

Some Observations After Fifteen Years as a County Road Supervisor

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This program has been arranged primarily for the benefit of the new road supervisors who are attending the Road School for the first time.

The Purdue Road School was started in 1914, the same year, that the first law was passed, creating county highway departments. At that time there were only two systems of roads, county and township, in Indiana.

The legislators in setting up county highway departments and establishing the office then known as road superintendent, evidently could foresee that the duties of a road superintendent required a variety of qualifications for which no previous experience would fully fit him.

As valuable as an engineering college education might be, this alone would not supply him with all the answers. Having been a road contractor would help, but would not supply him with all the answers. One might have been an expert with all types of highway equipment, and while this would be a help, yet it would not give all the answers. One might have been an accountant, fully versed in keeping the records, costs, etc., yet this would fall short, as helpful as it might be.

I think for this reason the Purdue Road School was started, and the legislators sensing this condition put into the law that road superintendents shall attend the annual Purdue Road School. Although the law has changed numerous times since 1914, this part pertaining to superintendents attendance has never been changed.

You will not find all the answers to your problems discussed here. It would be utterly impossible to arrange a program to cover all the questions and problems that arise. But to my way of thinking, the program of the Purdue Road School is not all of this meeting. Here you meet other road supervisors with whom you can discuss many common problems.

No truer statement has ever been made than that "one gains the

greatest and most important part of his knowledge from the information of others”.

Professor Petty has had complete charge of this school since 1924 with the exception of a few years during the war. No one man in Indiana has made a greater contribution to all highways than has he. He is recognized as an authority not only in Indiana, but any place in the United States where highway problems are discussed. When he speaks on any program, he speaks with authority.

I have attended this Purdue Road School for a quarter of a century. I have been able to see what tremendous good has come from this Road School and Professor Petty's efforts. My first suggestion to the new road supervisors is to take full advantage of the Purdue Road School and be here at every session. They always try to have something on this program that will help you. You also are permitted to rub shoulders with other road men and discuss your mutual problems.

During the summer Professor Petty carries on his extension work. This consists of calling on city, county and state highway groups and getting first hand information on their many problems. He usually spends one day with you, offering his assistance in every way possible, always willing to speak to your men, and to give publicity to your work, by speaking to any civic group interested in having him as a speaker.

This work is on an invitational basis. He will never force a visit upon you, but if you are anxious to do a good job, and gain all the information possible to help you, I would suggest that you extend to him an invitation to meet with you and your men this summer. I have known many cases where he has given much valuable assistance keeping records. Unfortunately some of you will be required to keep records without the aid of competent office help. When this is the case, there is nothing you can do about it, but it would appear to me that since the average county in Indiana will this year be responsible for the spending \$175,000, records should be kept.

This is big business. Any business handling as much money as the average county highway department does, sees to it that every dollar is accounted for.

Keeping the records straight in the county highway department does not, by any means, solve all the financial problems of the highway supervisor. Your office will keep only the records of the money spent. Just as much emphasis should be put on keeping your expenditures in line with your budget and planning your work accordingly. In other words, control your expenses according to the amount of money available.

Nearly every year we learn of some department, county or city, spending beyond their means. I question very much if this is ever advisable. Did you ever see much pity shown any one who spends beyond his means and winds up broke? There might be exceptions to this, but I would say very rarely, if ever, is it advisable to allow this to happen.

If, and when, Professor Petty calls on you I can think of no higher compliment that he might pay you in your work than for him to say, "You are a good business man." Naturally, of course, being a good business man would include many other things besides working within your means and keeping the records straight, but this would be one of the first marks of a business man.

I have been asked numerous times to explain how to anticipate our revenues. You must be able to anticipate your yearly receipts before you can plan your work and be able to keep on the black side of the ledger.

ANTICIPATING YOUR REVENUE

Each legislature, since I have been connected with our highway department, has changed the formula of distribution. This makes it complicated to anticipate, with very much accuracy, the amount you will receive each quarter. Prior to 1947, one could estimate fairly close, since in those years we operated under a standard total of \$2,200,000 for the 92 counties. But in 1947 we had an additional income figured on \$30 million of excess motor vehicles which complicated the problem.

At present we are operating under the 1949 act of the legislature, which has an entirely different allocation formula. This law provides that all revenues from motor vehicles, including gasoline tax, license fees, drivers' licenses, etc., go into a fund which is known as the automotive fund. After deducting the cost of operation, about \$1,250,000 to the state police department and the cost of the safety department, the balance is to be divided on a percentage basis as follows: 53 per cent to the state highway department, 32 per cent to the county highway departments, and 15 per cent to the cities and towns. The 32 per cent going to the counties is allocated on the following basis: 5 per cent equal among the 92 counties, 65 per cent on a road mileage basis and 30 per cent according to motor vehicle registration. The money is collected by the state auditor and the distribution is authorized for the preceding quarter. Hence, instead of receiving your check on the first day of the quarter as in the past we now receive it usually between the 20th and 25th of the month following the end

of the quarter. Last year it was indeed difficult to anticipate. This year we have possibly a little better idea, but the exact amounts are still vague.

