

HIGHLAND PARK NEWS-LETTER

An Open Letter

To the People of the State of Illinois:

FELLOW CITIZENS:—The General Assembly of the State of Illinois at its last session, passed a law creating a State Highway Commission. Under that law the Governor of the State has appointed the undersigned members of this commission.

As there seem to be various misconceptions as to the purpose and functions of the Commission, we have deemed it advisable to issue the following statement, to which we invite your careful attention:

It will be noted that the Commission is not called in the law a hard roads commission, or even a good roads commission, but simply a highway commission. The name, we believe, to be significant and to indicate in general its function.

We enter upon this work without preconceived notions or pre-determined policies. It is not made our function by law, nor is it our intention to urge upon the people of this State, or upon those of any section, any special policy as to their respective highways. The determination of the road policy of this commonwealth is vested by law in the public officials of the county, township and road districts, and it is not our duty and is far from our desire to attempt to dictate to any of these officers as to any point respecting their highway policy. In a word, it is not the function or purpose of this Highway Commission or of any of its members to make propaganda for hard roads or State aid in any form. On the other hand, it is made our duty and will be our desire to be of any use or assistance in our power to any or all of the road officials of this State in the performance of their respective duties. It is our purpose to put all the forces of the Commission at the disposal of such officials and to serve them in any way we can.

Over 97 per cent of the actual highway mileage of the State is earth road, which, for aught we can see, will be for generations to come the prevailing type of roadway. It will be our effort, therefore, to make such a study of the construction, care and improvement of these roads as will yield valuable results for the benefit of every portion of the State, keeping in mind the fact that the improvement of these roads benefits immediately all classes of the community and every part of the State alike.

In some portions of the State the local authorities are constructing gravel and macadam roads. We shall try to offer to these sections of the State such assistance in the way of advice as we may be able, by drawing up standard specifications, testing the quality of road-building material and finding deposits of material which may be of use in such road construction. In the last mentioned task we have been promised the aid of the State Geological Survey. We shall thus hope to make some valuable contributions to this style of road building wherever local authorities desire and local conditions justify it.

We hope further to be of assistance to all departments of the State alike in furnishing on request, advice and specifications as to bridges, culverts, and other forms of structure necessary to highway maintenance. We shall aim to develop an engineering force of such character and training as will put at the disposal of the poorest road district in the State the best possible expert advice as to all matters falling within its jurisdiction. So that upon questions of grade, drainage, culvert and bridge construction the roadmasters of any district or the highway commissioners of any township or the authorities of any county may obtain, upon request, the best advice we can furnish.

The law makes it our duty to collect and publish full statistics relating to the highways of the State and makes it the duty of local officials to give us the necessary information upon blanks furnished them for this purpose. We make an urgent appeal,

therefore, to all road officials to assist us in the performance of this portion of our duty.

The law of the State relating to the employment of convict labor in our State penitentiaries makes it the duty of the boards of management of these institutions to furnish to the Highway Commission such quantities of broken stone as it may call for—this stone to be of a size and quality suitable for use in highway construction. The State Highway Commission is authorized by law to distribute this stone among those road districts of the State asking for it free of all charge to these districts so far as the railways of the State are willing to carry such stone in return for similar stone to be used by them. The quantity of such stone available, is, of course, limited, and it will be distributed in accordance with general regulations intended to insure fairness in distribution among those communities asking for it.

The penitentiaries are also required to manufacture tile suitable for road drainage, and road machinery which will be distributed in the same way. But at present no penitentiary has actually installed a plant for manufacturing such tile. Due notice will be given to the road officers in the State when and where such tile and road machinery can be obtained.

It is further made the duty of the Highway Commission to undertake a careful and thorough examination into the best and cheapest method of highway construction adapted to the needs and conditions of the various portions of the State. Accordingly we shall begin a system of experimentation in the construction, maintenance and improvement of all classes of road which seem adapted to the peculiar conditions of any portion of the State. The cooperation of the highway department of the State University in charge of Professor O. Baker, has been secured for this part of our work and we shall hope to have some valuable results in course of time from this department of our undertaking.

The headquarters of the Commission will be in the State Capitol at Springfield, to which all communications should be addressed.

As State highway engineer, the Commission has engaged the services of Mr. A. N. Johnson, for some time in charge of the highway division in the United States Department of Agriculture at Washington. As one experienced in this sort of work in different parts of the country, his acquaintance

with the construction and improvement of earth roads, his careful training as a civil engineer, his knowledge of building all forms of modern highways, will, it is believed, stand the people of this State in good stead. He will be assisted by a competent corps of engineers which will be increased as the public demand may make necessary.

It is plain that the success of this Highway Commission is absolutely dependent upon the hearty cooperation of county, township and district officials, and we earnestly bespeak such cooperation and support, so that by the combined efforts of state and local officers in this department of public administration the interests of the people of this commonwealth may be most fully served.

EDMUND J. JAMES.
JOSEPH R. FULKERSON.
State Highway Commission.

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