TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL ROAD SCHOOL

President renewed his request for drastic curtailment of highway expenditures and declared that the states also should be encouraged to bring their highway budgets back “to a more normal figure.”

NEW FEDERAL AID BILL

Congressman Cartwright, on January 6, introduced a bill in the House of Representatives to provide for the continuance of federal aid on the present basis through the years 1940 and 1941. Hearings are at present being conducted to consider both this bill and the President’s recommendations. That is the situation as it stands today. If the Cartwright bill is passed, we will be assured of sufficient funds to construct and maintain highways and secondary roads adequate to meet the demands of modern traffic for the next four years. If, on the other hand, the President’s proposal receives favorable consideration, it will mean the loss of nearly 40 per cent of our highway program. Not only are these funds necessary because of their face value, but the matching clause also serves to obligated many millions of state funds which would otherwise be used for non-highway purposes.

It is therefore essential that there be complete co-operation among all the organizations interested in the continuance of an adequate highway program to insure the passage of the Cartwright bill. We who have made a thorough study of the highway problem sincerely believe that, if all conditions are properly appraised and highway expenditures credited with all the benefits and rewards derived from completed highways, everyone, including our state and federal lawmakers, will immediately sanction the continuance and even the increase of appropriations for the highway program.

EFFECTS OF ROAD IMPROVEMENT UPON RURAL COMMUNITY AND FAMILY LIFE

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To tell the story of man’s progress in methods of transporting himself and his goods would be almost identical with giving the history of the development of civilization itself. Indeed, man’s physical and even spiritual needs and ambitions are so definitely dependent upon adequate transportation facilities that no phase of his educational, cultural, religious, or recreational life, or physical well-being, can be studied intelligently without a knowledge of the effects of transportation upon them.

The deeply religious Egyptians have baffled present scientific knowledge with their actual solution of a prodigious prob-
lem of transporting huge stone blocks to their places in forming one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the pyramids. Alexander, Caesar, Hannibal, and Napoleon owe their unbelievable accomplishments to their ability to deal expeditiously with transportation problems. The Dark Ages were dark because of very limited and slow transportation. The Renaissance ushered in a new era of enlightenment because of new knowledge and courage regarding transportation.

It is well for us to remember that it was only a little over a century ago that man's fastest communication depended upon the gallop of a horse. The century just past brought the steam boat, the locomotive, and the automobile. Today, nearly four million people in the United States make their living through some activity connected with transportation. But in spite of all this, the isolation and solitude of farm life in America is still a problem. This situation is peculiar to the American farm. In Europe, it does not maintain because of the fact that European farmers live in villages and go to their farms to work. Because of this American situation, a farming community is a different kind of social group from that familiar to urban people.

This "splendid isolation" of the farming community is rapidly changing. On the six million farms in the United States, there are now approximately five million motor cars. These cars have made possible a kind of community life in the country that was unthinkable forty years ago. Then, the farm family was, to a degree, a community within itself. There was an isolation from outside influences which proved to be a serious hindrance to the spread of new ideas and knowledge concerning new inventions and new processes. Five million cars traveling on hard roads have been a tremendous factor in obliterating the handicap attending the farmer's isolation.

Generally speaking, improved roads have resulted in the rapid growth of country-wide social organizations. Notable examples are the 4-H clubs, farm bureaus, libraries, health units, and social welfare agencies.

A recent issue of Rural Life carried an article, "Recent Social Trends," by J. H. Kolp and E. de S. Brunner, Vol. 1, pp. 497-509, from which we quote:

These facilities make possible not only the multiplication of contacts over a larger area—they also make possible the multiplication of local contacts. Neighboring farms are only a few minutes distant. The farmer is adjusting himself rapidly and willingly to the new and larger community. This is not to be questioned. He has sacrificed many of his old service institutions. In many places, he seems also intent upon retaining something of the old social life. In others, he is persistently building something to take the place of the old, something to fit the modern age, something that will express his new interests. . . . Like the urbanite who, utilizing what the city offers, shares more intimately in the life of a Green-
wich Village, a Gold Coast, or Morningside Heights, the country man is experimenting with a social life with more than one center and with more than one set of interests. He is altering his immediate locality organization, recognizing himself all the while as a part of the village community.

Thus we see in this quoted summary that the educational, social, and cultural distinction between urban and rural communities is rapidly being eradicated.

It will be our purpose in the remainder of this paper to show more specifically the relation between our highway system and rural changes in the fields (1) of education; (2) of culture; (3) of recreation; and (4) of health.

ROADS AFFECT EDUCATION

Free public education in the United States has been rightly considered the fundamental basis and safeguard of American democracy. There is no Hoosier who is not proud of the practical elimination of illiteracy in our state. Our school system has served us well. Many eminent Americans have learned the “Three R’s” in our little red school houses. But the 20th Century brought many and varied complexities to our new social order. The needs and desires of our elementary and high-school population were vastly changed and augmented. School administrators and teachers frantically and futilely attempted to budget their time and facilities in order to meet these new needs and desires. Necessity once more opened the way for progress, and school people began to think in terms of larger units; and consequently the consolidated township school fought its way into being.

