

A Good Roads Plan

There is a great deal of discussion today on the question of road construction—I mean public highways—and much is being said that is quite uncomplimentary to the present system of road construction. In fact, you can scarcely pick up a newspaper without finding a complaint either against the contractors or boards of commissioners on the improper construction of roads.

We are not far enough removed from political influence and the desire to graft to get as high efficiency in road construction as is necessary to guarantee permanent roads.

I have given some thought to the question of road construction and may have read more on this subject than the average man, because of my having the subject on my mind and, therefore, I may possibly be more familiar with the general complaints being made on account of faulty road construction.

In order that we may get away from the political influence and drive the corrupt politician out of the road building business, I believe it would be wise to put the United States government in direct charge of the construction of our trunk lines of highways and authorize the United States army to supervise the construction, using their splendid engineering department, also utilizing all the present army equipment that would be applicable to road building.

I believe that the government should operate its own brick plants, cement plants, crushed stone plants, steel mills, for its structural iron—in fact, produce all the materials needed for road construction. The Bureau of Standards should pass upon the kind and quality of materials that would be used in the construction of the roads and the roads should be twenty miles apart; east, west, north and south, across the United States.

The engineering department of the United States army should be directed to make contours of all streams that would permit the development of water power and wherever power could be developed, bridges should be built, with concrete going sufficiently deep into the sub-strata to produce proper dams and at the same time, make the top of the bridge the roadway across the stream.

This kind of construction would develop a great deal of power that could be utilized in running mills and at the same time, there would be water sufficient to irrigate all our small valleys, which would mean an abundance of food-stuffs throughout the growing season and with good roads, the farmer would be more accessible, the consumer would be able to purchase much of his living direct from the farmer and fresh from the field.

Permanent, every-day-in-the-year roads will mean much in the way of reducing high living costs. It will make it possible for farm communities to own jointly powerful trucks that will pull a number of trailers and will guarantee to the farmer an assurance that he can market his products at will and without depending on insufficient cars on steam roads to carry his products to market.

This system of roads will do more to reduce the cost of living than any one thing. It will enable those who are equipped to go to the country for their foodstuffs, to go direct to the farmer for them and it will enable the farmer to bring to the doors of those who do not have this equipment, his products at a reasonable cost.

The farmer can go to the mines for his coal and transport it direct to his own bin. Many small coal mines can be kept in constant operation that do not now have rail facilities on which they can deliver their coal. Such a system of roads would make steam lines a competitive proposition. There would be no hiding coal cars on blind sidings and then pleading a shortage of cars, because the small mines would be busy supplying coal direct to users and the large operator would be compelled to keep his mines going.

This system of roads would class the steam roads as common carriers, instead of being operated as speculative properties, which was the practice prior to the war and will, no doubt, again be the practice, if the properties go back into the hands of the former owners.

The United States government can popularize itself with 90% of its people by building such a system of roads, building them quickly and, of course, they will be built efficiently, if the army is in charge of the work. Think of the great group of intelligent soldier boys in charge of thousands of trucks, plants for producing brick,

crushed stone plants, cement plants, concrete mixers and practical in every way. Think of their interest in assisting to prepare our country for the highest efficiency in peace times and making preparations that would make us safe from the entire world, in case of war.

The states and counties would complete the inside, or intersecting roads, purchasing their materials from the government and building their roads under the same supervision and standards and in this system of construction, we would, in a very few years, have a system of roads that would not, or could not, be surpassed in any other part of the world.

The cost of government road construction would be borne equally through direct taxation by the people of the nation. The extremely well-to-do, who enjoy their heavy motor cars, would pay their full share of road construction and this should be so. It is the proper system, because it compels those who are amply able to bear the major portion of the burden to pay their full share and why should not the well-to-do be compelled to make large contributions to the country's preparedness, if the great masses of common people are to offer up their lives in defense of the government, when it has to go to war?

The government calls upon the farmer and mechanic in times of great need to increase production, in order that necessities of life may be abundant, when they are needed and the response has always met with hearty approval and cooperation. Therefore, I believe it to be only fair and right that the government would step in at this time and take charge of our road construction, to the end that every farmer in the United States would have the opportunity every day in the year of delivering his produce to market.

We have reached a point in our country today, where our transportation equipment is entirely too heavy for our present roads, in even the most favorable seasons. There are many months in the year, in which the roads are not accessible for our present motor equipment and, in order that the country may keep pace with the rest of the world, it is necessary that we begin in the most practical way to build our trunk line highways. With the United States army in charge, there will be no question as to rapid progress of the construction, no bickering as to the kind or quality of the material, there will be no political pull as to what particular stretch of road must be built within a given time and there will be no need of complaint about the government-owned and state-managed trucks; there will be no need of inspectors who draw salaries from both the material men and the state. The cost of construction will be very much reduced and the quality of construction will be very much increased.

If the United States army could build the Panama Canal and without the slightest suspicion of graft, the United States army can build our trunk line highways. Why not ask the government to take charge, at once, of our trunk line highway construction and utilize the present equipment that the government now owns, instead of either sacrificing it, or allowing it to rust and rot?