The new license law went into effect this year and, according to advance information, this should increase the automotive fund by \$6 million, 32 per cent of which will go to the county highway departments.

The greater portion of this will show in your April draw. Thus, if gasoline sales this year hold to what they were last year, your April draw should be 10 per cent or more above last years draw. Your July draw likely will be larger. Your October draw, which is controlled mostly by gasoline revenue, cannot be anticipated to be much larger. Your January 1st draw will likely be no more than this year and represents the smallest quarter draw of the year. Hence, if you come up to January 1st with your funds exhausted, no doubt you have experienced some difficulty this first quarter.

I would suggest that rather than anticipate one quarter at a time you take the year as a whole and, as a safety factor, hold back 10 per cent and budget yourself accordingly.

PERSONNEL PROBLEMS

If any of us succeed to a marked degree it will be because of the caliber of men working under our supervision. I presume the average department has between 12 and 50 men on the regular payroll. Whether it be a few or many, their efficiency will determine your success. In most cases you will represent a manager. It is your duty to train, organize and maintain as much harmony as possible among this group. Your success or failure will be determined largely by your handling of this one problem.

Naturally, from this group you will select certain leaders trained for specific tasks. These men must not only have confidence in themselves, but they must have confidence in you. They will carry on in your absence. Very likely one man will be trained to carry the entire responsibility when you are off the job.

It will be up to you to do all the planning, but the execution of these plans will be left to your men. If they are to fulfill this task in a creditable manner it is up to you to provide all the things necessary to create in these men an interest in their work and a desire to do a good job.

First, you should provide, as far as possible, good working conditions. You should provide, as far as possible, the best in modern equipment. It is only by the use of good equipment that we can over-

come the high cost of labor with which we are faced today. Keep this equipment in the best of condition. No man can take proper interest who has to work with worn-out and run-down equipment. This equipment of yours, as it goes up and down the road, speaks for you and your department in a publicity way. If it is obsolete, and poorly maintained and left standing along the road, it is creating a poor public impression of you and your department.

Provide working hours comparable to other working conditions in your community. Pay wages comparable for like work in your community.

See that your men have compensation insurance in order that they may be taken care of in case of accident.

See that employees are protected with liability insurance. Accidents are bound to happen and in this day and age someone is going to be held liable. It is your duty to provide these men with some protection.

Give your men a few days vacation and a few of the holidays with pay. You take these days off. Why not give these advantages to your men?

If your men should elect to carry hospitalization insurance to take care of themselves and their families you can make this possible by withholding premiums from their pay check and giving them group protection.

Under the present Indiana laws it is possible for you to provide a retirement plan for them. In 1937 a law was passed by the legislature providing for a retirement fund. In 1941 this law was amended and was extended to cover the state board of accounts. In 1947 it was again amended and extended to cover all public employees. Public employees never have been protected by social security or any other means of providing for their future. The legislature of Indiana, recognizing this condition, provided this law whereby all public employees could participate in a retirement fund plan. It provides a Public Employees Retirement Fund and now is in full operation in Indiana. The office is located on the seventh floor of the Board of Trade Building in Indianapolis. Its executive secretary and board of directors are appointed by the governor. All public employees of the state are permitted to participate in this plan. Your highway department should be in it for your employees' security.

Your department is taken into this plan by a vote from your county council. It provides a minimum retirement age of 55 years, and a *must* retirement at 70. It provides for a minimum of 15 years service, according to the age of the employee. All prior service is considered

in determining the amount of your retirement income. This is a joint program whereby the employee pays 5 per cent of his wages, not to exceed \$90 a year, and the county pays a similar amount, including all prior service. This is made optional for your present employees. But when the program is entered into it becomes compulsory for all new employees.

You should practice economy in all your highway dealings. You should use local materials whenever possible. But when you pinch your employees on wages below those customary in your community, when you fail to give them needed protection in insurance, when you refuse to give your men vacations and holidays with pay, and when you refuse or neglect to provide for their future security, you are practicing false economy.

Many of you have worked with horses. Did you cut down on their feed to practice economy and expect a day's work? Most all of you drive good cars. Do you buy the lowest price gasoline, or do you tell that station agent to put in a quart of 15 cent oil? When you fail or neglect to provide for your employees you are practicing this same type of economy.

I know it is discouraging when you realize that the average age of service of a county highway supervisor is only about three and one-half years. Likely, with the turnover we have this year, that figure will be lower. This is something neither you nor I can help. I hope some time in the future this will be different.

It appears that sometimes the reward for a job well done is not too great. Nevertheless, I am sure that all you men want to do the best job possible and I have every reason to believe that if you will attend the Road School and apply yourself in acquiring useful knowledge, follow the suggestions of Professor Petty, be a good business man in all your dealings and transactions, give your employees every consideration possible, that some of you will be on this job and attending this Road School fifteen or twenty years from now.