system of road construction throughout the entire Dominion is not one that is conducive to the best results being obtained, as the work is generally carried out by the municipal councils, who, although interested in the construction of good roads, have not the expert knowledge necessary to see that the best results are being obtained from the expenditure of the rate-payers' money. In order to remedy this state of affairs, it has struck me that the system of road-building would be improved by the placing of all the main highways throughout the Dominion under the charge of the Dominion Government, whose engineers should construct the roads, take care of the maintenance, and the cost of the work be borne from the consolidated revenues of the Dominion.

The second class main roads should come under the control of the Provincial Governments, who would be responsible for their construction and maintenance, and the cost covered from the consolidated revenues of the Province, or in a similar manner to that provided for under Section 20 of the Road Laws of the Province of Quebec, by which the Government may construct or reconstruct roads connecting central points of importance and levy the cost on a mileage basis on municipalities benefited. This, it will be noted, provides the entering wedge for a system of Provincial Roads.

The third class of road would come under the heading of Municipal Roads, and would consist of the local market roads and feeders forming the connecting links

between the main highways. The cost of such municipal roads would come under the present system of construction and maintenance by local taxation.

The encouragement of Split Log Drag competitions throughout the Province will also be found of the greatest benefit to the good roads movement. In the Province of Manitoba a Split Log Drag competition has been carried on for several years past by the Manitoba Good Roads Association, and has been so successful that the government has decided to help along the movement this year by a special grant towards the cost of the work. Such a grant will probably take the form of a percentage on the number of miles kept by each municipality under the dragging competition, which will commence with the spring break-up and last until freeze-up. By extending the competition in this manner it will ensure the roads being left in good condition for the winter, which, as everyone will agree, is a most desirable condition, as the smoothness of a road when winter sets in guarantees it being in good condition for shedding the surface water when the spring break-up comes.

It may be said that it is almost impossible to get work done on the roads when the farmers are busy harvesting their crop or hauling grain to the elevators, but this only makes a strong argument for the suggested revision of our road system, as, if the farmer cannot be depended on to do the work when it is most necessary and of the greatest benefit to the agricultural communities, then the work should be done by means that will assure a continuance of work at all times.

I do not wish to offer any suggestions as to the best way of bringing about such a radical change as I have suggested, as there are many delegates to this conference who are more fitted to deal with this question than I am, and I simply desire to see this question discussed by the congress with a view to the improvement of our present road system, which, if only considered from the viewpoint of military necessity, should receive the attention of the Dominion Government, as far as the main highways are concerned.

In conclusion, I would thank the officers of the convention for affording me the opportunity of placing these suggestions before you, and trust that the congress will meet with the success which such a laudable object deserves.

At a case argued before the North Carolina Supreme Court it was established that a power company that owns land on one side only of a stream is not entitled to build a dam to the middle of the stream and divert one-half the water through a flume for use in developing power, although the water be returned to the channel before leaving the company's land. In reaching this decision the court cites New York and Maine cases as upholding the principle that each of opposite riparian owners has an indivisible right to the enjoyment of the full flow of the stream.

The Nord Railway of France has suffered more through the war than any other French railway. In September, 1914, only 414 miles, or 18 per cent. of the total network of 2,324 miles, was actually being operated by the company, which indicates the invaluable military services which the Nord rendered during the earliest stages of the war. To-day the company is operating a total length of about 1,200 miles, or 51.5 per cent. of the entire system. Of the 768 stations on the system, 346 are at present either occupied by the enemy or closed to traffic. Not all the remaining 412 stations are open to the public, a certain number being exclusively reserved for military purposes. The actual situation is that for over a year the Nord has been deprived of the use of most of its great arteries, and the only double-track main line now available is that from Paris to Creil, Amiens, Boulogne, Calais and Hazebrouck.

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