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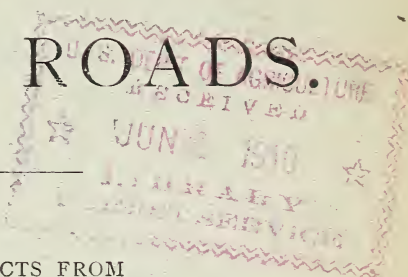


U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.  
OFFICE OF ROAD INQUIRY.

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GOOD ROADS.

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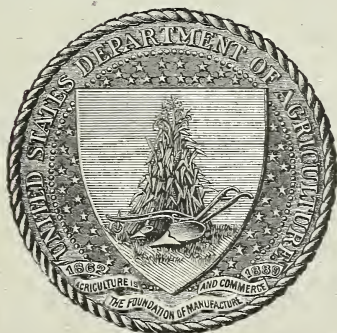
EXTRACTS FROM

MESSAGES OF GOVERNORS.

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COMPILED BY

ROY STONE,  
Special Agent and Engineer.



WASHINGTON:  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.

1895.



BULLETIN No. 14.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.  
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## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
OFFICE OF ROAD INQUIRY,  
*Washington, D. C., March 15, 1895.*

SIR: In compliance with your wish, I have collected the messages of the governors of those States whose legislatures have been in session during the past winter, and have the honor to transmit herewith such portions of the same as relate to the subject of highway improvement for publication as Bulletin No. 14 of this office.

Very respectfully, yours,

ROY STONE,  
*Special Agent and Engineer.*

Hon. J. STERLING MORTON,  
*Secretary of Agriculture.*

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# GOOD ROADS.

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EXTRACTS FROM MESSAGES OF GOVERNORS.

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## FROM GOVERNOR MORTON, OF NEW YORK.

The subject of good roads is one which merits thoughtful attention at your hands, for it is year by year becoming of larger importance in the public eye. Nearly all of the various State legislatures which will be in session during this year will be engaged in efforts to secure practical results, in the direction of selecting approved methods, though on a variety of lines or theories. The information obtained by the Office of Road Inquiry, a bureau of the Federal Department of Agriculture, and which has had correspondence on the subject with all of the State governments, is that wide divergence of opinion exists on the whole question, and it is feared that it may, in consequence, be difficult to secure sound practical results. Not less than half a dozen plans are in effect or contemplation, a fact that is undoubtedly regrettable, and it would seem desirable that the Empire State should, with its characteristic progressiveness, be a leader in the establishment of an acceptable system of road improvement, extension, and maintenance. The advocates of road improvement in several States are urging the establishment of temporary joint commissions by the respective legislatures, such commissions to include, besides members of both legislative houses, representatives of road-improvement organizations. If this plan is adopted by a number of the State legislatures, the Federal Office of Road Inquiry proposes to act as a medium of communication between them, as well as a source of information. I think that the legislature might, by a commission, put itself into communication with the National and State authorities on the subject, and acquire all available information as to plans and experiments, with a view to obtaining good roads, constructed on wise and economical principles, throughout the State.

The constitutional amendment, which takes effect two years hence, forbidding the State from employing convicts at the State and county prisons, jails, and reformatories in any industrial arts or useful occupations the products of which may come into competition with the work or products of the people, imposes a grave duty upon the law-making

power. No condition is so subversive of both moral and physical discipline, especially among bodies of men under punitive restraint, as that of idleness, and the restriction now imposed upon their occupation will render it no easy task to provide employment within the law, and to make the convicts yield an appreciable proportion of the cost of their maintenance.

If their services can be legally applied to the building and improvement of roads and highways, the manufacture of clothing and other articles, the raising of food supplies on State farms, and other like pursuits all for use in State institutions, the solution of the problem may be less difficult than it now appears to be. The character of the laws framed to accomplish this end will be closely scrutinized by the people, and should be such as to relieve the industrial workers and their employers from the competition of prison labor, against which they have for years past so earnestly protested.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR MARKHAM, OF CALIFORNIA.

One of the foremost subjects claiming the attention of the people at the time I assumed the executive office I found to be that relating to the betterment of the country roads throughout the Nation. It is a subject that has long had my thought, and one in which I take profound interest, since I am convinced it is eminently true that a people's civilization, progressive spirit, and economic methods are largely to be estimated by the character and condition of the highways that are their means of transportation and greatly of communication. It was true of the ancient nations, and the truth has not declined with us because this is a railroad-building era. On the contrary, we have been so absorbed in the promotion of the latter industry throughout the United States that we have lost sight of the necessity of building and maintaining permanent country highways to relate us to railroad systems more economically. Now the matter is so before us as to demand immediate attention, because the fact has been developed that the producer hauling to market, or to a point of rail shipment, a dozen miles over a bad road, is more distant than the producer who is located upon a railroad line a hundred miles away.

It is also apparent to the most superficial observer that our bad road conditions in California are a decided detriment in the matter of inducing desirable immigration and in peopling our rural sections. The home-seeker of to-day demands, as one of the conditions of change and settlement, the largest possible degree of the privileges, the refinements, and the advantages of town life, while at the same time he enjoys the independence and free life of rural living.

