

THE AURORA BOREALIS

Published every Thursday by DIXON & HOSKINSON, PROPRIETORS

RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION: One year (in advance) \$1 00 Six months 50

Application made for second class rates.

Advertising rates made known upon application to the office.

Aurora, Or., Thursday, Nov. 26, 1908

BUILDING GOOD ROADS

Highway Expert Tells Why the Government Should Help.

HAS THE RIGHT AND ABILITY.

Secretary of Farmers' Good Roads League Points Out How States Can Be Helped by Bond Issues—Definite Conclusions on Construction Methods.

H. H. Gross, secretary of the Farmers' Good Roads league, has written as follows from Chicago to the editor of the New York Tribune on the subject of building improved highways:

Should the federal government by a bond issue assist the states to build public roads? If so, to what extent? The answers to the above questions involve the consideration of several things—first, the right of the government to do so, the need of it, its ability to do so, whether it is a wise policy to adopt. In the brief space available we must assume the necessity for good roads; that their condition affects market conditions and thus concerns all the people; that bad roads are productive of a great and preventable waste that amounts to several dollars a person a year; that one of the greatest needs for the social and economic development and welfare of all the people is good roads.

As to the right or power of the federal government to build or assist to build highways, section 8 of article 1 of the constitution says among other things:

Congress shall have power "to establish postroads and post offices."

More than 40 per cent of all the highways and most of the main roads are used for rural mail delivery and so are postroads in the meaning of the constitution. President Monroe in a message to congress May 4, 1802, says:

In whatever sense the term "establish" is applied to postroads it must be applied in the same sense to post roads.

Cooley in his book on constitutional law says:

Every road within a state, including railroads, canals, turnpikes and navigable streams, existing or created within a state, become a post road whenever by act of the postoffice department provision is made for the transportation of the mails upon or over it.

The above is deemed sufficient to show the government has the unquestionable right to improve highways used for rural mail delivery.

Article I, section 8, clause 1, provides in part: "The congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imports and excises to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States."

Is not highway improvement for the general welfare?

On March 11, 1818, the house of representatives passed the following resolution:

Resolved, That congress has power under the constitution to appropriate money for the construction of post roads, military and other roads and of canals and for the improvement of waterways.

Among the early statesmen who held that the federal government had ample power to build roads were Jefferson, Madison, Clay, Webster, Calhoun and others.

The government has expended millions on the old Cumberland road and a number of military roads, establishing a precedent. The public roads of nearly every civilized country in the world have been built in whole or in part by its general government. It is the only plan that has ever succeeded. It is the world precedent.

As to the need for better highways no argument is necessary. The general government is expending \$35,000,000 a year on rural delivery. According to Senator Hankhead of Alabama, the postoffice department estimates that uniformly good roads would mean longer routes, more regular service and a saving of 20 per cent in the cost. Thus the loss to the postoffice department due to bad roads is now \$7,000,000 a year and is increasing as the service is extended. It will soon reach \$10,000,000 a year. While bad roads reach a loss to the mail service of \$7,000,000 to \$10,000,000 a year, the loss to the farmers and consumers of farm produce cannot be less than twenty times as much.

As to the ability of the federal government to assist in building good roads, how better can we judge this than by comparing the debt per capita of our country with the leading nations of the world that have built good roads and found it paid to do so?

The per capita debt of Germany, according to the Chicago Daily News Almanac and Year Book for 1908, is \$40; England, \$88.83; Italy, \$92; Spain, \$98; France, \$144, and the United States, \$11.11. The amount of annual interest charge to be met by a citizen of Germany is \$2; France, \$0.05; England, \$3.17; United States, 29 cents.

The panic of 1907 was occasioned

largely by the enormous demand for currency "to move the crops." Why need the crops be moved with such haste and at such great inconvenience to the railways and so completely drain the cities of money as to cause a panic and the loss of many millions? The farmer knew the winter and bad road season was approaching and that if he didn't get his crops off before the roads broke up he didn't know how long the embargo of bad roads would prevent him from doing so.

Another factor was the insufficient amount of government bonds to serve as the basis of national bank circulation. As no bonds were available the banks could not increase their circulation, as they would have been glad to do and which would have immediately relieved the financial strain. The country needs good roads, and it needs a larger debt (strange as that may sound). Out of this dilemma the way is easy.

If the federal government was to issue as needed \$400,000,000 of 2 per cent thirty to fifty year bonds to aid in road building it would carry the national debt up from \$11.11 to \$15.55 and the interest charge from 29 to 39 cents per capita. The debt per capita then would be almost exactly where it was ten years ago.

It would require \$8,000,000 a year to pay the interest on the bonds, but every dollar of it would be saved upon the one ton of rural delivery.

Of the 2,100,000 miles of highways about 900,000 miles are post roads, and about 800,000 of these are unimproved. The \$400,000,000 for national aid would give about \$509 a mile, or about 25 per cent of the average cost of building hard roads upon these highways.

