THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE GOOD ROADS MOVEMENT.

BY HON. R. L. JOINER.

The principles of Highway Engineering have been as well settled by experiment, observation and experience, as the principles of any other branch of physical science.

Those principles may be grouped under three general heads:
1st. The location of public highways.
2d. The construction of highways.
3d. The maintenance of highways.

It may be safely said that except in bridge construction, little if anything has been added to our knowledge of these principles in the last two thousand years. The old Roman military roads, built in the beginning of our era, have some of them endured to the present day,—their location and construction so correct that the elements have not been able to destroy them, even in the absence of any repairs for hundreds of years.

Every departure from correct principles in either of these branches of highway engineering has always and always will result in a defective highway—one that is costly to maintain and unsatisfactory in service. This country compares very unfavorably with many if not all of the civilized nations of the old world, in the condition of its highways. The reason given for this state of affairs is no longer a good reason. We have excused ourselves by saying, our country is so new, our people want so many other things worse than they want good roads that permanent roads should wait awhile, and we must make the best of these temporary makeshifts, which we dignify by the name of public highways. It is also urged that our changeable climate, extremes of heat and cold, wet and dry weather, immensely increase the difficulties of the construction and maintenance of good roads. Undoubtedly, to some extent this is true. But these same difficulties have not prevented us from
making this nation, in many other respects, one of the greatest nations in the world. No expense has been spared in building railroads, all of which are only great highways for travel and commerce. We are not satisfied with anything less, and are willing to pay railroad fare and freight tariffs, which enable railroad companies to build roads, equip and maintain them so well that even our hogs and cattle ride to the city from the station with ease and safety; and we ourselves, on our infrequent visits to the capital or metropolis, ride in palatial cars, like luxurious princes, though we may ride from our homes to the station, and drive or haul our produce over roads that are practically impassable at some seasons of the year owing to their faulty construction, and many of them so badly located that for long stretches in places, we must drive in a walk, even with a light carriage, no matter in how great a hurry we may be. As we transport our produce to the station we are often compelled to lose a good market on account of bad roads, or double, treble, and sometimes increase four times the expense of wagon haul, by lightening our loads to suit the condition of the road.

The American people pay for all the luxury, convenience, speed and safety of our railroads, for we may be sure that railroads are not built from motives of philanthropy. We pay for all of it, I say, and a good round sum, too, in many instances—a sum large enough to pay all the expenses of construction, operation and maintenance, and a profit over all great enough to make millionaires of the promoters of railroad enterprises. Everything we sell, everything we buy, pays this railroad toll.

It is no less true that bad highways are a continual tax on every citizen who uses them, or who uses any article which has to be transported over them. The hundreds of millions invested in railways have immensely cheapened transportation, broadened commerce, provided markets, and made progress and prosperity possible to inland communities and states. The same result will follow a judicious system of expenditure on our public roads. It is a safe estimate that the produce and manufactures of this country are charged to the consumer with fifty cents per ton cost of highway transportation, and that this cost
could be reduced one-half if our roads were all as good as they could be made at a reasonable expense.

The arguments for good roads are unanswerable from every point of view. As an economical investment it can be demonstrated that money properly spent on good roads will pay the country more that ten per cent. per annum. As a convenience, or luxury if you please, nothing tends to bring us closer together socially, and closer to the civilizing influences of more fortunate communities. The country with its beauty, its freedom, its healthful air and broad landscapes, becomes a suburb of the town or city, with its libraries and lecture rooms, its schools and churches, its markets and many desirable advantages. All of these things are admitted, and need now only to be stated to be accepted as true. It seems to me that the argument might be closed, and that we should apply ourselves to the task,—by no means a light one,—of devising some practicable plan of distributing the expense of building good roads equitably among those people who receive the benefit from them. The railroads have solved this question by furnishing carriages and motive power and charging tolls and tariffs on freight and passengers. Toll roads have been built which simply collect toll for the use of the road. It is said that syndicates of capitalists could be formed, with sufficient capital to build good roads on all our main lines of highway, if the state would give them power to condemn land at actual value and allow them to collect toll enough to pay them three per cent. per annum on their investment over and above the cost of operation and maintenance. The American people have seen how this plan works with our railways, and do not consider it an economical solution. At present, in this state and in almost all of the states, the land owner,—and to a very large extent, this means the farmer,—the land owner is charged with all of the expense of constructing and maintaining the highways of his locality. To understand how unjust this system is, one has only to think of the fact that the most expensive roads to build and maintain are in a hilly country where the land is poor and often of little value. This is carried so far in some towns I might name,
that the per cent. of highway taxes is three times as much in some towns as in others in the same county, when it is also the fact that the produce of the better and less taxed district is drawn over the roads of the higher taxed districts to market. The hill farmer naturally, however patriotic and public spirited he may be, bears with perfect complacency the reviling his neighbor of the prairie neighborhood freely bestows on the roads as he passes to market. Although the hill farmer may never have thought it out in words, his sense of fairness teaches him that he should not be compelled to pay a road tax four or five times greater on a dollar valuation than the prairie farmer does, for Mr. Prairie Farmer’s especial accommodation or to keep him in good temper while he is hauling his produce through the hill country to market. The farmer, generally speaking, and the farmer’s boy especially, laughs to himself, when he sees some pleasure carriage from the neighboring town or city wrecked in a ditch, or most unmercifully jolted over rough places in the road, regardless of the feelings of the holiday passengers, for he knows that his farm pays four or five times as much highway tax, dollar for dollar valuation, as the city dwelling or store, and the country man knows that there are miles of country roads to build, where the city man has rods of streets. Farmers generally believe that country roads, so long as they are passable, must remain much as they are, until the cost of making them good is properly distributed.

