

Market Efficiency Depends on Roads

A. S. Benson tells of Canadian markets fed by best of main highways. He advocates permanency of construction and explains the progress and expenditures of Clarke County and King County, Washington.

MUCH has been written lately and great interest taken in the efforts by press and public to start public markets. We need these markets, and the sooner the better, but there is a phase in the question of public markets often overlooked, namely their relation to and inter-dependency on good roads. One is possible without the other, but without good public roads, markets lose their efficiency. Permanent roads in conjunction with public markets, in my opinion, will do more to solve the problem of high cost of living in less time and with greater efficiency than anything else.

While in Canada last fall I saw the public markets of the Dominion in operation. There the farmers drove as far as 25 miles with their produce. One farmer would come one day, bringing his neighbor's produce as well as his own, and sell his neighbor's foodstuffs for him, and on the following day the neighbor would take his turn. Markets were held three days a week. In them the consumer could purchase the best of produce and the freshest at remarkably cheap prices. But don't overlook one fact—they have good roads.

Markets Need Better Roads.

I believe that the markets are not going to be the benefit that some people expect until we get better roads, roads that can be depended on, that can be used every day in the year with easy grades so that the farmer can haul large loads. Then he will be able to haul much more cheaply. The money which now goes into a mud tax would be saved. I have been informed that the mud tax in the United States each year is larger than the taxes that we pay for all our forms of government combined.

You must remember that the farmers who are going to bring produce to the public market cannot bring it on railroad trains, steamboats or electric cars, but must haul it with their own vehicles, whether team or auto truck. When the road problem is better understood by the people at large everybody will be "howling" for good roads. The

larger portion of the people in the city figure that the road problem does not concern them, but it affects every man, woman and child, both in the city and country.

Use of the Country Road.

While the city person may never ride on the country roads, he must not forget that nearly everything he uses has to be hauled over some country road. Although Multnomah County does not have very much farming land, it is a very wealthy county, about 40 per cent of the wealth of the entire State of Oregon being in its borders.

Then, too, there is a very rich farming country all around us. With the Interstate bridge built, Clarke County, Washington, will be as close to Portland as any of our Oregon counties. Some of our Oregonians may not realize what that means, but Clarke County has very rich farming lands and it is away ahead of Multnomah County on permanent road construction. They have about four times as much paved county roads as Multnomah County and are building more as fast as possible. Now then, what is the answer? Multnomah County is worth about 20 times as much as Clarke County. With one-third of the population and two-fifths of the wealth of the entire State of Oregon, we should lead the way.

Autoists Interested.

Some people will say, "I want good roads so that I can ride around in my automobile." I am fortunate enough to own an automobile and riding around in it is what first started me thinking about roads; and the more I look into it the more impressed I am with the great benefit good roads will be to everyone.

Multnomah County has about 500 miles of county road. With a 2-mill levy for road purposes for four or five years, every one of its county roads could be paved. With an eight or ten-year maintenance that would mean a very light road tax after that. Just think of it. In the last ten years Multnomah County has spent \$2,000,000 on roads, with no permanent roads yet. With that same amount we could now pave all our county roads, over which practically everything we use could be hauled much more cheaply than now.

These roads can all be made permanent without hurting anyone. A 2-mill levy means \$2 on each \$1,000 of assessed valuation, or a 2-mill levy each year for five years would mean \$10 on each \$1,000 of assessed valuation. Can anyone say he will not benefit that much in proportion to whatever is his assessed valuation?

Washington Leads.

The State of Washington is at least 12 years ahead of Oregon on the road problem. While taxes are higher in Seattle than Portland, Samuel Hill tells me one can live more cheaply there than in Portland, owing to its paved county roads and public markets. Do we want to lag along behind Seattle?

Look at Los Angeles. With a population of over 500,000. Just a few years ago it was no larger than Portland. Good roads are what built it up. Los Angeles has a good winter climate, but it never amounted to anything as a drawing card till they built good roads. The State of California and its counties are this year spending \$40,000,000 on roads. King County, Washington, is spending \$5,500,000 this year on roads. Are we to lag behind everybody else?

An Important Problem.

I believe the road question is the most important problem before the American people today; more important than tariff, currency or anything else. Good, high-class roads will do more toward regulating rates on railroads than the Railroad Commission can ever hope to accomplish, and this will not hurt the railroads, either, because these county roads will be the means of developing the rural districts and consequently make more business. I am sure the railroads would far rather have the county roads to regulate their rates than to have the Railroad Commission's regulation, with their impractical ideas.

Did you ever stop to think that about 80 per cent of the money spent for roads goes for labor. Thus we build roads and keep the money, also. That is, if we build good, permanent roads that will last, we save the roads and the money also. I have never met a man

yet who has turned down the idea after it was thoroughly explained to him.

People in all walks of life would benefit by building good roads. The average cost of macadam road is about \$5,500 per mile. If there is heavy traffic on it, it costs about \$1,000 a mile for maintenance. In ten years this means \$15,000, and in the meantime you have not had a good road. We can get paved roads for \$100,000 a mile with a free maintenance for ten years. Does the proposition look unreasonable? I am not guess when I give these figures—they are verified easily.

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