The construction of good permanent highways for trunk lines at general cost of the county, leaving to districts the construction of

feeder lines, is, in my judgment, the right policy to adopt. The town, equally with the suburb, is interested in the road between the two; every dollar's worth of assessable property in a county is as much the subject of responsibility for road conditions as is the property of land owners in the country. I have vainly sought for a substantial reason for adhering to the present system, which visits the cost of road building and maintenance upon the farmer and rural land owner alone. It is supported by no more worthy reason than this, "it always has been so."

The amendment to the constitution, adopted in 1892, relative to county and municipal credit, enlarged the limit thereof to forty years from twenty, the former period. When, however, the last legislature came to the reformation of the road laws, it did not recognize this constitutional extension solemnly voted by the people, but retained the credit limit at twenty years. This has given rise to confusion, and has greatly embarrassed the friends of road reform. On the one hand they claim that the constitution governs; that it is a grant the legislature can not restrict, since if it can cut off twenty years it can with equal right restrict to any lesser time, and thus nullify the constitution. On the other hand it is urged that the constitution simply states the maximum period for which communities may, under legislative regulations, pledge their credit after a two-thirds affirmative vote, and therefore the legislature has the right to prescribe any period within the maximum limit.

I call your attention to the subject that the relation between the constitution and the law may be harmonized, and I advise that the constitutional extension be recognized in the statute, because it will be a means of bringing the Government still closer to the people, and this is always desirable.

The augmenting agitation concerning good roads led to the first National Assembly for Good Road Promotion, held at Chicago in 1892. It was an eminent success, and was promoted by many of the most patriotic and able minds of the nation. It resulted in the formation of the National Good Roads League, of which a convention was held at Washington, D. C., in 1893, and received the aid and hearty cooperation of the Federal Government. This was followed by the National Road Conference, held at Asbury, N. J., in July last, and will be followed by the National Road Parliament, at Atlanta, Ga., in October next.

In March, 1893, Congress by act authorized the creation of a Bureau of Government Road Inquiry, under the direction of the Department of Agriculture. To the head of that Bureau Gen. Roy Stone was appointed by the President. I have been in close communication with General Stone on the subject of road improvement, and have extended him all the aid I could in gathering information concerning road conditions in California, and at his request have recommended an agent to represent him here in the distribution of good-road literature, printed

by the Federal Government, such as the proceedings of road conventions, road laws of the several States, road-building materials in the United States, construction of earth roads, etc.

I am informed that General Stone will visit California during the session of your body. I bespeak for the distinguished engineer such reception as will best forward his inquiries and advance the good-road movement in our State.

In the summer of 1893 I gave semiofficial sanction to the use of the executive title in aid of a State road convention, which was held at the capital in September, and was the first road conference of State importance on the coast. It had its inception in the public spirit of the Sacramento County Humane Society, and its expenses were borne by the people of Sacramento. It was not fruitless of results of a gratifying character, though it fell far short of the hopes of its promoters. It was a first effort, and, if it did no other good, it set in motion forces which, I trust, will continue to move until practical results of the most beneficial character are attained. An adjourned session of the convention was held in San Francisco in May, and, though profitable, was lightly attended. A second annual session of the organization will be held at the capital early in February. I have no hesitation whatever in advising your honorable bodies to give it all encouragement and cheer. Its delegates are chosen from among the best citizenship of the State. Twenty of these delegates have been selected by myself to represent the State at large.

I am in receipt, at a late hour, of a letter from General Stone, who, speaking for the honorable the Secretary of Agriculture, urges me to invite your attention to this good-road subject, which I had already done. The Secretary adds that information received by him reveals the intention among legislators throughout the Union to give very much attention to the subject of highway improvement at these winter sessions, and that the measures to be considered chiefly will be the "State-aid system of New Jersey," "State highway commissions," "Effective road laws," "Utilization of convict labor," "Width of wagon tires," "Discovery of road materials," "Substitution of money taxation for the statutory labor system," etc.

There is such a diversity of opinion, says the letter, on these subjects, and such misapprehension concerning methods best to employ to secure good roads at least cost that it is desirable that agreement in detail be reached before legislation is attempted, for without such agreement there is danger that nothing valuable will be accomplished, because of the difficulty of harmonizing individual bills. The General, for the Secretary, advises that at the opening of the legislature a temporary joint commission be created, perhaps out of the membership of the legislature itself, with the addition of expert engineers and others who have knowledge of the whole subject, to consider all road propositions, hear all suggestions, and reduce the whole to such form that the matter may be most intelligently handled by your honorable bodies.

As I conceive that such a temporary advisory board may be created without mentionable cost to the State, and as the Department of Agriculture at Washington advises me that if some such plan is adopted the Federal Government will render all possible assistance, furnish all information at its command, and keep each commission posted as to what each other commission in the several States is doing, I do not hesitate to advise you to create such advisory commission and to reinforce it with a few members distinguished by their knowledge of road conditions and needs and of engineering science. Of course, to accomplish anything, such a body, if created at all, should be named almost immediately.

Committing this whole subject to you with conviction of its supreme importance, and believing that road reform lies at the base of nearly all the other great economic reforms affecting immediately the conditions of life and prosperity in our land, I solicit for the whole matter your earnest, early, and profound attention.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR MORRILL, OF KANSAS.