Legislatures pass highway laws and courts make decisions that we must keep our highways in good order from end to end, and in some particulars throughout their whole width. Sometimes our country towns are muleted in heavy damages for unavoidable accidents occurring on our highways, but only a passing glance at the condition of the most of our roads shows that we hold all such laws in derision, and are compelled to take the risk of accidents and damage suits by reason of the extent of our roads and the limitations of the means to fulfill absurd requirements, and the manifest injustice of doing so under our present system.
I am not now, nor do I at any time, defend or excuse bad roads. I simply express a general protest against a system of distribution of the cost of roads which is manifestly unjust to the last degree, a system which is crude and primitive, which comes down to us from Adam's time hoary with age, a great injustice in these modern times. It is only a step removed from the methods of savage lands, and resulting, as we have often seen, in a road actually worse than the Indian trail or emigrant trail of frontier settlements. The hundreds of millions of property piled up in our cities pay no road tax, while these same roads which we have been talking about have made cities, banks, factories and railroads possible and profitable. They are the brooks and rivulets which feed and create the mighty rivers of commerce throughout the world.

Good roads will be expensive to construct, but not so expensive to maintain as our present roads. It is estimated that the saving in cost of maintenance will pay the first cost of construction in forty years. The benefits of good roads will be great and widely distributed, and not the greatest portion will inure to the farmer who, under our present system, is charged with the whole cost.

In our educational system we have adopted a wise plan. We recognize the justice and the necessity of distributing the cost of our public schools, a portion to a state school tax, another portion to a county school tax, leaving the larger portion, it is true, to the local tax payer. It is more necessary to an equitable distribution of the road tax that something like this should be done, and the wonder is that it should have been so long delayed.

Section 10, Article VIII of the Constitution of the state of Wisconsin seems to prohibit the state from assisting in highway construction. It is undoubtedly a wise provision that has protected us from the visionary schemes and corrupt jobbery which would have crippled our resources in the early history of the state, when there was a great temptation to use the credit of the state to build canals and railroads, which were much needed and which we could not build ourselves. It is to some extent a wise provision now, but if it prevents a proper distribution of road
taxes it should be modified, with careful limitations. Suppose
the state was allowed to assist by appropriating one-fourth of the
total tax raised for road purposes, the county one-fourth, and the
locality the remaining two fourths. I do not see that there
would be much inducement for extravagance on the part of the
local authorities, as in any expenditure of taxes on roads, one-
half would come directly out of their own people. The state of
New Jersey has such a system in successful operation. That
state has adopted a system of state aid to highways which has
deservedly become highly popular, especially in the farming
communities. Under their law the cost of building the good
road is divided among the the state, the county and the adjoining
property owners. The adjoining property owner pays ten
per cent. of the cost, the state pays one-third, and the county
(which is the political unit in that state) pays the remainder.
This plan is not recommended for adoption in this state, and
is only spoken of here for the principle which is involved, viz.:
the distribution of the cost over the whole people benefited. It
seems to proceed upon the principle that the adjoining property
holder is more directly benefited than any one else, and indirectly
besides as much as anyone else, a proposition I do not believe
will in most cases be true.

