

AUTOMOBILES AND GOOD ROADS

A Department Designed to Help Farmers With Progressive Road Ideas.

Logan Walter Page is director of roads in the Department of Agriculture and an acknowledged expert on expenditure. This is the second of two articles dealing with his views. We counsel our readers to study it.

NATIONAL aid road improvement is one of the plans proposed, and I have no doubt this plan will be inaugurated in the near future. State aid is already well under way, and has been constantly growing since 1891, when New Jersey first embarked on the plan of having aid granted directly by the state, and a measure of state supervision provided. Counties and states are bonding themselves to build hard-surfaced roads, and this is helping to some extent, but to my mind the primary necessity is so to reform and revise our existing road systems as to insure the efficient construction of the roads, continuous and adequate maintenance and honest and capable handling of our road revenues.

I had hoped that when the states as units took hold of the road problem they at least would eliminate to a very great degree the baneful influence of politics, but the history of the changes in state highway departments during the last 10 years would indicate that politics is as active there as in local subdivisions. During the past 10 years there have been changes in the control of the engineering work in the state highway departments of Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington and West Virginia. In the state of New York alone there have been nine changes made in the state highway department in the last 15 years. While it would not be fair to characterize all of these changes as unjustifiable, it is evident that the tenure of office is, as a general rule, insecure; that the official, who should be absolutely free from political control, is almost totally unable to act except at the dictates of those very forces.

Civil Service Advocated.

The remedy, to my mind, is the enactment of strict and clear-cut civil service legislation applicable to the entire road system in the each state, and the conscientious and wise enforcement of such legislation. In the first place, a state highway engineer should be chosen by a non-partisan board, and should hold office at the discretion of such a board. All subordinate positions in the department should be filled by rigid competitive examinations, without regard to party affiliations. At this point I wish to call attention to the fact that we have recently filled the office of assistant director of the United States office of public roads by such a competitive examination, and practically our entire force, from messenger boy to director, is filled in the same way. The results are infinitely more satisfactory than the old spoils system.

In regard to county and township road work, I think it would be advisable, wherever the system of government permits, to have the county as the smallest unit of administration, and to have one county official who is required by law to possess a practical knowledge of road construction and maintenance, and who is appointed after an examination to be prescribed by the state highway department in connection with the State civil service commission. While it probably would be necessary to give the County Board of Commissioners, or such officials as have charge of county affairs, the power to remove this road official, they should be compelled to appoint his successor upon certification from the register of the eligibles established by the state highway department and the State Civil Service Commission.

Fair Compensation Urged.

This would prevent removal of road officials for the purpose of substituting local politicians, and would tend to permanency of office on the part of good men and the easy removal of incompetent men. There should be provided by legislation and regulation sufficient compensation for the county road officer so that efficient men might be attracted to the work. Constant employment should be given,

and his subordinates should be capable men, supplied in accordance with the spirit of the merit system.

The objection has been made to the employment of county engineers that some counties are utterly unable to pay a salary such as a competent engineer would require. This difficulty can be overcome in two ways, first by legislation so framed as to permit two or more counties to jointly employ an engineer, or, second, by making the civil service regulations sufficiently

elastic as to enable a practical and efficient superintendent to be employed rather than a high-salaried technical engineer where conditions appeared to warrant it. Only when we arrive at the state of development where we recognize in the fullest degree the necessity for the application of the merit system in road administration in every unit of government will we attain that standard of excellence in our public roads which would make them comparable to the roads in Europe.

but the quantity of the oil used.

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Oil Is Important Factor With Auto

Sixty Per Cent of Motorists' Troubles Are Due to Faulty Lubricants, Says Fred J. Wagner

By FRED J. WAGNER

EXPERIENCE of oil experts has proved that about 60 per cent of the troubles to which motors are subject is due primarily to faulty lubrication. The remarks are based on my own personal experience in the oil business and not merely from hearsay.

Faulty lubrication can be subdivided into several classes—among them improper lubrication, insufficient supply, over-lubrication and, most important of all, the failure to use a pure oil drawn from the well section of Pennsylvania, which state produces the best crude oil; the failure to use a lubricant free from acid treatment or one with a high-firing point, good viscosity and, in short, one which will lubricate under all motoring conditions.

The supply of Pennsylvania crude oil is so limited and the demand so great that there has gradually crept into the field of automobile lubrication the use of cheaper products, commonly known as "midcontinent oil," having heavy asphaltic bases, and coming from the fields in Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Texas and through to the Pacific Coast.

Pennsylvania crude, having for its base paraffin, offers the best oil for the lubrication of the automobile motor, considering the exacting requirements of high speed, long-continued runs, the high heat generated in the explosion chamber, etc.

In order that this midcontinent and Western oil having an inferior base may appear pleasing to the eye and compete or compare, at least when offered for sale, with the purer and higher priced oils which come from the restricted fields of Pennsylvania, the refiners of the asphaltic oils resort to a number of practices, none of which tends to improve the quality as a lubricant.

The practice most frequently resorted to is the treating of the oil with an acid; then the attempt later to neutralize it with an alkali salt, and by washing free the oil from both the acid and the salt. In theory this is accomplished; in practice there remain a number of salts entirely foreign to the oil as a lubricant, but all of which, as they are foreign products, tend to break down the oil under high degrees of heat generated in the explosion chamber.

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