

**Good Roads an Economic Necessity.**

Dell M. Potter, Arizona and California:

"I do not own an automobile," said Mr. Potter, "nor do I own stock in any automobile corporation, but I know that the men who have money own automobiles, and if you want to get them into your States and have them learn the climate and soil conditions, together with their other attractions, you must furnish good roads upon which they may travel in comfort. The prosperity of the country depends upon the automobile, and the sooner we come to a realization of this fact the better it will be for us. Governor Wilson rightly said in his speech of yesterday that there is a limit upon farm products in this country because of poor roads. The roads of our country are in worse condition than those of any nation of the world. The policy of this United States Government as it affects the prosperity of the country is a thing wonderful to behold.

"Within the past year we have driven out of the great Northwest from 25,000 to 40,000 of our best citizens because they were not able to make a living on their farms, and all that prevented them was the vile condition of our roads. Nine-tenths of the money appropriated by Congress for public improvements goes into our rivers and harbors and but a small fraction into good roads. I have no fault to find with the practise of appropriating money for the rivers and harbors, even though it does benefit only the great corporations, but I contend that it is time the niggardly policy maintained towards our highway system was abandoned.

"There are 850,000,000 acres of farm land in this country and less than half of it is under cultivation, because of the inability of those who would work the land to get their produce to a market. Upon the products of these farms depends the prosperity of the country, and good roads are vitally essential to such production."

**Marking Highways.**

As a preface to his address on the establishment of a National Department of Highways, Frank D. Lyon told of the plan adopted in New York of designating various routes through the State by colors, and of the use to which telegraph and telephone poles were put in this connection. By this system, he said, it was possible for tourists to make their way from one point to another throughout the State without the aid of books or maps. Then, launching into his scheme for the establishment of the Federal Department for the supervision and construction of roads, he elaborated upon the plan and explained many of the details as they had been worked out by him. With the establishment of such a department, he said, its head could go from State to State, urging the establishment of similar departments and guaranteeing Federal aid in the construction of whatever roads were considered necessary. Whatever highways in the various States were designated as national highways would be maintained by the State and Federal Government sharing equally in the expense. The plan so appealed to the delegates in attendance that it was freely predicted some definite scheme towards its adoption would be worked out before the congress came to a close.

**Maintenance of Roads.**

It was admitted by all that American road systems were failing because of poor maintenance.

Logan Walter Page, president of the congress, was enthusiastic in reference to work accomplished. He said in part:

"Never before have there met in this country so many people or so many interests having for their object the betterment of the public roads. When we consider the great activities manifested during the last few years for the pro-

motion of this most necessary work, it is astounding that so much has been accomplished in so short a time. As a matter of fact, more has been done in the last two decades than in the previous two thousand years. It engenders something more than the methods of construction and maintenance. Back of these problems are intricate questions of finance, which are involved in the issuance of bonds, the levying and apportionment of taxes, the accounting and safeguarding of road funds. Co-ordinate with the question of finance we may place those of promotion, legislation, organization, administration, construction and maintenance. Probably few other questions have been productive of so much legislation as that of roads. It is absolutely essential to sound progress in the road movement in this country that our highway be simplified and perfected.

"It is not admitted that the policy of placing convicts at work in the construction of roads or the preparation of road materials is wise in all cases.

"Although it is generally conceded that the most serious defect in our road system in this country is lack of maintenance, we have been making progress at a very slow rate to remedy this defect. It is high time that action is taken leading to a strong, concentrated and intelligent campaign in every State, not only in the maintenance of our roads in the highest state of efficiency, by the enactment of legislation that will provide definite annual appropriations and continuous and skilled attention, but the administrative phase of the question as well."

The speaker declared that the road situation, as it is to-day is that "we have two million and a quarter miles of public roads, eight per cent. of which have undergone some measure of improvement or have had something done to them; of this eight per cent. of so-called improved roads, probably not more than a half of four per cent. of the total, really deserve to be classed as improved roads. If we accept the general assertion that twenty per cent. of the roads carry ninety per cent. of the traffic, it follows that we have before us for improvement sixteen per cent. of the total mileage of the country, or 360,000 miles."

He asserted that the annual expenditures for this work in the United States was but half that spent by the United Kingdom on its 150,000 miles of roads; allowing but \$417 per mile, or hardly enough for maintenance alone. "When we consider that a very large percentage of the \$150,000,000 appropriated for this purpose is wasted, not so much through dishonesty as through ignorance and defective administration, it is apparent that the actual amount expended usefully on the roads is far less than the figures show. I believe that proper administration would save the country annually \$40,000,000 of this amount and do the same work that is now being accomplished."

One of the most interesting resolutions proposed was the following:

"Resolved, that the president of this American Road Congress appoint a committee of five to formulate and suggest to several highway associations of the country, a proposed form of legislation to regulate and control the use of the public roads and highways by the automobile truck and other self-propelled trucks and traction engines; to the end that the good roads of the country may be protected from the present destructive tendency of their use by excessively large and heavily loaded vehicles of the class herein described, and for the further purpose of obtaining a general expression of opinion on this subject which may result in uniform legislation throughout the several States to regulate the same."

It is fortunate that action is being promptly taken in connection with this important feature of highways before the vested interest becomes too large.