I have given much thought to this subject of distribution of
the cost, and although I am not able to demonstrate by figures
or statistics my position, I have concluded that as equitable a
distribution as could be made would be for the town to pay one-
half, the county one-quarter, and the state the remainder of all
road taxes. I would leave the management of our roads where
it now is, in the hands of the town authorities. They are on
the ground and are more interested in the judicious and economi-
cal expenditure of the money than anyone else can be. I would
have a maximum grade limitation which should never be
exceeded in the location or alteration of any highway. I would
also have a state and county inspection of highways so rigid and
thorough, both of construction and location, with the penalty of
loss of state and county aid for work not up to inspection, which
would insure a good highway.
This radical change of cost distribution is in my opinion the prime necessity, the first important thing to be done before the farmers, who now have and intend to maintain control of our country roads, will listen very attentively to lectures on good roads, or be moved to wiser methods or more costly expenditures by the gibes and sarcasms of people who neither pay road tax nor work on the public roads. When this is done and the farmer needs no education in that direction, then the highway engineer or surveyor comes in to insist on the application of scientific principles in road construction. In his path at once arises that almost impassable obstacle, the idea of the land owner that his personal convenience and wishes should be consulted and should be the paramount consideration in the location of the road through his land; and that other idea almost as troublesome, that in the award of damages for land taken he should not only be paid in full for the land so taken, but for the cost of a fence each side of the road and an exorbitant sum to compensate him for his imaginary and fancied inconvenience by reason of the road through his land. It may be necessary to exercise for a time the autocratic power of some state or county officer, who shall be such officer by appointment as far removed as possible from the influences of town politics, to obtain a location upon which it will be possible to construct a good road.

I give it to you as a surveyor's opinion that no road with a grade of more than ten feet in a hundred will ever be a good road, but that no hill that it is necessary to cross, even in the hilliest part of our state, need have a grade of over eight feet to the hundred.

Another very prevalent idea is, that roads should so far as possible,—and in many instances much farther than it is possible to make a good road,—follow the lines of the rectangular survey of our public lands. From an artist's point of view nothing mars a landscape more than to see it mapped out by roads and fences into squares and rectangles, like our great-grandmother's quilt patterns. The graceful and harmonious curves of nature's landscape gardening are not improved by art, but are destroyed and cut away by the one idea of straight
corn rows, and as many of those long rows as possible. The farmer who doesn't want his field cut up by a road because it spoils the looks of it, never thinks of the looks at all or cares much about it. His idea of beauty is utility. He is like the washerwoman who speaks of "lovely soap," meaning only that it is good soap to remove dirt.

The fact is, corn is the only crop for which it makes much difference whether the field is square or round; and in modern corn raising on hilly land, the only place where curves would be necessary on highways, the old idea of straight rows up and down the hill is being discarded. The rows follow the hill as the highway should do, with all the beautiful curves nature has marked out there. She no longer vents her wrath on such cornfields, but seeks the fields which have violated her masterpieces and the roads which are built on wrong principles, and with a sudden shower washes the soil down to the hard-pan where white beans would not grow, and tears the road into an impassable ditch.

When we get rid of these weeds, which are the heritage of our own and our fathers' slovenly methods of farming, and get a good road laid along the hillside, corn will no longer be planted in straight rows, but will be parallel to the road in rows but one way. Landscape gardening on the extensive scale of a community of farms will be possible. Some of the fine view effects of the hill country of England will be attainable, where rectangular surveying is not practiced, and no one ever dreamed of moving a road from a good location to a poorer one in order to get it on a line.

So much for the looks of the thing, which is about the only argument I have heard advanced against a scientific location of a road. I reiterate what I have often said before, that from a surveyor's standpoint, in fact, from any standpoint, it is absolutely impossible to build good roads upon their present location, with any reasonable expenditure. A very slight change in location, often not amounting to the width of the highway, will sometimes be sufficient; in other cases, it would require
a complete change of location for long distances to be of any material benefit.

This brings to the front another difficulty. Nearly all farmers like to live on the road. Why this is so, no one knows. It is probably an inherited trait from the time when the road sought the settler in his frontier home, when the road and the traveler were the farmer's only connection with the rest of the world. The roadside in thickly settled communities is a noisy, dusty, unpleasant place to live. It is not so secure from tramps, mad dogs, book agents, peddlers and marauders, and in these days of the telephone and the rural mail, is of no value as a news connection with the outside world. The rumors spread along the highway by passers by are notoriously the most unreliable news in the world. You cannot have a bright green lawn, a clean sitting room, healthy foliage on your shade trees, nor sweet smelling flowers, if you live by the roadside. Let us build our farm houses with reference to the farm and not to the road, and let the road go where it must, even if it is at the back of your buildings. Your friends, whom only you care to see in any social way, and those persons who have business with you can find you up or down the shady lane; and you can go to visit them or to your market over a road upon which it will be a pleasure and a rest to ride. Instead of market day being what it is now, often the hardest day's work for man and team in the week, it may be made a holiday.

