

Highways for Survival—Industry Group Action

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I have been invited to discuss our highway situation and what we as citizens and construction people can do to correct the situation. That something must be done, and soon, is quite clear, not only to those of us in the industry, but to anyone who is exposed to the facts.

As American citizens and a thinking people we have the serious responsibility of erasing the terrible shame of our inadequate highway system from the pages of our country's history. The luxury of a languid and ineffectual approach to the problem has long been really unthinkable and becomes each day more intolerable.

Concerning highways we have backed-up to the precipice and unless we take a forward step we will fall, shattering our economy; our safety; our national defense. There is no time for inactivity, equivocation or neutrality. There is no such thing as neutrality on the highway issue. If you are neutral and remain inactive you are an accessory-before-the-fact to the devastating slaughter of your fellow citizens on the inadequate highways which *you* are providing. In 1954 alone over 1,000,000 persons were injured on our nation's highways. The tremendous magnitude of these figures and their incriminations can be appreciated when we see that during the terrible and bloody Southwest Pacific Campaign of World War II, American casualties were 136,426. And of course the base statistical comparison does not suffice to paint the shameful picture.

Those war casualties were inflicted upon a country fighting for survival and pursuing a just and ennobling cause. While many of the 1,000,000 annual casualties on our highways are inflicted upon this country as a result of its failure to meet four-square the challenge from within of an inadequate, antiquated highway system. Already in the 63 years we have lived with the automobile and a much shorter time in which we have observed it in mass production, there have been twice as many deaths on our nation's highways as have occurred in all the wars of our country's history. Indeed the time has long since arrived when we as a nation and as citizens of our communities must pause and

give sober thought; when we as thinking people must put an end, an immediate halt, to the terrifying inverse proportion of our national progress and prosperity and the dismal devastation and depression status of our roads. It is time when we must listen to the words of one who has just recently returned to this country after an absence of many years.

Paul Gallico, writing in *Reader's Digest* and reflecting upon the achievements, progress and unparalleled prosperity of his country revisited, had this to say: "In an era where 60 million motor vehicles are in operation, where the economy is an automobile economy, United States roads are little better than they were 20 to 30 years ago." Little wonder that future generations may spend hours pondering the dilemma of our "highway enigma."

Organization and Program

It was in the face of this picture that we in the various segments of the highway industry formed our organization, "Indiana Highways for Survival." This organization received the necessary impetus from the failure of the 1955 General Assembly to provide highway legislation essential not only to the economic *prosperity* of Indiana but essential to its economic *survival* and social well-being. The inaction of the Assembly was the "last straw." A small committee, representative of the chief segments of the industry, decided to combine our resources and energy in a program aimed at "blasting" the public out of its prolonged state of inertia on the highway situation.

We therefore decided on a program of educating and activating the people of Indiana. We have embarked on a program of presenting the facts with the plea and fervent hope that the public will contact their elected representatives and *demand* highway legislation. However, our approach is not aimed exclusively at, nor entirely dependent upon, direct contact of representatives by voters. We are interested in (and I think have already had some degree of success in) creating a general atmosphere of *highway consciousness or awareness*; for in our system of government, if we can succeed in creating such an atmosphere, elected officials have the facility, as if by osmosis, of breathing and instinctively discerning the air of public opinion.

We, in Indiana, engaged an advertising agency to prepare a program based on the principle of educating and activating the road-using public. Our immediate objective was and is the 1957 session of the Indiana General Assembly; therefore the program the agency presented is graduated toward that goal and heavily concentrated just prior to and during the legislative session. The program prepared entails five

main sections: 1. Advertising; 2. News Bureau; 3. Speakers bureau; 4. Legislation; and 5. Finance.

Advertising

The first of these contemplates utilization of television, radio and newspapers. The television campaign would be concentrated in four of our largest and most strategically located cities—Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Evansville and South Bend—and the programs would vary from 52 fifteen-minute news cast programs in Indianapolis to 52 one-minute spots in the other cities. The radio portion of the program would entail the use of 104 time frequencies for radio stations in major cities throughout the state in order to deliver a saturation campaign aimed at influencing the highway users in the home and at those hours of the day when radio sets in autos are in use. (An example of a rather effective use of this medium was in evidence in Indiana during the basketball tournament. One could not turn on the radio without encountering a play-by-play of those games.)

