WHAT'S AT THE END OF THE ROAD?

Abstract of an Address Given at Road School Banquet
By Edward C. Elliott, President, Purdue University.

The deep sub-foundation of sentiment, of sense and of science, upon which this Purdue University has been erected, were laid by a courageous and far-sighted generation of men. These pioneers, breaking through the ancient frontiers of human privileges, did not, and could not, vision today's far flung development of the extraordinary proposal “to promote liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life.”

This original mandate has produced throughout the United States a group of institutions, of which Purdue University is a proud representative, wherein there is a keen consciousness of responsibility for being what their founders intended them to be. This, expressed in the language of our day, means that Purdue University has not served its full purpose until all of the people of the state, of whatever class or occupation, have come to realize that the University is a dependable and sympathetic agency, always at their disposal, to aid them in meeting those needs that determine the satisfactions, the happiness and ideals of the life of the ordinary man.

It is from some such philosophy as this that those serving Purdue University derive a feeling of gratification from such educational enterprises as is this Road School. This school is one of the signally important units of the scheme of practical education demanded by practical modern life. The teachings carried on here, directly and indirectly, influence every man, woman and child in the state; and many thousands who live beyond the borders of Indiana.

Nowhere in the history of the world is there a more dramatic story than that found on the pages recording the conquering of that one-time wilderness we now know and cherish as the United States. The stages of exploration, of settlement, of unification and nationalization of this conquering epoch may be written around the thrilling work of the path builders. Civilization has traveled a romantic journey from the wild game track and the Indian trail to those swift, straight, and solid highways of commerce and communication which we possess today. The Constitution was but a blue print of a nation yet to be. The builders of the roads, the canals, and the railways gave practical reality to the union, one and indivisible.
On such an occasion as this one cannot but feel himself in the presence of new pioneers who are building new roadways for the new civilization already upon us. The modern highway has suddenly assumed a tremendous economic, civic and aesthetic significance for the American people. If our national greatness and our national unity are to be measured by the quality of American genius for opening and smoothing new lands of travel and of communications, then great new tasks are now ahead of us.

As the successors of the first trail makers, the diggers of canals and the creators of our railways, the crafts and the professions you represent are to exert an influence for good or harm upon every firm, every factory and every home in the state.

Geographically we are one land. Socially and humanly we still have great distances to go before we have become a people of that singleness of purpose upon which our final destiny rests.

All live and forward-looking citizens of Indiana have, I am sure, a deep satisfaction from the progress that has been made during recent years with the road building program of the state. To be sure this program has cost, and will continue to cost, great sums of money. And what appeals to the mass of our people is that this program has been accomplished without heavily mortgaging the future of the state with bond issues. The state has not gone into debt for its new roads even though the owners of many roadsters have acquired mortgages which they are unsuccessfully trying to burn up with gasoline.

That we need the good roads we have there can be no doubt. That we are going to have more and better roads than we have, there can likewise be no doubt. Yet there are some serious minded ones who are beginning to ask questions of consequence. How far will these roads make for a fundamentally better state? How much better off will be the individual citizen of the state when we have forty thousand miles of state highways instead of the present four thousand? In other words, how far will all these new roads make for the permanent solidity and development of our state?

We rightly assume that the roads being built and projected will make for better agriculture. Will these same roads make for an aggressive constructive citizenship determined to promote the best interests of the best rural life?

We properly conclude that the new road program clears the way for certain business prosperity. Will this same program produce better government?
We know that the people of the state want a better and more extensive road system for pleasure riding. Will these people, who already spend not less than three hundred millions of dollars for such travel be willing to spend in taxes as much as one-tenth of this amount for the further improvement of our state schools and our state parks?

These are some of the serious questions which those whose duty it is to think for the future as well as live for the present, are asking. Unless this great modern public undertaking of road construction shall produce something more than those profits that make for material prosperity; unless these roads furnish something for our people besides the means of speed and pleasure; unless they become a new agency by which men come to know and to understand one another better; unless they become the threads by which we are bound more securely to our common heritage of duties and responsibilities, then I say to you that we shall have spent our substance in vain, and that the roads we build today are leading to the land of nowhere, instead of the land of our dreams and our hopes.

Will hard roads make for a soft civilization is a fair and open public question.

ADDRESS OF TOASTMASTER AT ANNUAL ROAD SCHOOL BANQUET

By Prof. W. K. Hatt, Head,
School of Civil Engineering, Purdue University.

On behalf of Purdue University and the School of Civil Engineering I desire to welcome to this banquet the members of the organizations constituting the Twelfth Annual Road School, namely: The Indiana State Highway Commission, the Indiana County Highway Superintendents’ Association, the Indiana County Surveyors’ and County Engineers’ Association, and the City Street Commissioners’ Association of the State of Indiana, including County Commissioners, City Engineers and Contractors. The members of these associations are public officials of this state and in like manner to the Purdue Faculty are dedicated to the service of the state.

For the first time this year, through the co-operation of the School of Electrical Engineering, these public officials assembled in this meeting are part of a much larger invisible audience reached through the radio broadcast.