The work of the county surveyor in dredge and allotment ditch clean-outs, under the new law, could follow a standard plan that would apply to the different counties. I suppose that some of the wide differences in dredge clean-out specifications are due to the views of various attorneys on these ditch petitions. I have found that attorneys take quite opposite views of the law relating to clean-outs. For example, if I should follow the advice of one attorney, my procedure may be quite different from what it would be if I had followed that of another attorney on the same type of work; whereas, if a standard plan were used, this would not happen. In the allotment clean-out, by hand, if a uniform specification could be adopted, the surveyor would find his duties much more simple and easy.

Contract proposals by the county for material to be used in county work should be expressed clearly in order that the prospective bidder may have a clear understanding of materials needed. Those best qualified to draw up these specifications are the county engineers. In attempting to interpret the intent of the specification in some counties in their advertisements for bids on material and machinery, the bidder is at a loss to know just what to put on his bid as the specifications are not clear as to what is desired. One county may advertise for 10,000 cubic yards of gravel and not specify any control tests. One may advertise for a 1 1/2-ton truck with no mention made as to the size of tire, the horse-power, or the extra equipment to be furnished. It seems to me the county should have a definite specification for the kind of material and equipment it desires to receive bids upon. This would give the bidder a knowledge of what the county desires and also save the commissioners a great deal of time and worry in awarding the contracts.

In summing up, the county engineer should adopt standard and uniform specifications that would be flexible enough to be used in the various counties, with very little change, to suit all types of work and material. So doing would save time for the engineer, money for the county, and inconvenience to the bidders.

SELLING THE PUBLIC ON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Marc G. Waggener,
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No phase of highway operation today receives more attention from those interested in the promotion of the highway industry than that of selling the public on highway improvement.
Usually this topic is viewed as a major PROBLEM, with every letter a capital and heavily underscored, leaving the impression that here is something new, some new discovery that has just been made. The problem in Indiana is not selling the public but rather keeping the public informed on highway improvement.

If there is any selling to be done, it certainly is not to the public—at least to the motoring public in Indiana. It has been my observation that, when it comes to selling highway improvement, the sales are being made by the motorists in the form of demands upon the road-builders for modern highways that will meet the traffic needs of this generation.

But you seldom pick up a publication devoted to the highway industry without encountering some reference to the importance of a public-relations program in road administration. Many of the ideals are practical and deserve consideration; others are hardly deserving of the time it takes to read them.

Yet many of the writers leave you with the impression that once a state highway department, a county highway engineer, or a city street superintendent has inaugurated a public-relations program, all of his troubles are over and he need have no further worries. It would be Utopia if such a condition did result.

It is true that the road-building fraternity has in the past ignored the public and the motorist with the result that there has been criticism and misunderstanding where neither should have existed. But no dose of publicity or public relations—no matter how skillfully it is concocted, nor how it is administered—can be a cure-all. It cannot take the place of practical achievement, efficient administration, and economic operation.

In other words, publicity is not like the remedies which are still sold Saturday afternoons on the courthouse square—a sure cure for everything that may be wrong. Where there is an intelligent, forward-looking program, business-like management, and an efficient organization honestly striving to meet the highway transportation needs of a state, a county, or a city—then publicity can and does have an important function to perform.

Today no one questions the value of advertising. The day when the world beat a path to the door of the man who made the best mousetrap may not be over, but the man who makes a good mousetrap, and advertises his product, is getting the major part of the business.

Advertising, publicity, and public relations are just terms that we use to express the idea of telling people something that we want them to know. Sometimes we get an old idea all wrapped up with a new label and fail to recognize it for what it is. The whole idea of publicity or public relations for roads is simply telling people about roads and the problems of building, maintaining, and financing roads.
Not so many years ago there was no need to tell the people about roads, for a group of them organized, named one of their number road supervisor, and then, at his direction, spent several days working on the roads. Today only a small percentage of our population has anything to do with the actual construction or maintenance of a road, their only connection being through the funds which they contribute in taxes and fees for road-building and maintenance. But that does not mean that they are not interested, that they do not want to know what is being done.

This is the place for the road-builder to step in with his publicity program, telling the motorists what is being done, what they are getting for their money, and the problems he faces in attempting to give them the kind of roads and streets they expect.

