

March 1

Plans to Extend Highways Ready, Doucett States

Though the Ontario Department of Highways does not intend to embark on any extensive road improvement projects during the period of the war, the department has formulated comprehensive plans for postwar extension of highways, elimination of bottlenecks in the highway system, and other general improvements designed to provide tourist traffic better access to Ontario's summer playgrounds. Highways Minister George Doucett told the annual meeting of the Ontario Good Roads Association yesterday.

Pointing out that in two years 60,839 trucks and cars have disappeared from the roads in Canada, Mr. Doucett noted that this was just one reason why ambitious road programs must wait until the war is over.

While total expenditures on Provincial highways dropped from \$38 million in 1938 to \$13 million in 1944, with the 1945 estimate just little more than \$12 million, Provincial contributions to municipalities for the upkeep of their roads increased from \$9,513,238 in 1938 to \$10,841,071 in 1944, with the estimates for the present year set at \$15 million, Mr. Doucett said.

Mr. Doucett also announced that the Highways Department is planning to establish "machinery pools" in the north so that small municipalities will be able to have the advantage of power machinery from the local pool—machinery which their resources would not permit them to purchase on their own account.

He noted an "alarming depletion in gravel supplies throughout the Province and said that in sections where there is a shortage of gravel the department is considering using commercial material only on the King's Highways, leaving the gravel pits for the use of municipalities.

A close relationship between the main highway systems of the country and Canada's future airborne transportation system was seen by Reeve J. N. Allan, Dunnville, in his presidential address to the association.

More attention to the marking of municipal roads in order to attract tourists off the main highways into the rural areas was urged by Mr. Allan.

Ontario Inquiry Not Influenced By Mine Verdict

The Government's inquiry into the Paymaster Mine disaster, in which 16 men were killed when a two-decker cage dropped 1,500 feet, will not be influenced by the verdict of a jury exonerating any person from blame, Mines Minister Leslie Frost told the Legislature yesterday.

Arthur Williams (C.C.F., Ontario) raised the matter, and read from a newspaper report of the inquest. In his opinion this verdict prejudiced the approach of the investigating body appointed by the Government to inquire into the disaster.

"According to this newspaper report of the inquest, the jury exonerated everybody," said Mr. Williams.

"The verdict is not at all binding upon the Government," said Mr. Frost. "That is the finding of the coroner's jury. I have not seen the evidence, but I have asked for a transcript to be sent to me. I can assure all the members of the House that, despite the verdict of the jury, we intend to investigate this matter thoroughly."

The committee of engineering experts from the University of Toronto would start its work of investigation shortly, the Minister said. He said that some of the greatest engineering experts in Canada were connected with the Northern Ontario mining companies, but he had considered it advisable to select experts elsewhere rather than have mining men investigate mining regulations and mine practices.

Full opportunity to discuss the Paymaster case would be provided in subsequent sittings of the House, the Minister said. He suggested that when the Mines Department estimates came before the Legislature this would be an appropriate time to have a full debate on the subject.