Our spot announcements were being employed before, after and during the account of the games. These announcements are compact, not wordy, and aimed not primarily at persuasion but more at arresting the attention and laying the groundwork for further and more detailed information at a later time. This portion of our overall campaign is based on the theory of selling by repetition. As you all know, our present highway situation lends itself perfectly to presentation of interesting and attention-arresting facts. The only job here is preparation and presentation of the facts in an eye- and ear-catching manner. I think our agency has achieved that.

News Bureau

The second section of our campaign is the operation of a news bureau. In our particular situation, the advertising agency prepares data on the problem at hand and distributes the information prepared in an interesting and logical form to newspapers, periodicals and other media for dissemination and, we hope, public consumption. Many of the releases which the newspapers have already used were concerned primarily with factual reports of the progress of our organization as such; e.g., election of directors to the board, election of officers and other similar events; but even such releases as these help to create that atmosphere of highway consciousness.

Speakers Bureau

Very closely related to the news bureau is the speakers bureau. This consists of a number of persons in the industry, such as equipment and

material salesmen, contractors, association executives and others who have volunteered to make addresses throughout the state before various clubs and organizations. The basic information is prepared by the public relations agency and the speakers have been given a list of do's and don'ts to observe when they are making the talks. In other words, we don't strive to eliminate the individual style but only erroneous or imprudent statements. We have sent out to the various civic, fraternal and commercial organizations (and you would be amazed how many there are) announcements of our bureau and our willingness to serve up a speaker for dessert—free of cost—on a stimulating current issue. The clubs are as hungry for such speakers as they are for the pot roast and so far this bureau has been well received and effective.

Legislative Activity

The fourth part of our program entails legislative activity during the sessions of the Assembly. We, of course, can make no intelligent appraisal of the extent of such activity until we have had a little longer in which to judge the effectiveness of our program. Any legislative activity in which we might engage will be greatly enhanced by tangible indicia of public opinion. With this end in mind in some of our radio and news releases, we have asked that the voters write to their legislators and political incumbents in care of Post Office Box 11, Indianapolis, maintained by Indiana Highways for Survival and we will see that it gets to the addressee. It appears to us that the arguments of our Legislative Committee might take on a little sharper logic; might sound somewhat more poignant, if they are flavored by the insertion of the contents of Box 11—courtesy of the constituents, so to speak.

Finance Committee

Next is a necessary section of our program although perhaps it presents one of the knottiest problems. The campaign advocated by our advertising agency encompasses roughly 18 months and would entail a budget of \$75,000 for that time. At first perhaps that seems like a lot of money; however, we in Indiana feel that it is the best *investment* we construction people can make. For that \$75,000 we expect to create a multi-million dollar increase in the construction market. We have decided on a program of no deficit spending in our campaign, but we keenly feel that the success of our campaign depends on raising the \$75,000 and conducting the campaign as planned. We already have half of the necessary amount pledged and no doubt whatsoever of full payment on the pledges. We are proceeding on the reasonable and indicated assumption that we will reach our goal of \$75,000.

Closely related to the topic of finances is the structure of our organization. Early in our discussion of the organization we saw the necessity of incorporating. As a Corporation we provided for two classes of membership: (1) Individual membership available at \$5.00, and (2) Sustaining membership available to firms, organizations and groups for contributions or investments they make in the movement. There is no minimum or maximum limit for the amount paid by a sustaining member. It remains a voluntary movement.

It is not our intention to reap any substantial funds from our individual memberships but rather to use such membership primarily as a means of promoting individual interest and of giving us a ready computation of such interest. Our basic premise remains: that the various segments of the industry will benefit most, therefore their's should be the greater support of the movement.

Board of Directors

We have been fortunate in acquiring for our Board of Directors men of exceptionally high calibre, well distributed geographically and as to their particular primary enterprises. They serve as the policy making body and are unanimously convinced of the drastic need for intelligent highway legislation and of the necessity of a group such as ours to provide it. Who are these members of the Board of Directors? James D. Adams, Industrialist and Banker, Columbia City; Charles Buesching, President, Lincoln National Bank and Trust Company, Fort Wayne; C. B. Enlow, Chairman of the Board, National City Bank of Evansville; Samuel C. Hadden, Consulting Highway Engineer, Indianapolis; Richard T. James, Secretary-Manager, Hoosier Motor Club, Indianapolis, James DeLaurier, Publisher, Hammond Times; Carl H. Mullen, President, Indiana State Federation of Labor, Indianapolis; Hallie L. Myers, Executive Director, Indiana Traffic Safety Foundation, Indianapolis; Ben H. Petty, Professor of Highway Engineering, Purdue University; John Stoner, Professor of Government, Indiana University; and Joseph L. Quinn, Jr., President, Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce, and Safety Director, Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Some Pertinent Highway Problems

So far, I have discussed what Indiana Highways for Survival, Inc. is, what it is trying to do and how it is going about it. We have, in other words, discussed the organization, the formal or structural aspects of the movement. Now let's take a look at some of the highway problems with which we find ourselves confronted.