These are some of the difficulties in the way of good road construction. They must all be met and overcome before a spadeful of earth is turned for the road. To the construction and maintenance of the road, there are no problems which can be brought that are not easy of solution. Almost any surveyor is competent to stake out the work, and in every town we have splendid fellows to handle rock and dirt. When farmers shall not have to bear more than their share of the expense and they see that work put on the road is effective to a permanent highway, the slipshod makeshift, temporary methods,—if they can be called methodical,—of our present highway matters will be a thing of the past.
A few words on the law of highways: A highway has in law, length, width and direction, fixed by a definite location. The survey is supposed to follow and mark its center line. If a road is properly laid out, and the proper releases executed by the land owner, the public acquires a right of way over that road, to its full width from the center line and extent until it vacates or abandons it. If a town allows a road to be entirely closed up by a land owner for four consecutive years, it is held in law to have abandoned it, and cannot reopen it without the consent of the land owner, except by original proceedings, as though there had never been a road there. This, however, does not apply to encroachments on a highway. It is a common practice for the farmer, on hilly land, when repairing or rebuilding his fence on the lower or field side of the road, to move the fence nearer and nearer the road until it is often as near the wheel track as it is possible to pass. I know many roads which were originally three or four rods wide, but have been contracted by this operation in the course of years almost imperceptibly until they are now not more than twenty feet wide in many places. All such fences or encroachments may be removed by the town, whenever they wish to use the land, and no lapse of time will bar that right if the road was properly laid out in the first place or the limit of the original dedication can be determined. Bear in mind, that there is a center line of each highway definitely fixed, either by a survey in the first instance, or by the land owner himself when he first fenced the road and thereby dedicated it to the public use. The land owner or anyone holding title from him cannot take back again, without official and legal consent of the town, any part of that land, be it one and a half or two rods each side of the center line.

After our good roads are built, in some places there will be extensive fills, with banks so high as to be dangerous, and which it will be necessary to guard with a railing. In such cases it might be well to allow the fence to be built on the hip of the embankment to serve as such railing, but generally no one should be allowed to encroach on the public road. In many
cases, four rods is not too wide to properly construct a road. In most cases three rods will do; in some places it will require six rods for base of fill and ditch, or top of cut, through earth.

Many of our roads were surveyed in an early day when the land belonged to the government. I understand that that fact, though no award of damages was made or release executed by the land owner, legalized the location. As the land was settled, the location did not suit the settler and each man was allowed by the town to move that road to a new location on his own land, to suit his own convenience. Now, the fence that he erected at that new roadside is held in law to mark the limit of his dedication, and marks a line which he cannot afterwards pass without legal consent of the town. Simple acquiescence on the part of the town authorities is not such legal consent. If he does move his fence further up the hill to increase his tillable land at the expense of the public, he is liable to be compelled peremptorily to remove his fence back to the line of original dedication unless it is moved far enough to cut off the whole of the original dedication and comes under the four-year law, thereby becoming a new dedication of land to the highway.

More attention should be paid by surveyors and town authorities to definiteness in locating the beginning and ending of roads, or, as surveyors express it, the initial and closing points of a highway. I have been called upon to locate and retrace the lines of an old road, which was also the boundary line between two land owners. The road had long since been abandoned and was grown up with young trees. It was described on the town records as beginning at a stake in John Smith's hog pen, and ending after numerous angles at another stake two rods south of the southwest corner of Jim Brown's stable. Upon inquiry, I learned that John Smith and Jim Brown, their hog pen and stable, had been dead and forgotten for forty years.

I will close this paper with a prediction: Good roads are coming in the near future. No man's convenience will be allowed to stand in the way of them. The cost will be equitably distributed and will not be so heavy as to increase our taxes
to any great extent. Permanent roads will be built on correct principles; roads that will cost infinitely less to maintain than our present highways. The croakers, who are now hanging on the wheels of progress in this direction, will in the end be the loudest shouters in praise of those better methods,—like the man who staid up in the loft of his cabin while his wife down below killed the bear, and who ever after boasted of the big bear we killed.