This plan would put all the government trucks and automobiles into actual service and create an additional market for equipment of this kind and when these roads are built, the army should be in direct supervision of them, looking after the needed repairs and policing the roads that traffic rules would be obeyed to the letter.

This construction means both peace time and war time preparedness.

JAMES KIRBY RISK.

MR. TAFT ON THE DRY LAW

(From Chicago Tribune, July 27, 1920.)

Pointe au Pei, Quebec, July 22.—(Editor of The Tribune.)—I am in receipt of several letters commenting on an interview with me said to be reported in The Chicago Tribune in which I am represented as approving a modification of the Volstead law so as to allow the manufacture and sale of light wines and beer. I have not seen the interview. A reporter of your paper met me at the Blackstone hotel just as I was leaving for an extended speaking trip in the Dakotas in June last. He rode to the train with me. In that conversation I expressed no opinion favorable to the modification of the Volstead act. I said I was in favor of its enforcement, that I was a democrat spelled with a small d and bowed to the will of

the people expressed in a constitutional way. Your reporter pressed me to say whether under the eighteenth amendment congress had power to define intoxicating liquor in such a way as to allow the making and sale of light wines and beer with a greater percentage of alcohol than now provided in the Volstead law. I answered that congress had that power within the limits of good faith and that the supreme court would be very loath to attribute bad faith to congress, a coordinate branch of the government, in such a case. In respect to the enforcement of prohibition, I ventured the opinion that it could be better enforced by moderate penalties and reasonable provisions than by draconian severity and that harshly inquisitorial measures and heavy penalties, sought by fanatics, would obstruct rather than aid the law and would stir protest and turn the people against prohibition.

As a matter of fact, I am not in favor of allowing light wines and beer to be sold under the eighteenth amendment. I believe it would defeat the purpose of the amendment. No such distinction as that between wines and beer on the one hand, and spiritous liquor on the other, is practical as a police measure. I did not favor national prohibition when it was an issue. It has been adopted under constitutional forms by the people and it should be enforced in good faith. Any such loophole as light wines and beer would make the amendment a laughing stock. Kindly publish this.

W. H. TAFT.

THE NINETEENTH AMENDMENT

The Nineteenth amendment to the constitution of the United States reads as follows: "Section 1.—The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Section 2.—Congress shall have power by appropriate legislation to enforce the provisions of this article."

The amendment was first submitted to congress January 10, 1878. It was finally passed by the House of Representatives on May 21, 1919, and by the Senate on June 4, 1919. It was ratified by 37 states in the following order:

Ill.	June 10, 1913	N. Dak.	Dec. 1, 1919
Wis.	June 10, 1919	S. Dak.	Dec. 4, 1919
Mich.	June 10, 1919	Colo.	Dec. 12, 1919
Kan.	June 16, 1919	R. I.	Jan. 6, 1920
N. Y.	June 16, 1919	Ken.	Jan. 6, 1920
Ohio	June 16, 1919	Ore.	Jan. 12, 1920
Penn.	June 24, 1919	Ind.	Jan. 16, 1920
Mass.	June 25, 1919	Wyo.	Jan. 27, 1920
Texas	June 28, 1919	Nev.	Feb. 7, 1920
Iowa	July 2, 1919	N. J.	Feb. 9, 1920
Mo.	July 3, 1919	Idaho	Feb. 11, 1920
Ark.	July 23, 1919	Ariz.	Feb. 12, 1920
Mont.	July 30, 1919	N. M.	Feb. 19, 1920
Nebr.	Aug. 2, 1919	Okl.	Feb. 28, 1920
Minn.	Sept. 8, 1919	W. Va.	Mch. 10, 1920
N. H.	Sept. 10, 1919	Wash.	Mch. 22, 1920
Utah	Sept. 30, 1919	Tenn.	Aug. 18, 1920
Calif.	Nov. 1, 1919	Conn.	Sept. 21, 1920
Maine	Nov. 5, 1919		

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RICHARD COBDEN, JOHN BRIGHT, AND WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

When any man of prominence in public life does a thing so startling as that done by William Jennings Bryan when he resigned as Secretary of State it is to be expected that the people will be divided in their opinions and comments on the action.

Mr. Bryan is receiving both commendation and criticism. Some of the criticism in the newspapers is partisan. There are men who never see any good in those who differ with them on important questions; and they are, in the press and elsewhere, ever like barking, snarling curs. But a great deal of the criticism in which men and women often indulge is due to lack of information and errors in judgment.

Our opinion is that Mr. Bryan's action in resigning should be commended.

He had long stood as an apostle of peace. In his advocacy thereof he had gone beyond Mr. Wilson either as a private citizen or as president. As chief magistrate of the nation Mr. Wilson, in his handling of the problems in our relations with Germany and England, had not advanced so far as Mr. Bryan had. Bryan desired to act in accordance with the treaties recently negotiated with many different nations and arbitrate certain questions. President Wilson did not. Moreover, Mr. Bryan was of opinion that a note to England concerning her persistent disregard of neutral rights, and of international