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COLONEL POPE ON GOOD HIGHWAYS
 IN AMERICA.

Advocates State and Federal Aid in
 Road Building—Special Bonds For
 Raising Funds—What the Farmers
 Have Been Taught.

Personally I believe in an extensive
 development of both state and federal
 roads, writes Colonel Albert A. Pope in
 Harper's Weekly. For many years we
 have expended liberal sums of money
 for the betterment of rivers and har-
 bors, and the results accomplished are
 commendable; but we must not lose
 sight of the fact that a great majority
 of the people live away from the coasts
 and waterways, in regions where the
 necessity for good highways is im-
 perative.

In many cases these people need the
 appropriations and national aid a great
 deal more than those dwelling nearer
 the seaboard or on streams that team
 with industry. The highways are the
 natural feeders to railways, and im-
 provements on them materially in-
 crease both interstate and international
 commerce. If our government has
 seen fit to be liberal in river and har-
 bor work, it is reasonable to expect
 that the building and maintenance of
 public highways must demand the
 same attention. There is an interde-
 pendency here which cannot be over-
 looked by those who analyze this ques-
 tion aright.

It has long been a mooted question as
 to what is the best method of raising
 funds for the construction of public
 highways, but I know of no better way
 than for state and federal government
 to issue special bonds for the purpose.
 Three per cent fifty year bonds of this
 kind would find an immediate market,
 and they could be paid by a sinking
 fund of 2 per cent per annum, which
 would mean that there would be charged
 against this indebtedness 5 per cent
 per annum to be provided for by taxa-
 tion. Such bonds could be issued from
 time to time as the work progressed, so
 that funds would always be available
 up to the limit of the bonded indebted-
 ness agreed upon.

There is a trait in American charac-
 ter which makes us ultra conservative
 on some issues, especially where long
 established custom causes us to travel
 in ruts so deep that it is difficult to
 leave them.

For years the inhabitants of the rural
 districts of our country deceived them-
 selves in believing that the best, and by
 that is meant the cheapest, way to pay
 a road tax was to work it out by a
 definite quota of day's labor on the
 highways. It took a far reaching and
 aggressive educational campaign to
 persuade them that the old method of
 road building and repair was unneces-
 sarily costly and thoroughly ineffec-
 tual. Nor was this reformation well
 started until some communities had
 made a practical demonstration of the
 actual value of good highways to those
 who depend on the soil for a living.

In working out his road tax the farmer
 clung to the idea that a dollar saved
 was as good as a dollar earned, and at
 the same time he lost sight of the truth
 that it is good business policy to
 invest a dollar which will bring back
 two. Once the farmer was shown by
 object lessons that good highways,
 passable the year round, were essential
 to a profitable handling of farm prod-
 ucts he freely expressed astonishment
 at having been fooled by the methods
 inherited from his ancestors.

This educational work, which in its
 inception called for great energy and
 the liberal expenditure of time and
 money, was later on helped by both
 state and federal government. An ap-
 propriation was made by congress for
 the purpose of collecting and dissemin-
 ating information on road building
 and repair, road materials and other
 kindred topics. As a result the farmers
 learned that to build roads properly,
 though apparently expensive, was
 in reality an economic measure. They
 were led to see that the highways were
 natural feeders of railways and that it
 was as much of a detriment to have
 produce snowbound or mudbound on
 the farm as to have freight congested
 on the railroad. They comprehended
 the difference in cost between hauling
 a ton a mile on good and bad roads,
 and they realized, too, that with pass-
 able roads the year round the hauling
 to station and other shipping points
 could be done to advantage out of sea-
 son when draft animals were not need-
 ed for plowing or harvesting.

These few paragraphs will indicate
 in outline the manner in which this
 great reform was started by agitation
 and fostered by education until the
 question is not, "Shall we have good
 roads?" but "How can we best secure
 and maintain them?"

Experience has taught us the valua-
 ble lesson that highways must be con-
 structed and cared for under skilled su-
 pervision. This point is emphasized by
 the fact that the demand for trained
 road engineers is constantly increasing,
 and to meet it our educational institu-
 tions and colleges are offering a regu-
 lar course of study to fit students for
 this important work. A number of
 states have appointed highway com-
 missions, whose duty is to suitably
 provide for the expenditure of money
 appropriated for state highways.

Though the methods of procedure in
 various states differ, it is generally ad-
 mitted that one of the best plans is to
 complete sections of state roads in each
 of the counties, so that they may serve
 as object lessons and in their building
 supervisors and laborers may be trained
 to the work. These sections are
 parts of a carefully studied plan to
 connect large cities and towns through-
 out the state and also to unite with and
 form a continuation of highways in
 neighboring states, so as to facilitate
 both local and through traffic.

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