Aside from tradition and prejudices, the greatest single obstacle in the way of the consolidated school was transportation. With the coming of hard roads or improved roads, this problem was solved. In communities where mud roads predominate, elementary school consolidation remains an unsolved problem.

Good roads have brought to the country boy and girl broadened curricula, specialized teachers, efficient administration, adequate facilities to assist them in their ever-changing adjustment to an ever-changing social order. They have made possible the consolidated school building which serves as a community center for the new and varied social activity of the rural community.

SPREAD OF CULTURE

In the progress of a nation’s development, we always find at least three stages—pioneer, handicraft or industrial, and cultural. Cultural attributes seem always to center in urban sections. Art exhibits, concerts, operas even yet belong to metropolitan areas. But the auto and hard roads have brought these
values within one to two hours' time from the most remote parts of our state. Travel has brought an interchange of ideas. Evidence of the significance of good roads to rural appreciation of aesthetic values may be observed in many instances. It is reflected in our architecture, both public and private. It is reflected in the promotion of concerts of a high order in our small urban and rural centers. It is reflected in musical appreciation and attainment. For instance, one of our counties, graduating approximately 300 high-school students each spring, boasts that 30 per cent of these students are capable of rendering band music in a professional manner. Indeed, there are but few of our small rural communities that cannot boast of well-trained musical organizations that adequately meet their local needs. Good roads do not teach music and art, but they make possible the creation of a desire for, and an appreciation of, these arts, as well as making possible the attainment unto these desires.

SANITATION AND HEALTH

Another contribution of good roads to the betterment of rural communities is in the matter of sanitation and health. County health nurses are common. Good hospitals and civic health centers, as well as more able physicians, are readily accessible for the emergencies that arise in more or less isolated communities. Good roads have given the country dweller the advantages of city life without the crowding of that life and without the monotony of its kind of work.

FARM MARKETING

One other resultant of good roads should be noted in this paper, intrinsic values on the farm. One hundred acres of 40-bushel-to-the-acre wheat have very little value if 20 miles of mud road lie between the farmer and the market. Small-farm produce sixty miles from a metropolitan center has but little utility or value unless directly connected by a good-high-speed road. One farmer reports that twenty years ago, he drove his hogs to a market two miles distant, loaded them, and sent them to the Indianapolis market at a freight rate of 30 cents per hundred weight. At the present time, he has a 20-cent freight rate by truck with rapid transportation absorbing most of his previous shrinkage losses. Taxes are usually considered an obnoxious but necessary evil. We cannot help but wonder how deeply embittered our rural population would be were it possible to reveal their tremendous losses resulting from so-called "mud-tax".

The following is an excerpt from one of the best essays entered in the National Good Roads Essay Contest of 1923:

A few years ago, our roads were such that only the strong farm teams could be used on them. We had no durable surfaces—
nothing but soft, deep mud in the winter, and stifling dust in the summer. Churches were things unknown, and Americans and foreigners alike led a haphazard, even a corrupt, life. The innocent, little overalled boys and ginghamed girls took an active part in whatever happened—the rough fun and the back-breaking toil. Something happened about that time that opened the people's eyes to their need of a better means of communication. A child was drowned while fishing in the river with a group of youngsters. The lad's mother tried to get a pastor for the burial. The minister struggled all day with his carriage on the muddy road, was finally stopped in sight of our cemetery by the flooded ford, and was unable to let us know that he was there. This incident revealed our road problem, and our struggle for better roads began. We soon had the road to town in a serviceable condition by fixing it with planks, slabs, sawdust, and gravel. Then our progress started.

Our theme has not been exhausted, but we believe sufficient evidence has been given to warrant the conclusion that educational, cultural, recreational, and other social attainments of any given rural community depend largely upon the progress of the improved road program in that community.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE STATE HIGHWAY COMMISSION TO COUNTY ROAD DEPARTMENTS, AS AFFECTED BY RECENT LEGISLATION

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In 1935, the Seventy-ninth General Assembly passed a joint resolution providing for a survey of the highway system of the state and for the appointment of a commission consisting of three members of the Senate, five members of the House of Representatives, three citizens-at-large, and two ex-officio members.

As a result of the public hearings which were held in seventeen different cities of the state by this Highway Survey Commission, fifteen recommendations were made, among which was one pertaining to funds expended for construction and betterments by the counties, which shall be under the supervision of the State Highway Commission, in the same relation as the State Highway Commission is supervised by the United States Bureau of Public Roads. The last legislature passed a law somewhat in accord with this recommendation, which I wish to discuss at this time.

I might say that the present State Highway Commission has had the responsibility of working out the secondary-road program with the various counties, the routing of the high-