Every citizen is interested in having good roads. To the farmer who has to ship his products by rail it is a matter of special importance, lessening to a considerable degree the cost of transportation to the depot. And yet there is hardly a matter that will come before you that will awaken less interest, and there is no expenditure of public money so loosely guarded. The country is divided into small road districts; anyone is chosen supervisor who will accept; all who care to do so are allowed to work out their road tax at extravagant wages, and the result is that one-half of the tax judiciously expended under the direction of some competent and intelligent man, who has made a study of the best manner to improve the public highways, would be more effective and produce better results than are now obtained from the entire tax.

A new system should be provided. The county commissioners should have charge of the roads, with authority to appoint a sufficient number of overseers to look after the roads of the county. All road taxes should be paid in money, and it should be expended in the most practical and economical manner possible.

The county commissioners should also be required to personally view and lay out all new roads, and assess damages therefor. The present system of appointing road viewers should be entirely abolished.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR ALLEN, OF NORTH DAKOTA.

The attention being paid to the subject of good roads in many States, agricultural as well as manufacturing, is evidence of its importance. In the development of a State, the proper building and improvement of highways is one of the last questions to receive consideration, though they are of great importance to all industries.

Streams and railroads are the arteries of commerce, and public highways are the tributaries. From the farm and the factory come the articles to be transported. With the low price that commodities often command, it is necessary that they be marketed as quickly and cheaply as possible. Every item of expense that can be saved in delivering to the lines of transportation will augment the profit of the producer.

While the people of this State may not feel the need of judicious improvement of highways, I believe that the day is not far distant when they will realize that the subject should have received earlier and more careful attention.

These improvements are often objected to by farmers, who claim that they constitute the class least benefited. This is erroneous. Good roads enable the farmer to place his products upon the market at a time when they are at the highest point; bad roads often prevent this. Good roads enable him to deliver them in much better condition than they are otherwise delivered, and with a saving of time, expense, and energy.

We believe there are few thinking people who doubt that the farmer of North Dakota will eventually have a diversity of products to market. When that time comes—and we will not have long to wait—the advantages to be derived from an early effort to establish and improve our highways will be appreciated. Good roads are the forerunners of other improvements—the erection of good farm residences, planting of groves, and increased valuation of land. Moreover, when we construct good highways, we build that which those who come after us will enjoy, for they are permanent.

The system under which our roads are built does not produce the best results attainable. There is enough work done, and a sufficient amount of money expended, which, if properly applied, would construct roads that would last for years.

I am of the opinion that if roads were built and kept in repair by a judicious system of contract and convict labor, under the direction of a competent road engineer in each township or county, more desirable and satisfactory results would be obtained.

I would recommend (1) that the plan of road work now authorized by law be abolished, and that the work be done by contract and convict labor, the expense to be met by taxation; (2) that the office of road overseer be abolished, and that the work be performed under the direction of a road engineer; (3) that, in order to secure greater uniformity, a joint committee be appointed, to whom all road bills be referred.

Under the election laws of this State, voters exercise the right of suffrage without hindrance. I believe there are but few thinking men who would consent to their repeal and the reenactment of those previously in force. After holding two general elections under their provisions, no glaring inconsistencies, either in the spirit or letter of the law, have been made manifest.

If evils exist in the choice and selection of men to fill public offices, they are to be traced to the primary and the caucus. Much thought is being devoted to the problem, how to induce the voter to give them proper attention. The primary should be kept pure and just, for evils there perpetrated are not speedily remedied.

It has long been a favorite criticism of those opposed to popular government that, owing to a lack of interest on the part of the voter and the unscrupulous methods of professional caucus workers, free government will fail. Such is possible but not probable. We have that confidence in human nature to believe that men sooner or later will invariably assert their rights and exercise their prerogatives in rebuking designing men. Free government is not a failure; but if it suffers adverse criticisms it may be attributed to defective primaries.

To guard against dangers from any source is as much the duty of the representatives of the people as it is to provide for their correction. If, in your opinion, the system now in vogue is or should become a menace to the liberties of the people, it is incumbent upon you to enact such measures as will avert it, for the demoralization of our politics means the ruin of our liberties.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR BROWN, OF MARYLAND.

There is a growing popular demand for improved roads—a demand which is fully justified upon economic and social grounds. Therefore I desire to recommend a measure by which tramps and vagabonds, as defined by statute, may, upon conviction, be sentenced in the different counties (at the discretion of the court or justice of the peace having jurisdiction) to labor upon the public roads or village and town districts, under the direction of the county commissioners, and while in the custody of the sheriffs of the counties.

Such a law would relieve the counties from the expense involved in conveying convicted tramps to the house of correction which is now incurred, while the cost of the additional force of deputy sheriffs requisite for guarding the convicts when at work and in the county jails would be more than covered by the value of the improved roads and the lessening of the road tax.

Provision may also be made that those tramps and vagrants who are sent to the house of correction from Baltimore city should be turned over for the time of their sentence by the board of managers to the commissioners of such counties as make application for their labor.

The measure that I recommend can scarcely fail to achieve the desired object of diminishing the number of this undesirable class.

