

**THE MOVEMENT
FOR BETTER ROADS**

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The movement for better roads by Various

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VARIOUS

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FOR BETTER ROADS**

7/1892

THE MOVEMENT
FOR
BETTER ROADS.

AN ADDRESS
From BY COL. ALBERT A. POPE, OF BOSTON;

BEFORE THE BOARD OF TRADE AT HARTFORD, CONN., FEBRUARY 11, 1890.

AN OPEN LETTER
TO THE
PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Relating to a Department of Road Construction and Maintenance
at the World's Columbian Exposition.

WIDTH OF TIRES.

EXTRACTS FROM RECENT SPECIAL CONSULAR REPORTS ON
STREETS AND HIGHWAYS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

BOSTON:
POPE MANUFACTURING CO.
1892.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN:

The construction of the public road is eminently a matter of the first and highest importance to any people.

The first evidence of habitation looked for in a newly-discovered land is the trace of the footprint of a human being, whether in the scattered tracks of some casual explorers who have gone away again, or the beaten paths of those who have made it their home, and already have their established settlements with regular routes between them.

Communication between one point and another is the idea standing first in the mind of the settler, after that of the building of his home, and we see the progress of the idea developing with the country from the "blazed" line through the otherwise trackless forest, then the bridle path over the roughly cleared way; following this, the gradual stages of growth of the road proper, from that unregenerate condition which probably gave rise to the theory of

the "survival of the fittest," because it would kill any ordinary mortal to ride over it, to McAdam's perfected road, and the splendid sheet asphalt which it is the privilege of some of us to enjoy to-day.

The establishment of communities and of intercourse between them come before the formation of government.

A prime function of government is the protection of the life and property of the citizen, and I maintain that very high among the duties of a general government should come the construction and maintenance of roads which shall serve in the best possible way the interests and welfare of the general public.

It is an unfortunate fact that our own general government has thus far taken little advantage of even that authority distinctly given it under the Constitution, for the construction of post-roads. Still less has it used its right to go beyond this in the establishment of national thoroughfares, which could afford as good opportunities for military and all other movements, and would redound in all ways to the credit of the country, as do the magnificent roads of European countries.

Constituted as our government is, covering the infinite necessities of so great and prosperous a country, and necessarily a complicated one with its system of State organizations below it, it can, per-

haps, hardly be expected that every duty should have been fulfilled thus far, nor that even now a matter which has had so little attention as this question which is of importance to us, can be brought before our national Congress with such prompt success as to bring us within a reasonable time such improvements as thinking people are demanding to-day.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION.

The pressing needs of the country, and the increasing demands of the public, are such that it does seem by all means desirable to bring it up in proper form in each State, and by legislative acts secure such provisions and organizations as shall result in the greatest possible amount of good.

No small amount of work is already being done in this direction in several of our States, and the good results are already making themselves felt in many directions.

NEW YORK STATE BILL.

A bill has already been introduced in the New York Legislature, relating to the construction, maintenance, and repair of the highways and roads of that State, and which provides for the creation of a Board of Highway Commissioners, three in number, whose duty it shall be to take charge of the highway

systems of the State, and particularly to provide for the construction and maintenance of an improved system of highways in its several counties, outside of the great cities, building them up, and perfecting them upon the road beds of such existing highways as may be selected by the supervisors of the various counties.

By the concurrent action of the highway commissioners and the county supervisors, such a general system of improved roads over the whole State shall be determined upon as will afford credit to the greatest number of the citizens of the State.

It is provided that the work necessary to be done shall be put through under contract in regular form, under the charge of the county supervisors, and the whole under the general direction of the State commissioners.

The expenses of these improvements are to be met by the issuance of bonds by each county, to an extent not exceeding in any case one twentieth of one per cent. of the total valuation of the property within the county.

This bill will, if passed, insure the construction of several hundred miles of superior highways within the State of New York, and provide for the extension of improved highways from time to time, as they may be needed.

MASSACHUSETTS HIGHWAY BILL.

A somewhat simpler plan than this is provided for by a bill prepared for my own State, Massachusetts, and one, perhaps, less likely to meet with the usual opposition from the many voters of the farming districts, who are too apt to look only at the expense of any reform or progressive movement without stopping to calculate the greater return it will bear them.

It is proposed in this, that a commissioner of roads and bridges shall be appointed, who shall be a civil engineer, and receive a salary of \$3,000 per annum and be allowed \$2,000 for expenses.

His duties shall be, to visit annually the cities and towns of the State, inspect the roads and bridges thereof, and advise the local authorities in relation to the same.

He shall have general advisory oversight over the roads and bridges of the State, can be consulted at all reasonable times without charge by officials, and advise them as to construction and maintenance.

He shall make an annual report to the Legislature of his doings, and all facts collected, together with suggestions regarding the improvement of the condition of roads and bridges.

The advantage of this plan is seen in the fact that no increase of taxation is called for beyond the

\$5,000 annual expenses, but it provides particularly for the judicious use of every dollar already expended on the roads, and aims at making such use of the materials and opportunities already at hand, under the guidance of well-qualified and competent officials, so that without an increase of expense, roads which are now a disgrace to so thickly populated a community shall become a credit to the commonwealth, and shall increase the value of the property of every citizen, and add vastly to the comfort and welfare of all who have occasion to travel upon them.

EVILS OF PRESENT SYSTEM.

Under the old plan, still in vogue in many States, of permitting anyone to work out a part or all of his road tax, too often more harm is done than good to the roads, and certainly it is safe to say that less than one half of the amount of the tax is seen in actual effective results, so that the effect of the Massachusetts bill should be to secure a saving rather than an extra expense to the State, with rapidly-improving roads as a result.

Says one of your own citizens of the good old Nutmeg State, who is already thoroughly interested in the road question, "What we complain of, under the present condition of affairs, is that all four of