AFTER FOUR YEARS

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It seems that it was only yesterday that I attended my first Purdue Road School as a member of the State Highway Commission. Four years have passed with amazing swiftness.

Four years ago the State Highway Commission faced an extensive reorganization, and Indiana was beset on every side with wide-spread unemployment. Today the situation is entirely different.

During the past four years the State Highway Commission has enjoyed the valuable co-operation and assistance of Purdue University, the contractors, and the material and equipment groups—all of whom have been sincerely interested in helping to initiate and carry out an adequate state highway program for Indiana. In that ambition the Commission has enjoyed the fine co-operation of the newspapers of the state and of city and county officials.

The State Highway Commission has endeavored, during the past four years, to make plans which will carry on into the future, and three accomplishments I wish to characterize as the most outstanding and the most influential upon the future of Indiana’s state highway development.

First must be listed the widening of the rights-of-way along more than 1,700 miles of highways and of hundreds of narrow bridges and culverts. This simple action has effectively promoted greater safety for our motoring public and without question has resulted in the saving of hundreds of lives. This program must be continued.

The second development of the past four years is also of far-reaching importance to the people of Indiana. It is the inauguration of construction work on a system of divided-lane highways for this state. Several miles of such modern highways will be in use in Indiana before the close of the year. The construction of many more miles of one lane of future divided-lane highways will also be completed in 1937. These first lanes are being built off-center so that as traffic develops the second lane can be built with a parkway separating it from the initial roadway. The State Highway Commission has planned construction of both lanes or the primary lane on more than a hundred miles of state highways; so we are making excellent progress. This type of highway, we believe, will gain tremendously in public favor during coming years.

The third outstanding accomplishment of the past four years has been the establishment of a bureau of highway research at Purdue University. The study is being financed by the State Highway Commission to deal more particularly with
secondary road types. There will be a permanency to the findings of this study group, and its conclusions will be reached without outside influence. The findings of the bureau will be available to the various counties of the state. The establishment of this bureau is one of the most important steps taken by the State Highway Commission.

It is my opinion that the highway industry in Indiana is still in its infancy. Highways will become increasingly important, and will be built with more attention to future traffic needs than has been possible in the past.

The past four years have been important ones in the modernization of Indiana's state highway system. Although revenues from the state gasoline tax and motor vehicle license fees available for construction and maintenance of the state system were reduced materially during the special session of the General Assembly in 1932, allocation of federal grants to Indiana for highway work made it possible to carry on statewide construction and improvement programs. Utilizing federal funds, the Commission for the first time was able to improve state highway routes in cities of over 3,500 population. A program of roadside planting was inaugurated, and more than seven hundred miles of state highways have been improved under this continuing program.

During the four years, scores of grade separations have been placed under construction, and more than two hundred highway-railroad intersections are being protected by flashing light signals. Greater attention has been given to the design and maintenance of highways and highway structures to free them from possible hazards to the safety of motorists. We feel that a notable advance has been made in this direction; but there is much yet to be done.

The highway industry in Indiana gives employment through construction and maintenance operations to many thousand persons each year, and no type of public work can be used more universally than improved highways.

May I take this opportunity to express my deepest appreciation to the employees of the State Highway Commission—laborers, patrolmen, superintendents, engineers, and clerical help—for the devoted manner in which they have co-operated during the past four years. It has been a high type of public service; and the people of Indiana, as well as the motorists who visit within our state lines, are the beneficiaries of the loyal and intelligent service given by the employees of the State Highway Commission.

No one could serve on the State Highway Commission for four years without deeply appreciating the public-spirited attitude of citizens in all parts of Indiana. This attitude and their support mean much to the future of our state and give assurance that Indiana will continue to measure up to its responsibilities.