**FROM GOVERNOR WERTS, OF NEW JERSEY.**

The advantages accruing from good roads can not be overestimated. They not only promote the comfort of the entire community, but add immensely to the value of lands and other property. The saving in "wear and tear" on animals and vehicles, the increased carrying capacity afforded, and the ability to use them at all seasons of the year, vindicate the wisdom of their construction. Notwithstanding the cost, they are a wise and economical investment. The rise in value of adjoining lands, and the savings effected by their existence, very soon pay for their construction and provide for their maintenance.

The "stone road law" of this State, while perhaps not perfect, is admirably calculated to secure to the people in most parts of the State good roads at reasonable cost. In sections where stone is scarce or altogether absent, the cost of transportation becomes a very important consideration. But even there, unless through long stretches of uninhabited country, it is debatable whether the resultant advantages will not justify their construction. The "New Jersey road law" is recognized all over the country as about the only practicable measure existing. In some States it is proposed to adopt it bodily, and in others it is being used as the framework of laws adapted to that particular locality.

During the year the committee on roads of the New York legislature, accompanied by several county delegations and two delegations from North Carolina, visited our State and inspected the stone roads constructed in the southern counties. As a result of legislation of last winter, the laws relating to the construction of improved roads are, in some respects, conflicting or antagonistic. I am advised that a bill has been prepared for introduction at the present session avoiding the difficulties referred to and making all provisions consistent with each other. Should the bill, when presented, be found satisfactory, I recommend its passage.

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**FROM GOVERNOR CLEAVES, OF MAINE.**

Some well-considered policy should be adopted for the improvement of our highways. Our excellent railroads furnish rapid and easy methods of transportation for passengers and freight, and improved carriage roads would afford additional facilities and further aid in the development of the State. There seems to be an earnest sentiment for some recognition by the legislature of the growing demand for improved highways. It is a subject in which many people are taking a great interest. It is claimed that under a well-regulated and uniform method of expending the money now appropriated, with the advance already made in road construction, our highways could largely be improved without any material increase of taxation. If the State is to inaugurate a permanent system of road improvement, the subject should have

thorough and careful investigation by men of experience, in order that the wisest course may be determined upon; otherwise we may involve ourselves in a system of internal improvements more burdensome than the people would care to bear. The subject should receive your careful consideration.

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**FROM GOVERNOR LORD, OF OREGON.**

There is no subject of equal importance upon which the public mind is more unanimous than the advantage to be derived from good roads. The subject of economical road-making has been much studied, largely discussed by the press and in road conventions. Everyone understands that the State can not be built up and its lands made valuable without good roads are constructed. But how to do it without involving too great an expense is the difficult problem. Various systems have been devised with varying degrees of merit, but they all include a measure of expense that makes it difficult for the younger States, like our own, to construct them in a satisfactory manner without entailing too heavy taxation upon property holders. This consideration, though, ought not to discourage us from ascertaining the condition of our roads and the best methods of constructing and improving them. Our State is in great need of good roads. Where the cost of them is reasonable there can be no better investment. Good roads facilitate intercourse and develop trade, promote health, and add greatly to the enjoyment of life, enhance the value of farms, and make markets accessible for the sale of their products, spare beasts of burden and save the wear and tear of wagon and harness. It is greatly to be desired that some economical plan may be devised to secure good roads, so that our communities may be enabled to enjoy their advantages. There is no doubt that our road laws have failed to accomplish, in a satisfactory manner, the object of their enactment. The system created by them is defective and needs thorough revision. I own I have no plan for correcting their defects, but I suggest to you, who are intelligent men of experience in practical affairs, to take the matter into consideration and endeavor to evolve some system which shall remedy their defects and secure better roads for the traveling public. As the question of good roads is a matter now much discussed, you can acquire much useful information in regard to them through pamphlets which have been published and circulated with the view of suggesting the best method of improving and building good roads.

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**FROM GOVERNOR WOODBURY, OF VERMONT.**

I thoroughly believe in good roads. They are necessary for the comfort and profit of our citizens, and as a means to attract to us people from other States. I do not feel sure that the 5 per cent State tax

has been wisely expended. In most towns it has been put to the same uses as the town highway tax, and in many cases the towns have raised 5 per cent less tax than they would had they not received the State tax. Many believe that the distribution of the tax is unjust and think that each county should have the benefit of the tax levied upon it.

There does not seem to be any good reason why a county in one part of the State should send several thousand dollars per annum into a county in another part. If the county plan of distribution were adopted the money raised should be expended, in my opinion, in what would be called permanent improvements, under the directions of a commission composed of say one from each town in the county. Addison, Bennington, Caledonia, Franklin, and Washington counties would not be materially affected by this change. Chittenden and Rutland counties would be benefited, while Essex, Lamoille, Grand Isle, Orange, Orleans, Windsor, and Windham would suffer loss.

Each county is particularly interested in good roads in its own county, but only interested in a general way in the roads of other counties. The large towns in the several counties are interested in having good roads in the small towns, as the trade and traffic of small towns are tributary to them and therefore they might in justice be required to bear a share of the burden of maintenance of their roads. If any change in the distribution of the tax is made it should be done solely because you believe it to be just.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR COLCORD, OF NEVADA.