ROAD NEWS HARD TO GET

When I was assigned this topic, I immediately thought of the years that I had spent on a newspaper and the problems of getting news about what was being done to improve the roads and streets. Usually it was almost a major operation, and I am afraid that too frequently it was a desire to get rid of me, rather than to inform the people who would read the paper, that finally led to some bits of information being given.

I began to wonder if my experience was typical of other newspapermen over the state, whether the county engineers or road superintendents still regarded newspaper reporters as something to be put up with and put out at the first opportunity. As a result of this curiosity, I began to write letters. Some of them went to the men in charge of county highway departments that have a high rating due to the attention they give to providing interesting facts and figures about roads to their local newspapers for the information of the newspaper readers.

Most of the letters went to newspaper editors. Some of these men are in charge of the big metropolitan papers that have thousands of readers. More of them went to the editors of the smaller daily papers and to the men who edit the weekly papers. The group questioned represented all sections of the state and all political beliefs.

Almost to a man, these editors of your home-town papers expressed the hope that in some way you might be aroused to the importance of providing information about roads. They say that it is almost impossible to get material for publication in their papers about the county highways and the city streets. They charge that partisan politics enter into the dispensing of what news is given out; that they are the victims of buck-passing with no one willing to assume responsibility for giving out information.

Written frankly, for they are to remain nameless, here are some of the comments:
"I cannot remember when any of our road authorities have ever volunteered a piece of news."

"Most of us have to drag news out of the county commissioners if anything is to be done, and their reluctance to give construction and improvement work on the roads any publicity often results in considerable opposition and antagonism to their program."

"We started last spring to find out what roads were to be improved but were unsuccessful, and not until work was started did we discover that improvement was being done on roads past the home of two of the present commissioners and a former member of the board."

"We heard that a number of miles of roads were to be improved by the county, and the engineer said that the roads had been selected but that he could not release the list. It was not until work had actually started or, in some cases, was almost finished, that we could get any information."

"In this county it is difficult to get information about road activities, but we will soon have a change in the board of commissioners and maybe we will have better luck."

These, gentlemen, represent the opinions expressed by your home-town newspapers. Not a charge of dishonesty was made; not a question was raised as to your sincerity or your ability to give the motorists an efficient road system; but you are indicted for carelessness and failure to take advantage of the most effective medium possible in keeping the people informed of your problems.

In all frankness, I too have a few bruises as a result of some of the comments that were made about publicity for the State Highway Commission, but I expect to profit from them and I hope that you will profit equally from those that apply to you.

CO-OPERATING WITH THE NEWSPAPERS

Now that we have taken our medicine, let's look around and see what other people are doing. Here are some excerpts from a letter from one of the county engineers who is in charge of county roads:

"The editors of our papers generally come to my office at least once a week to ask for news. I give them details of work that is being carried on, the location of the project, the kind of work done, and its importance to the road system and to the community. I use photographs showing conditions of bridges with detailed statements in presenting data to the papers and to county officials."

Another county highway superintendent explains that he keeps in close touch with the local newspaper, suggesting subjects and offering photographs dealing with the county roads as matters of interest to the readers of the paper. He goes even further in his publicity program, reporting that keep-
ing equipment in good repair, well-painted and neatly stenciled, keeping road signs painted and the roadside clean, are material factors in his success as a road supervisor.

Needless to say, none of the comments I reported a few minutes ago came from newspaper editors in the counties where these men are in charge of the road system.

Nothing that these two engineers report is impossible for every county to do. It is only a matter of spending a few minutes occasionally to discuss road activities with the newspaper editor or reporter, seeing that he has the information from which he can prepare an accurate statement that will be of interest to every reader of the paper.

I know that many of you regard a newspaper man with suspicion, that you look for the joker in every question that he asks, and that you keep your fingers crossed whenever one is within hearing distance. And yet, the editor of your local paper or the reporter who calls at your office can become your most effective worker if given half a chance. Whereas you may be able to tell your story to a dozen persons, he can tell it to hundreds—many of whom you may never see.

There is not one of Indiana's more than four hundred newspapers that does not do more for the community than the community does for the newspaper; not one that will not welcome the opportunity to aid you in informing the public on the subject of roads and road problems. I doubt whether there is a single county represented here today in which the county commissioners and the engineer or supervisor have ever sat down with the editors of the county to discuss their road programs. Don't undertake such a meeting unless you are sincere and are willing to put all the cards on the table. If you are, you can have the support of the newspaper regardless of politics.

