

Profits from Better Roads

THERE are hundreds and hundreds of automobilists in British Columbia, in Tacoma and in Seattle, who would make trips to Portland every year if the roads could be covered in comfort," said A. S. Benson, of Portland, who has just returned from a trip to Vancouver and Victoria.

"If we had the roads we wouldn't have to make any effort at all to secure a great stream of tourists, who would come to Portland to see the many points of interest which lie thickly about the city, but which are now almost inaccessible. And this would be a golden stream, too, for it is the tourists who spend the money. I was gone but 16 days and was economical besides, yet I spent \$550. Multiply that by the number of tourists who would come here if they could, and you will get some idea of what good roads would mean to this community.

"It's mighty impressive to see the way the people in British Columbia are going after the tourists. And I want to say they are getting them, too. Here's an example: From Victoria to Stratheona Park the government is completing a paved road which will enable motorists to travel with ease to Campbell River and all around the lake, which is the beauty spot of the park. This lake is a mile wide and 26 miles long. On every side snow-capped peaks rise up from the very edge of the water, yet a road is being pushed all the way around its border. When this is completed all that the people will have to say is: 'Here is a scenic spot which is not only easy of access, but surpasses anything in Switzerland,' and the tourists will flock there to see the park and leave their money among the residents of the country.

"I drove on high gear all the way out of Seattle to a point 4,000 feet in

elevation in Rainier National Park, where the children could get out of the machine and break chunks of ice off a live glacier. On Mount Hood, I understand, there is a live glacier at an elevation of 3,000 feet, one of the lowest in the world.

"Along this road to Rainier Park big automobile busses fly every few minutes. The passenger busses hold about 25 people and are always full. Freight busses give the farmers of the community easy access to the markets. There are little inns scattered all along the route, and, although none of them serve liquor, all are making a lot of money.

"The people up north informed me that of the \$400,000,000 spent each year by tourists they are getting their share, while down here we are losing ours, simply because we don't have good roads.

"As to our route, we went from here to Vancouver, Washington, and from there to Tacoma, via Kalama, Kelso, Chehalis, Tenino and Olympia. The road is fearfully bad from Vancouver to Kelso, and also around Toledo; but considerable grading is going on near Kelso and Olympia, all of which will be finished this fall.

"After one gets to Seattle, however, it is easy going. A pace of 25 miles an hour can be maintained all the way to Vancouver, B. C. We went by way of Bothell, Everett, Bellingham, Blaine and New Westminster. From Vancouver we shipped to Victoria. There is a paved road 26 feet wide all the way from New Westminster to Vancouver. I think that by next summer the road to Seattle will be by way of Goble, as a new ferry is to be installed there."

With Mr. Benson on his trip were his wife, four children and a nurse.

Good Roads as Crop Producers

THAT an improved road will increase vastly the productiveness of the area through which it runs has now been satisfactorily demonstrated by studies conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture in Virginia. Conditions in Spotsylvania county were investigated with particular care, and the results have proved surprising. In 1909 the county voted \$100,000 to improve 40 miles of roads. Two years after the completion of this work the railroad took away in 12 months from Fredericksburg, the county seat, 71,000 tons of agricultural and forest products hauled over the highways to that town. Before the improvement of the roads this total was only 49,000 tons annually; in other words, the quantity of the county's produce had risen more than 45 per cent. Still more interesting, however, is the increase shown in the quantity of the dairy products. In 1909 these amounted to 114,815 pounds, in 1911 to 273,028 pounds, an increase of practically 140 per cent in two years. In the same time shipments of wheat had increased 59 per cent, tobacco 31 per cent and lumber and other forest products 48 per cent.

In addition to this increase in quantity the cost of hauling each ton of produce was materially reduced. In other words, the farmers not only produce more, but produce more cheaply, for the cost of transportation to market is of course an important factor in the cost of production. From this point of view, it is estimated that the \$100,000 spent in improving the roads in Spotsylvania county saved the farmers of that county \$41,000 a year.

In the past two years the traffic studies of the federal experts show that approximately an average of 65,000 tons of outgoing products were hauled over the improved roads in the county an average distance of 8 miles, or a total of 520,000 "ton-miles." Before the roads were improved it was estimated that the average cost of hauling was 20 cents a "ton-mile"; after the improvement this fell to 12 cents a "ton-mile," or a saving of 8 cents. A saving of 8 cents per mile on 520,000 "ton-miles" is \$41,000 a year. The county's investment of \$100,000 in other words returns a dividend of 40 per cent annually.

Because this saving, in cases of this

character, does not take the form of cash put directly into the farmer's pocket there is a widespread tendency to believe that it is fictitious profit, while as a matter of fact it is just as real a source of profit as an increase in the price of wheat.

In Dinwiddie county, Va., for example, where peanuts are one of the staple crops, the average load for two mules on a main road was about 1,000 pounds before the road was improved. After its improvement the average load was found to be 2,000 pounds, and the time consumed in hauling the larger load to market was much reduced. In other words, one man with a wagon and two mules, could do more than twice as much work with the improved road than with an unimproved road. This is the explanation of the extraordinary rise in the total output of agricultural products in a county with a good road system.

HIDES FOR AUTOS.

AS AN indication of the tremendous size of the automobile industry, it is interesting to note that in one year approximately 1,000,000 hides are used for upholstering purposes. The ordinary roadster body requires a little more than two complete hides, and the touring body about three hides. The average of a car, therefore, is two and one-half hides. From the time the hide is stripped from the animal, it requires from ten weeks to six months completely to prepare it for use, the time varying with the quality of the leather. Each hide is split into four grades, which are known as hand buffs, machine buffs, deep buffs and splits. The hand buffs are the best and are the part nearest the hair. This is the quality that is most used in the best motor-car factories.

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