Too little attention is being paid to good roads, their construction and maintenance, in this country, and Nevada, despite her favorable conditions for good natural roads, is as backward in the matter of road building as her sister States. With great wisdom it has been said, "A country is known by the condition of its roads." All must unite in this and in the admission that not only are good country roads matters of great public convenience, but they are truly matters of the shrewdest economy in every community. A systematic agitation for the betterment of American highways has been going on in the Eastern States for some time, and already practical and beneficial results have followed. The movement should be encouraged. America is lamentably behind the age in this matter. Every country in the Old World has far better roads than any one of our States possesses. I invite your attention, gentlemen, to this subject, and sincerely hope you will endeavor to bring about some legislation that will result in the improvement of our roads at home. Well-built roads go far toward improving a State. True, money must be expended in their construction, but I know of no investment of public funds that will, in the

long run, prove more profitable. Good roads are the most hearty invitations that can be extended to induce immigration. Again, national legislation should be advocated for the construction and maintenance of a system of good interstate roads. The Federal Government appropriates money to improve harbors and make rivers navigable for the development of commerce, why not exercise that right in the construction of an interstate road system, and perhaps include the building of a great highway traversing the entire continent? A memorial to Congress on this subject would give impetus to the movement for needed reformation in this line and would receive the indorsement of every good citizen.

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**FROM GOVERNOR BROWN, OF RHODE ISLAND.**

I have received assurance from the chairman of the committee appointed in 1892 to examine into the condition of the highways of the State that a report will be presented at this session. Recommendations based upon extensive examinations of our main highways and of the methods employed by the various towns in building roads are also promised.

The ever-increasing interest manifested in highway improvement proclaims more vigorously than words of mine the timeliness of any action you may take toward instituting methods of construction and repair that will secure more durable and serviceable roads. But being aware of the diversity of opinion as to methods and also of the opposition to any movement toward centralized action, I venture to advise the adoption of any moderate measure of reform rather than risk the postponement of all improvement in the hope of procuring agreement toward more radical legislation. I know of no question of public policy now requiring your thought that is more closely related to the material welfare of every section of the State than this opportune one of road improvement.

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**FROM GOVERNOR M'KINNEY, OF VIRGINIA.**

The advantages of good roads can be shown in so many ways that it seems useless to discuss the question. Every intelligent citizen believes we make no sacrifice when we proceed to build them at any reasonable cost. Experience demonstrates that if the country is ever to be built up, and the lands made valuable, good roads must be constructed, so as to make them accessible and convenient.

**WILL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BUILD THEM FOR US ?**

This is not probable, because it is an undertaking too great even for the Government to attempt, and it is adding too much to the immense patronage and power which the United States Government now has.

Then again there is no authority given by the Constitution to construct county roads, except for military purposes, unless you place the loose construction that some of our modern statesmen do "that whatever is necessary" can be done under the general welfare clause of the Constitution; but it can not be said that these roads are necessary for the United States, although they may be necessary for the good of some of the counties in this State.

#### CAN THE STATE BUILD THEM?

No, because the State constitution gives no power to the legislature to make expenditures for this purpose, and declares that "The State shall not be a party to, or become interested in, any work of internal improvement, nor engage in carrying on any such work otherwise than in the expenditure of grants to the State of land or other property." (See Art. X, sec. 15, Constitution of Virginia, Code of Virginia, p. 47.)

The only way possible is for each county to build its own roads, and to build them in the way in which they can do it at the least cost, and they should do this whenever their necessities demand it. Power should be given by the legislature to the counties, with suitable restrictions, so that in a moment of excitement they may not be rushed madly into an expense which they can not bear and thus embarrass their credit by a debt too burdensome for the people. Whenever it is demonstrated that in those counties made accessible by good roads, purchasers can be found for real estate and farms, on which the owners are making money by cultivating crops, because of the advantages of a cheap, certain, and accessible market, then will be learned a valuable lesson which the most obtuse will understand and the most incredulous believe. Our people must be educated up to this; they must be made to see and to feel that every interest demands that the county roads be improved. If this is not done, the county which ignores this fact will certainly retrograde, and will no longer be the home of a thrifty population, but will be left as an abode for the ignorant and thriftless.

If your people are not ready for the move, do not hinder the counties which are. Do not endeavor to force counties by any general legislation to tax themselves to undertake great enterprises of this kind when they do not desire it; let them learn by the experience of those who are willing to try it. All the counties do not equally need a new system of roads; let those which need them most first commence the work; the rest of the State will, in good time, follow, and then it will not be long before the remote places in the county will be opened, and the inaccessible farms become rich and valuable by the industry and energy of the people.