Except for the right to issue bonds for the construction of bridges, the only source of highway revenue available for counties since 1932 has been their share of the Indiana Motor Vehicle Highway Account, which, for the fiscal year of 1955, amounted to \$27 million in round figures. Prior to 1932, the counties had these sources available: tax levy for maintenance, bond issues for road and bridge construction and a smaller share of state levied motor vehicle taxes. The revenue from these sources at that time approximated \$25 million, almost as much as the \$27 million for the fiscal year of 1955. In other words, the methods for raising revenue changed, but the revenue itself remained almost status quo and at a time when the county highways are burdened with an increased number of vehicles, increased loads, increased maintenance and, of course, greatly increased costs. Is it any wonder that the counties are in need of more money?

Let's take a look at the State picture. For the fiscal year of 1955, ended June 30, 1955, the State Highway Department of Indiana received from the Indiana Motor Vehicle Highway Account the sum of \$45 million in round figures. No other state source of revenue is available for state highway improvements; no bond issues, no property tax, no gross income tax, no money from the General Fund; only the state's share of motor vehicle receipts as they accrue to the Motor Vehicle Highway Account. Well, for the fiscal year of 1955, as previously stated, this accrual for the State Highway Department of Indiana amounted to \$45 million. It would be well, perhaps, to break down this sum. From the \$45 million there should be deducted \$20 million for maintenance, miscellaneous, supervisory and traffic, which are fixed budgeted items in the Appropriation Act and use 100 percent state funds. No federal aid is available for any of these operations. This deduction would leave a balance of \$25 million of state funds for the operation of the Construction Department. Out of this balance must come the cost of right-of-way acquisition, design and construction engineering, materials and traveling expense and necessary state construction contracts, leaving a balance of approximately \$15 million a year to be used in matching federal aid. To put it another way, of the \$45 million state funds, one-third of the total, or \$15 million, becomes available for matching federal aid.

What is the federal aid status of the State Highway Department for the next biennium? \$42 million of federal funds have been apportioned and are available to Indiana, none of which has been obligated. In fact, these funds must be obligated during the next biennium or be lost. To be more specific, federal aid apportionments are made to each of the states on a three-year basis and must be obligated not later than

the third year of apportionment or be lost. \$21 million of the \$42 million are known as the 1956 funds and are available until June 30, 1958, the first year of the next biennium. The remainder, \$21 million, is known as the 1957 funds and is available until June 30, 1959, the second and last year of the next biennium.

It becomes at once apparent that the total of \$42 million will have to be obligated in the next biennium, and this is the immediate highway revenue problem with which the 1957 session of the Indiana General Assembly will be confronted, and for which appropriations will have to be made, unless the Assembly elects to let a portion of it be lost. This, I say, is the immediate problem.

Of equal, if not greater importance is the impending federal aid highway legislation in Congress which is designed to increase materially the federal aid apportionments for the 1957-58 and 1958-59 fiscal years, which constitute the next biennium, and for approximately thirteen subsequent years. It is estimated that the impending federal legislation, if enacted into law, would make available to Indiana federal funds sufficient to carry out a highway improvement program of approximately \$184 million in the next biennium and even a greater amount, subsequently, for an additional period of 13 years. Again, if enacted, Indiana would be required to have a highway improvement program averaging approximately \$110 million a year for the full period.

Obviously, it is of the utmost importance that Indiana, more particularly the State Highway Department of Indiana, be prepared to handle this volume of work, which is approximately three times the volume now being done. Indiana will be unable to match its Federal apportionment for the next biennium now available unless additional funds are provided by the 1957 session of the Indiana General Assembly. Moreover, Indiana, perennially straining to match normal federal aid in the third year of apportionment, would be unable to match any additional funds made available by the impending federal highway legislation. The 1957 session of the Indiana General Assembly has its work cut out for it. And only the most careful and courageous consideration of this problem can bring about the desired results.

Reverting to our organizational structure, what we propose is for the common good; for the good of the citizens and the nation and communities. The good accomplished will be redistributed over us all and he who will oppose the movement does so for selfish gain and in opposition to the common good. The time for leadership is at hand, I ask only that you and we work together to grasp it and lead our fellow citizens to the truth and solution.