The operation of a practicable publicity program for the average county is only a matter of co-operation. In the first place, there must be some one with authority to give out information, whether it be the county engineer or the road superintendent or one of the commissioners is not important. It must be a person who knows the facts and has the information and figures available. The greater ability he has to recognize a news story, or to present his facts in an interesting manner, the more successful he will be and the more publicity will he obtain.

Today, pictures are an important part of every newspaper, and there is no more effective way in which to tell a story. There is no county that can not afford to spend a few dollars a year for pictures of the work done on its roads and to offer those to the newspapers. Pictures constitute a record of the conditions of roads and bridges that increases in value with the years, and a file of pictures can be a valuable asset in every road and street department.
ANALYZING OUR SALES PROGRAM

But before we get in too deep on specific suggestions, let's see just what we have to sell, whom we expect to sell it to, and how we expect to accomplish our purpose.

Indiana has a three-sided highway system—the state system, the ninety-two county systems, and the street systems in the cities and towns. We have some 76,000 miles of state and county roads in addition to the many miles of city streets. These roads carry a traffic that covers an average of 15,000,000 vehicular miles each 24 hours.

That is what we have to sell.

Every mile of every road and every street is maintained, and all new construction is financed from the receipts of a tax upon motor-vehicle fuel and from other fees paid by the users of the roads.

These motorists, then, are our audience.

The question becomes one of selling, or rather informing, the motorist about this network of roads that we operate for him. The average person has little conception of what it costs to build a mile of road or to maintain that road after it is built. When he reads that the State Highway Commission receives $20,000,000, he can see no reason why every mile of road could not be gold-plated. He must be reminded that there are 10,000 miles of state highways and that the $20,000,000 represents but an average of $2,000 a mile. He must also be reminded that it costs an average of $500 a mile to maintain the state highway system, that it costs approximately $35,000 a mile to build high-type pavements, and that other construction costs are proportionally high. The same thing must be done in the county and the city.

We must point out that demands for road improvement far exceed the funds provided, that the services he expects and demands are costly, whether it be cleaning the roads and streets after a snowstorm or marking the roads for his information and convenience. We must keep him informed of the effect that increased traffic volume and the heavier loads carried have on our roads, and we must not let him forget that his demand for motoring safety is costing a larger and larger share of the funds available.

We who are in the road business are in the same position as the man who is put in charge of a farm. We have certain resources with which to produce a crop, and our success or failure is judged by the use to which we put these resources and the crop of roads which we produce. It is one of our obligations to keep the motorist informed on what we are doing, what we have accomplished, and the problems which we face.

Regardless of whether you are in charge of a state highway system, a county road system, or a city's streets, you have a dual responsibility—to maintain the best possible system of
roads or streets possible with the funds available, and to keep the users of those roads and streets fully informed about your problems and operations.

SELLING THE PUBLIC ON HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

T. R. Johnston,

Director of Information, Purdue University

The University always is happy to be of service to any group in the state that is working for the common good, and all of us here derive a great deal of satisfaction in working for and with you men who represent such a powerful force in our lives today. I congratulate you on the job you are doing in providing in practically every township of the state roads that are usable almost every day in the year.

As modern missionaries for better roads, we need to tell the public of our roads as well as to know how to build them. Here in Indiana the people are road conscious. They are proud of the excellent highway system of which we boast and for which we boast day in and day out. But in some counties the people know more about their roads than in others, and usually this interest and knowledge can be traced to publicity.

Men concerned with road construction and maintenance are expending public money. All taxpayers are stockholders in the highways. As stockholders they are entitled to know about their own business, what it costs to build and operate, what use is made of the business, or what it returns. Facts about these matters are all that are needed. If you report to your stockholders through the newspapers and through the radio or by word of mouth, they are going to know what problems you face and what problems their own business is facing.

We at the University feel that way about Purdue and our relationships with the people of the state, and your situation is quite comparable to ours.

In preparing something that I might present here today of interest and value to you men, I submitted some questions about roads to a few people to determine what they thought and what they really knew about roads. Here are the questions and some of the answers:

1. How many miles of state and county roads are there in Indiana?

The answers to this ranged all the way from 40 to 100,000 and only three out of 14 persons knew that we had about 10,000 miles in the state highway system; and none of them knew that the county system contained over 66,000 miles. The actual total road mileage is almost 77,000.

2. What state has the greatest percentage of its road mileage improved?

Most of them “guessed” that Indiana was at or near the top, although four had no idea of how this state stood.