The necessity for better roads is conceded, and it is equally true that the people can not expect help from the Federal Government nor from the State government, and therefore they must build the roads for themselves. Each county must select the way best suited for itself, and

must make a temporary sacrifice to do this work. If a county is not willing to bear the expense and a district in the county is, let the burden be assumed in that district. This may, in the end, be best, because it will bring the expense nearer to those who are assuming it, and will compel the contractors to be more prompt in its execution, and more economical in expenditures. To do this work, you have under the law, as it now stands, two days' labor from all the men in the county between the ages of 18 and 60, and a tax of from 5 to 15 cents on the hundred dollars' worth may be levied on all the property in the county. The amount of tax can be fixed according to the necessity for improvement—greater in some cases and less in others—because of the difficulties presented by the nature of the ground, the value of the property, and the number of the population. Then a small toll may be exacted from all those who pass over the road, and every newcomer and the increase in the value of the land will serve to lessen the burden, until at last the tolls collected will be all that is necessary to meet the interest, and perhaps no road tax will be needed at all. Make the calculation of how much you will be able to save in a year by being able to market your crops, whenever you desire to do so, without regard to the weather, and thus be able to utilize the days when you can do nothing at home on the farm, and what you will save in damage to your conveyances, in overworking your teams by pulling over the rough roads, and the advantages of the market, and you will find that the amounts you have invested in good roads will be the most satisfactory and the safest you have ever made.

The counties and towns which desire to do so should be allowed to issue bonds redeemable in thirty years. The amount should be determined by the revenue derived from the road tax on property and the tolls collected from those who travel over the roads, and it might be well to put a small tax on all vehicles of those who live contiguous to the improved roads, or tolls should be required.

It has been asserted by a competent investigator "that the average expenditure for the past three years on the county roads in Virginia has exceeded \$350,000 per annum in money and over \$400,000 per annum in statutory labor." I do not believe this estimate is extravagant. We have not less than 300,000 persons who are required to give two days' labor to the county roads. We had in 1892 property valued for taxation at \$399,585,447. The Code of Virginia, section 978, page 288, allows a levy for the purposes of the county roads of 15 cents on the hundred dollars' worth of property. Place the value of the labor at 75 cents, which the statute fixes, and the tax on the property at 15 cents, and you will see that the estimate of \$750,000 is a low one. This sum of \$750,000, then, is the available money we have for road purposes every year, and it is sufficient to pay the interest on a sum of \$12,500,000 at 6 per cent; divide it among the counties in proportion to population and wealth, and what an enormous amount you will have

for road improvement. Take any county, see by examining the auditor's reports the value of your taxable property, and calculate what 15 cents on the hundred dollars will amount to. Then take the census and see the number of persons between the ages of 18 and 60 years; value their labor at 75 cents per day for two days every year and you can ascertain what your county can rely on to borrow money for road purposes. These facts show the feasibility of permanent road improvement, if we will utilize the resources we have by intelligent management, and we can improve our roads without the help of the State or Federal governments.

The State should employ a competent engineer, who should locate the roads in the counties which desire to improve them, or build new ones, and he should superintend the construction of these roads and see that the work is done properly; that the grade is the best which the surrounding circumstances will allow; and that the work is performed to the best interest of the counties.



#### FROM GOVERNOR GREENHALGE, OF MASSACHUSETTS.

The work of the highway commission is important, and I commend the report of the commission to your most diligent examination. The people have responded quickly and cordially to the suggestion that good roads mean business, comfort, convenience, and economy. One hundred and six petitions for highways under the law of 1894 and previous enactments have been presented, covering 500 miles of road. Work has been commenced on 50 miles of road in thirty different cities and towns. The hearings given by the board in every county have been largely attended. A great expenditure may seem to be required, the cost of construction running from \$2,500 to \$10,000 a mile, but your wisdom must determine the appropriations necessary and proper for this great and beneficial work. I merely suggest that the more ponderous and expensive machinery of road making—as steam rollers, stone crushers, etc.—be owned by the Commonwealth and let to the towns on reasonable terms as occasion requires.



#### FROM GOVERNOR MATTHEWS, OF INDIANA.

There will probably come before you numerous measures concerning the improvement of roads. There are few questions of greater importance that will engage your attention, and is being widely discussed by the people of the entire country. National and State road congresses are being held, the discussions taking a wide range, and many of the remedies proposed would doubtless accomplish the result. I fear in too many of the propositions that in the desire to secure improved roads due consideration may not be given to the cost nor that class of

our citizens—the farmers—upon whom will necessarily fall the heavier burden in the expense of construction.

I do not underestimate the value of a system of good roads to the public, and believe there is great need for such improvement, but in the framing of laws to further this end the interests and desires of those who will at last have the cost to bear should be chiefly considered, especially at a time when the profits from farming are not so large as they should be.

Plans devised by associations of civil engineers, cyclist clubs, and road congresses may be good—in theory, the best—but not always based on the ability of the taxpayer to pay.

In my inaugural address two years ago, referring to this same subject, I said, “The foundation of all true prosperity and wealth rests more largely upon agriculture than any other interest that engages the attention of our citizens. It should be our duty to encourage and foster this, and hold to a careful avoidance of placing any additional burdens upon this interest, for in its prosperity rests the common prosperity of all.

“The old law has many valuable features that commend themselves to the people, and is not a bad law if properly enforced. The people themselves are responsible largely for its deficiencies, owing to the laxity of its enforcement. A healthy public sentiment to encourage officials to faithfully carry out the provisions of the present law would overcome many of its supposed defects. There should be enacted no law that will add to the burdens of this tax, nor the management so far removed from the people as to deprive them of the right to ‘work out,’ as it is termed, the tax so collected, if this is desired.” In this day of electricity we may reasonably expect in the near future electric lines to branch out through the country. A law should be enacted restricting county commissioners in their right to grant rights of way along our public thoroughfares, to their injury and ruin for the travel of those compelled to use them, and who have borne the cost of their construction.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR COFFIN, OF CONNECTICUT.

