

GOOD ROADS

SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. BRYAN, APRIL 28, 1903, AT THE GOOD ROADS CONVENTION, HELD AT ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI.

I desire, in the first place, to acknowledge my obligation to your president, Mr. Moore, for his efforts to enlighten me on this subject. He came out to Nebraska some three or four weeks ago and urged upon me the importance of attending this meeting. I have learned more about good roads from him and from the literature that he has brought to my attention, than I ever knew before.

I have become exceedingly interested in this subject, as I have studied it. In fact, I have been thinking how many questions there are that enlist the thought and arouse the interest of those who seek to do something for their fellow-men. If we attend a meeting of home missionaries, we are surprised to find how much need there is in this country for home missionary work; and after we have listened to the speeches made at such meetings we make up our mind that the work of the home missionary is an exceedingly important work. If we attend a meeting of the foreign missionary society we are amazed to find what a large world this is, how much sacrifice has been made by foreign missionaries, and how extended is their field of labor. If we attend an educational meeting, and hear great educators speak, we wonder that we could have been so ignorant of the great forces at work for the uplifting of our people, and we are astonished to find how many people there are, with all our schools, public and private, who are yet illiterate. And then, if we go to a prison congress and hear people talk about the various means of reforming people, why, we find that there is another wide field for energy. And so with many other kinds of work, not to speak of political work. And as I have gone from one of these meetings to another I have been more and more impressed with the largeness of the vineyard in which people can work if they really want to work. And then, when I read in the paper that someone has committed suicide because there was nothing for him in the world, I cannot help thinking that if one has a proper conception of life and measures it by its outflow and not by its income, he will find so much to do that he will never despair.

They tell us about the wonderful improvement in shipping. I was interested this morning when I heard of the launching of a boat that would carry eight thousand tons more than any other boat ever built. It gives us some idea of the magnitude of our foreign commerce. I was glad to hear them talk of the railroads; for in this country we have wonderful railroad development. But, my friends, nothing I have turned my attention to in the last few years has seemed to me to come nearer to the people than this question of good country roads. I find that there is a new field there, and I have already advanced so far that I have made up my mind to build a little road out near my farm, as an object lesson; and not only that, but to do what I can to get my county and my state to do something in the matter of roads.

I confess to you that this subject, this great subject, is one that I had scarcely thought of until Mr. Moore called it to my attention. And you know how a person's attention will be attracted to a thing—I might tell you the first thing in regard to it that challenged my attention: I asked him about how wide these roads ought to be? He said that about sixteen feet was the ordinary width—I remember that; that attracted my attention—sixteen feet to one road. When I got to reading up on the subject, I found it was not sufficient to have a road wide enough for one wagon; it had to be wide enough for wagons to pass; there must be room enough for two wagons to pass—a double standard road, so to speak. You can imagine how intensely interested I became in the matter.

Then I began to investigate, and I found a political reason for interesting myself in these roads that I have not heard mentioned by any speaker today—and, my friends, that is not a reflection upon the gentlemen who have spoken, because they have covered a wide range, and have said about all on this subject, it seems to me, that could be said. But, you know, our ideas become larger with our experience, and a thought

has come to me in regard to these good roads that probably has not occurred to any of the rest of you. I do not claim any special originality in thinking of it, it simply shows that we learn from experience. In two campaigns I noticed that a great many of our people did not get out to vote, and it occurred to me that it might have been because the roads were not good enough. I have such confidence in the doctrines that I have been advocating that I am satisfied if the people had not been stuck in the mud they would have gone to the polls and voted for our ticket; and, therefore, I think I must commence a little further back. I think before trying to show people how they ought to vote, I must show them how they can get to the polls to vote. I have come to the conclusion that next to getting into the right road, it is important to have roads passable. I had to prepare this speech before I had time to read what others had said. And then, having prepared the speech, I was at liberty to read and find out what I ought to have said in the speech. I felt a little like a young man I knew in southern Illinois: He studied medicine awhile and then quit and began practicing; he said he thought he would practice while he was young, and study when he was old and could not practice. I feel a good deal in the same position.

In going over this subject I jotted down certain things I wanted to submit for your consideration, and I assure you I am more interested in getting before you certain ideas, than I am in the manner of presenting those ideas. In fact, I have been so busy trying to present ideas that I fear I have neglected the matter of ornamentation.

The expenditure of money for the permanent improvement of the common roads can be defended, first, as a matter of justice to the people who live in the country; second, as a matter of advantage to the people who do not live in the country, and, third, on the ground that the welfare of the nation demands that the comforts of country life shall, as far as possible, keep pace with the comforts of city life.