After ten years of study of road building at home and abroad the writer has reached the following definite conclusions:

First.—That if we are to have good roads within a generation the federal government must assist in building them.

Second.—That the government contribution be pro rated among the states as the work is done on the basis of one-half the cross area upon the full road mileage of the state and one-half upon the basis of population. The plan works out fairly to all the states. This plan would make available out of \$400,000,000 approximately \$2,900,000 for New York, \$2,900,000 for Pennsylvania, \$2,900,000 for Illinois, \$18,000,000 for Ohio, \$13,000,000 for Michigan, etc.

Third.—That the actual construction of the roads should be done under state supervision upon specifications approved by the United States government engineers.

Fourth.—That the initiative should be left with the respective townships, road districts or parishes, these to furnish at least one-third of the total cost, with the state clothed with power to vote any improvement if of insufficient importance. This power would probably be seldom if ever used. It may be assumed if the road was not a main highway and needed by the people of a township would not vote to build it when they had to raise at least one-third of the money required to do so.

Fifth.—That if this country is to fulfill its high destiny and meet the requirements placed upon it by its wealth, position and its opportunity good roads are a paramount necessity, and to get them speedily requires both federal and state aid to lighten the people to undertake this great work. Good roads will do more for the educational, social and economic development of the whole country than any other single agency.

GOOD ROADS IN ENGLAND.

W. H. Moore Says the United States Should Follow British Example.

W. H. Moore, president of the National Good Roads association, writing to the editor of the Kansas City Star, says:

The finest examples of perfect, easy and durable roads I have found in the British Isles are the Warwick road from Leamington to Warwick castle, about two and a half miles; the Kenilworth road from Leamington to Kenilworth castle, five miles, and the Stratford road from Leamington to Stratford-on-Avon, ten, and a half miles. These roads are about four rods wide between fences. The traveled or improved portion is twenty-two feet wide between grass edges.

All these roads have horse paths on one side. Some of these are carefully prepared with stone averaging from two to three feet deep, the top surfacing being earth. The paths on the side, which are two or three feet from the main road, average about five feet in width. No material has ever been nor ever will be found more suitable to horses' feet and to the horsemen than the common earth surfaced roads. The roads referred to receive careful and constant attention.

In the early season, May or June, they receive an application of coal tar product. This is impervious to rats and slays the dust. The very best interests of the people of the British Isles socially and commercially are concerned by the splendid system of public roads. If the great army of politicians in the United States who are making pyrotechnical speeches and all candidates for municipal, state and federal offices should confine their campaign to the subject of good roads and when elected go after the question in earnest, they would soon accomplish the greatest good in their generation. Every county can afford good roads.

With a little common sense financed by bonding or making a special levy with an interest and a sinking fund consideration any community can possess good roads, with all their attendant blessings. The course of mud roads in the United States is a national, monumental fraud. It is a hideous evidence of misgovernment, a reproach against the advancement of equal rights and liberty to all.

One Thing Left. Elderly Uncle—Spent your entire patrimony, have you, Archibald? Goes through everything? Scapgrace Nephew—Yes, uncle; everything but the bankruptcy court.—Chicago Tribune.

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THE SCOURING RUSH.

A Queer Plant That Can Be Changed Into a Mineral.

The scouring rush, Equisetum hiemale, is an interesting plant which has been put to practical use. In old times its hollow, flidly stems were in great repute for kitchen cleaning purposes. The stems are hollow and are easily separated at the joints. If one would satisfy himself as to the peculiar property that first suggested the use of this rush for scouring purposes he has only to draw a joint across the edge of his teeth to find it like a file.

A very pretty chemical experiment is frequently made with the rush. If one takes a small vial of nitric acid into which any ordinary lead is immersed he will quickly see it dissolve, literally eaten up by the acid. But what does the scouring rush do under such circumstances?

Immediately upon its introduction to the acid the stizzling process begins. The green pulp of the stem is gradually consumed, the tube, however, still retaining its shape, becoming paler and paler in color until after a few hours the specimen is transformed into a pure white alabaster-like column which defies any further attack from the acid.

On taking it from the vial and washing it carefully in running water the operator holds in his hands a beautiful tube of pure, glassy flint, or silex, an object of great microscopic beauty of construction. The scouring rush is no longer a vegetable, but a mineral, and in observing its skeleton of stone the secret of its utility as a scouring brush is easily understood.—New York Tribune.

Handicapped.

"What profession do you think our boy Joe had better adopt?" asked Mrs. Brown.

"I dunno," answered her husband. "Joe is rather handicapped by circumstances. The only profession he's naturally adapted to is that of a capitalist, and I don't quite see where he's going to get the money."

A Tip.

"Look as if you was feelin' pretty good today, James," said the first waiter.

"Yes, t'pton," replied the other. "Some streak o' luck maybe?" "Yes; t'pton tip"—Kansas City Independent.

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