An active and extensive movement in favor of better roads is already in progress in several other States, and is fully justified by the probable results of early, favorable, and efficient, though reasonably prudent, State action. We ought to keep fully up with neighboring States in this as in other important movements in which are involved questions of vital interest in their relations to the prosperity and comfort of our people. Views differ widely as to plans, and only through careful inquiry and perhaps extended experiments can safe and permanently satisfactory conclusions be reached.

**FROM GOVERNOR M'CORKLE, OF WEST VIRGINIA.**

The road system of this State is utterly bad, and thousands of dollars are yearly spent by us in constructing mere temporary roads, which are washed away by the first season's rain. I hope the legislature will revise the whole system and introduce a system of constructing permanent roads. I have some views upon this subject, but am informed that the subject will be so carefully gone into by the legislature that I will refrain from presenting them at this time.

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**FROM GOVERNOR CARR, OF NORTH CAROLINA.**

It is said that the condition of a country's roads are, in a measure, indicative of the civilization of its people. If this be true, then North Carolina is low in the scale. In many portions of the State, at certain seasons of the year, they are almost impassable, and at best they are scarcely worthy of the name. It is useless to dwell upon the importance of better roads. In these days of rapid communication between great centers of population rough highways place the people who live remote from lines of railways at a fearful disadvantage. Not only is the value of properties in such localities seriously affected, but communication and intercourse of every description materially retarded. The old system of working the public roads, like the roads themselves, has worn entirely out, the labor expended upon them being in keeping with the roads, the very worst. A law must not only be just, but seem so. No law upon our statute books appears less just than the present road law, and a new system is imperative. I am glad to note, however, that the people have become aroused upon this matter, and in some sections of the State great efforts are being made to better the condition of the public highways, and with marked success. I trust that your body will appoint a special committee with ample powers to look into this very important matter, and report a bill embodying a satisfactory measure during your session.

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**FROM GOVERNOR UPHAM, OF WISCONSIN.**

The subject of the improvement of country roads is one which should interest every citizen of the State. It is of special importance, however, to farmers and to those living in rural communities. A very active interest is being taken, and measures looking to a systematic effort to improve the public highways will probably come before you. The matter is of such general interest that I am assured it will be carefully considered by you.

**FROM GOVERNOR M'INTIRE, OF COLORADO.**

Your attention is called to the importance to the community of good highways and the necessity for legislation which will place our public highways in the best possible condition by the use of the money which the taxpayers constantly contribute for that purpose. In many parts of the State, for want of organization and system, the roads are practically left to chance for their condition, although the full amount of tax is collected and expended, which if wisely and systematically used would bring about the desired result.

The present law, placing the superintendence and repair of roads in the hands of a county road overseer, does not seem to be productive of as good results as the old system of district road overseers, although the old system was by no means satisfactory.

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**FROM GOVERNOR M'CONNELL, OF IDAHO.**

There seems to be a growing disposition on the part of each succeeding legislature to provide for the construction of what are termed State wagon roads. My opinion is that no more money should be expended in that direction, other than to finish the road now begun up the Lower Salmon River, which was intended to connect the northern and southern portions of the State.

The State has already incurred a bonded debt of \$185,000 in what seems to have been a futile attempt to open up the interior by a regular system of wagon roads.

The condition of the roads for which contracts were let, under the act passed by the second session, is very unsatisfactory. To avoid the expense of mileage from one section of the State to another, I appointed four different sets of examiners and engineers, living as nearly as possible in the vicinity where the roads are being constructed. To examine the St. Marie's and Shoshone divisions, I appointed E. L. Hemingway, J. B. Morris, and William Ashley, jr., of Kootenai County; to inspect the Idaho County divisions, I named James Edwards, J. R. Adkison, and James W. Shannon, all residents of Idaho County; to pass upon the Banner and Bear Valley divisions, I commissioned George Pettingill, Boise City; Hon. Louis E. Workman, Idaho City, and George B. Florence, also of Boise City; to report on the Lemhi divisions, I named J. H. Van Camp, Thomas B. Mulkey, and George W. Ball.

I regret to say that in no instance has either set of the examiners found the roads they inspected constructed according to plans and specifications. In consequence I requested the State auditor to withhold final payment until the work was completed according to agreement. No delay should be had in disseminating the information that the business interests of the State will be guarded as carefully as those of a private individual.

The wagon-road commissioners paid several contracts in full, without waiting for me to appoint viewers, as the law contemplated. The statute creating the board authorized its members to certify their own accounts to the State auditor, in fact placed the entire expenditure of the whole appropriation in their hands, without supervision from the State officers.

I recommend that you appoint a committee to investigate the condition of the State wagon road and report to you what legislation is needed, if any, to compel a completion of the contracts now let. Justice to myself and the gentlemen whom I appointed to guard the interests of the State demand that you should inquire into and ascertain the character of the men I have chosen and their method of procedure.

I will submit to the committee thus appointed all correspondence between my office and the board, as well as the examiners.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR RICHARDS, OF WYOMING.