It is a well-known fact, or a fact easily ascertained, that the people in the country, while paying their full share of county, state and federal taxes, receive as a rule only the general benefits of government, while the people in the cities have, in addition to the protection afforded by the government, the advantage arising from the expenditure of public moneys in their midst. The county seat of a county, as a rule, enjoys the refreshing influence of an expenditure of county money out of proportion to its population. The capital of a state and the cities where the state institutions are located, likewise receive the benefit of an expenditure of public money out of proportion to their population. When we come to consider the distribution of the moneys collected by the federal government we find that the cities, even in a larger measure, monopolize the incidental benefits that arise from the expenditure of public moneys.

The appropriations of the last session of congress amounted to \$753,484,018, divided as follows:

Agriculture	\$ 5,978,160
Army	78,138,752
Diplomatic and consular service..	1,968,250
District of Columbia	8,647,497
Fortifications	7,188,416
Indians	8,512,950
Legislative, executive and judicial departments	27,595,958
Military academy	563,248
Navy	81,877,291
Pensions	139,847,600
Postoffice department	153,401,409
Sundry civil	82,722,955
Deficiencies	21,561,572
Permanent annual	132,589,820
Miscellaneous	3,250,000

It will be seen that the appropriation for the agricultural department was insignificant when compared with the total appropriations—less than one per cent. The appropriations for the army and navy alone amounted to twenty-five times the sum appropriated for the agricultural department. An analysis of the expenditures of the federal government will show that an exceedingly

small proportion of the money raised from all the people gets back to the farmers directly; how much returns indirectly it is impossible to say, but certain it is that the people who live in the cities receive by far the major part of the special benefits that come from the showering of public money upon the community. The advantage obtained locally from government expenditures is so great that the contests for county seats and state capitals usually exceed in interest, if not in bitterness, the contests over political principles and policies. So great is the desire to secure an appropriation of money for local purposes that many will excuse a congressman's vote on either side of any question if he can but secure the expenditure of a large amount of public money in his district.

I mention this because it is a fact that I have not heard referred to. The point is, that the farmer not only pays his share of the taxes, but more than his share, yet very little of what he pays gets back to the farmer.

People in the city pay not only less than their share, as a rule, but get back practically all of the benefits that come from the expenditure of the people's money. Let me show you what I mean when I say that the farmer pays more than his share: The farmer has visible property, and in every form of direct taxation visible property pays more than its share. Why? Because the man with visible property always pays. If he has an acre of land the assessor can find it; if he has horses, they can counted; his cattle can be enumerated. If he has pigs, they begin to squeal when the assessor approaches; he cannot hide them. The farmer has nothing that escapes taxation; and in all direct taxation, he not only pays on all he has, but the farmer who has visible property has to pay a large part of the taxes that ought to be paid by the owners of invisible property, who escape taxation.

And when we come to indirect taxation, the farmers' share is even more, because, when you collect taxes on consumption, you make people pay, not in proportion to what they have, but in proportion to what they need. And God has so made us that the farmer needs as much as anybody else, even though he may not have as much as other people with which to supply his needs. In our indirect taxation, therefore, for the support of the federal government, the farmer pays even more out of proportion to his wealth. And then, when we remember that when we collect taxes on consumption, we make the farmer pay not only on that which is imported, but upon much of that which is produced at home, we find that the farmer's burden is not measured by what the treasury receives, but is frequently many times what the treasury receives. While in indirect taxation the burden upon the farmer is far greater than it ought to be, yet when you trace the expenditure of public moneys distributed by the federal government, you find that even in a larger measure special benefits go to the great cities and not to the rural communities. This point I desire to emphasize and make clear.

The improvement of the country roads can be justified also on the ground that the farmer, the first and most important of the producers of wealth, ought to be in position to hold his crop and market it at the most favorable opportunity, whereas at present he is virtually under compulsion to sell it as soon as it is matured, because the roads may become impassable at any time during the fall, winter or spring. Instead of being his own warehouseman, the farmer is compelled to employ middlemen, and share with them the profits upon his labor.

I believe as a matter of justice the farmer ought to have roads that will enable him to keep his crop and take it to the market at the best time; and not place him, as he is placed today, in a position where they can run down the price of what he has to sell just when he must sell, and then, when he has disposed of it, run the price up and give the speculator what the farmer ought to have.

The farmer has a right to insist upon roads that will enable him to go to town, to church, to the school house, and to the homes of his neighbors, as occasion may require, and with the ex-

(Continued on Page 5.)