The United States Department of Agriculture is taking an active interest in the improvement of highways. An Office of Road Inquiry has been established, with a special agent and engineer in charge. Through this office an effort is being made looking to legislation of a uniform character in all of the States for the better construction and management of public roads. No State has better facilities for maintaining good roads at a reasonable expense than Wyoming, and still large sums are expended annually on roads and bridges. In the consideration of legislation pertaining to highways, much valuable information could doubtless be obtained from the Agricultural Department.

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#### FROM GOVERNOR FISHBACK, OF ARKANSAS.

If every farmer in Arkansas would take the time to calculate how much taxes he pays indirectly to bad roads, in the shape of wear and tear of vehicles, of mule and horseflesh, of time and labor, and of the wear and tear of patience and therefore of health, he would apprehend why it is that the French people, who are the most prosperous people in the world, tax themselves every year to keep up their public highways alone more than nineteen times as much as Arkansas taxes herself for all purposes. They do it because it pays. One horse in France hauls more than four horses do in the rural districts of Arkansas, and vehicles last more than three times as long without repair.

The present road law has well nigh all the defects that could attach to a statute. It is burdensome, it is unjust, and it is wholly inefficient. I recommend its repeal.

Under our constitution the State is allowed to levy a 10 mills tax for State purposes. Only half of this is ever levied.

I recommend that an additional 3 mills tax be levied for public roads, to be divided among the several counties according to their respective assessments, and to be expended under State supervision through county officers in a general system of road making, and that short-term penitentiary convicts and county convicts heretofore worked on convict farms be worked upon the public roads. Under a well-organized system upon this plan it would not be two years before the people would realize its utility and would insist upon its extension until every public road would be a source of profit as well as pleasure to our rural population.

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**FROM GOVERNOR PATTISON, OF PENNSYLVANIA.**

The question of good public roads—how to make and how to maintain them—keeps pressing to the front as one of the first concerns of local government. The public roads and common schools have long been the chief subjects for the attention of the township. Each has been governed by a separate board and maintained by a distinct direct tax, and the taxpayers have always had an opportunity to see the results of extravagance, and to call to quick account those responsible for it. Experience in many districts has proved the practicability and economy of making a few miles, at least, of good permanent roadway each year.

The saving effected by increased efficiency and by reduced expenses for repairs have demonstrated that it is certainly economy to make and keep up good roads, and a prevailing and well-directed popular sentiment in favor of such public enterprise will generally suffice to secure it. The enormous State appropriation to schools has naturally created some demand for State aid to road improvements. But, as I pointed out in my disapproval of the so-called "road law" of 1891 and in my biennial executive message of 1893, the difficulties in the way of such a proposition are not only the wide differences of opinion as to a fair basis of apportioning State aid, but the vast sums of money required for the State to make any considerable beginning at constructing roads in all the districts of the Commonwealth. By providing that the counties and not townships shall bear the original cost of new roads, the law already recognizes that public highways are a concern reaching beyond township, borough, or town lines; and certain classes of bridges, too, are of such general use and necessity that their construction is undertaken by counties. So some public ways traversing the direct route between principal points or populous centers are of very general interest and might be required to be of extra width and to be maintained with special care. Some legal provision might be made to put these into control of the counties, upon recommendation of the

grand jury, approved by the courts, and certain license taxes now paid to the State might be diverted to the counties to provide specially for the increased cost of improving and maintaining such highways. Well-grounded complaint against the existing laws which permit taxpayers to "work out" their road taxes is steadily increasing. In these days of organization and subdivision of labor this relic of primitive usages might be profitably abandoned. The time for periodical or spasmodic road mending has passed. The supervisor, with a few permanent hands and improved machinery, can be "on the road" to public advantage at all times, giving his attention wherever and whenever it is needed. The ordinary practical business system of maintaining any other valuable property, subject to expensive "wear and tear," needs to be applied to public roads, and any legislation which can promote this or remove existing obstructions to it merits approval.

The act of June 12, 1893 (P. L., 451), was somewhat of an experiment, intended to permit taxpayers to contract for making the roads at their own expense, paying all the salaries of road officers and preventing the levy of road tax. Novel as this proposition seems, it was acceptable in many districts where single interests have hitherto been compelled to pay onerous road taxes and received inconsiderable return. This law had my approval. It was declared to be unconstitutional by the common pleas court of Luzerne County; but on appeal the supreme court held otherwise, and in a recent opinion it reversed the lower court and declared the constitutionality of the act to be "not even doubtful." The same opinion is of general importance in defining what is and what is not special and local legislation, repugnant to the constitutional prohibition. The practical operation of this particular road law may be of interest in its bearing upon the general subject of legislation for road improvement.

The experience of other Commonwealths which have revised their road laws since the present widely pervading discussion on this subject began may be studied to advantage. Even a brief abstract of them would be tedious recapitulation here; but they will be accessible to your regular or special committees to whom this whole subject may be referred. Among the timely suggestions which they afford are the requirement that all road taxes shall be paid in cash; a regulation that road authorities may procure, by the electoral consent of the taxpayers, the right to borrow money on the public credit for permanent road improvements; county control of certain classes of roads; frontage and adjoining taxes for permanent road improvements along private property specially benefited.