Thanking you, ladies and gentlemen, for your kind attention, I leave this subject with you.

DISCUSSION.

Mr. McKerrow: You have heard this most excellent paper on this question of roads, and if you have any questions Mr. Joiner can answer them fully.

Mr. Clinton: Will Mr. Joiner tell us how much it costs to build a permanent road?

Mr. Joiner: That will depend a great deal upon circumstances,—how far you have to haul gravel, the nature of the ground, the amount of damages you would have to pay for land. It would be very difficult indeed to say, but we are graveling roads in our country very cheaply. We construct them cheaply in the first place with road graders and gravel them over a bed of shales that we have in that country from the Potsdam. There is a bed of shales there four feet thick that no one supposed was good road material. It has a hydraulic quality in it. You put it on the road and the wheels crush it and it makes a cement. It does not wear as long as harder stone; still, it can be easily mended, and makes a beautiful road and is done cheaply. It would be difficult to give any kind of an opinion without knowing the facilities you have for getting stone to the ground and the draining it would take to make your roadbed dry, and the distance.

Mr. Clinton: Have you had any experience with crushed stone?
Mr. Joiner: Yes, crushed with hammers. But, since we
discovered that shale we have not crushed any more stone. We
dig a pit and back the team in, and with two or three scrapers
we can load a wagon in two or three minutes.

Question: Do you consider gravel good road material?
Mr. Joiner: Yes, except on sand. Gravel does not seem to
stay on sand.

Mr. West: I would like to ask your estimate for the cost per
mile of a good road through a prairie country where we have
to buy crushed stone and haul a distance of four or five miles.

Mr. Joiner: I am not prepared to answer any of these ques-
tions so as to give you anything to depend upon.

Mr. Raymer: I may give a little experience in building just
this kind of a road. A road 16 feet in width, macadamized six
inches in depth, rolled down well with a steam roller and wetted
while it was being done, cost $1,000 a mile. But it is safe to
say, taking the state over, that you can build a road, if you do
not have to haul the stone too far, for from four to six hundred
dollars a mile. I do not mean a road more than 12 feet wide,
and four inches—perhaps six in the center, in depth. We paid
60 cents a cubic yard for our stone at the quarry. We hauled
it two or two and a half miles, crushed. It was crushed at the
quarry. Good roads can be built for from four to six hundred
dollars a mile,—good macadam roads, rolled with steam roller.

Mr. West: What was the road bed?

Mr. Raymer: A good deal of it over sandy hills where there
had to be a good deal of grading. Earth and sand were moved
from part of the road to another to get the grade which we
wanted before putting on the stone.

Mr. West: This stone was placed upon a sand road-bed?

Mr. Raymer: The bed was first thoroughly rolled with a
steam roller and then the stone put on.

Mr. McKerrow: Does the price include the grading as well
as the macadam?

Mr. Raymer: Yes, over an unusually hard piece of road.

Mr. Linse: We have great difficulty in LaCrosse with soft
lime-stone.
Mr. Raymer: We have a soft stone here. We have thirty miles of macadam in this city and it is all that stone. It makes an immense difference whether the road is thoroughly rolled before that stone is put on.

A good sandy soil is the best for a road-bed because it is thoroughly drained. After the stone is put on it should be thoroughly rolled with a steam roller.

Mr. McKerrow: The government, in reporting upon road-building in New Jersey, makes the statement that they have put this on at different depths and do not advise more than four to six inches on a sand bed. They think that the best possible road for the money expended is made by putting on this thinner covering.

Mr. Linse: We put on all the way from eight to ten inches of common limestone and we have to keep at it in making repairs. In a short time we have to replace it. I have seen four or six inches go through on a country road in five or six years.

Mr. Everett: It depends a good deal upon the quality of the stone. I do not believe there is any better material than gravel. Gravel is miniature granite. If well crushed and screened and properly put on and rolled it makes as fine a road as I know of. I have had some experience this last summer in making this kind of a road. We had a complete crushing outfit and dumping wagons to handle this material. We had a 12-ton steam road roller. We first took off the surface soil down to the clay. The gravel had been run through a crusher and screened in four sizes. The coarser size of the crushed material was put on the road six inches thick. On top of that was placed a bond of clay and fine gravel which was thoroughly washed into the coarser material, and then the whole was rolled with a heavy roller. On top of that was placed four inches of a smaller size of the screened material which was again bonded, washed down and rolled. We had ten inches of material on that road and built it for $700 per mile. The macadam part was 22 feet wide.

Mr. McKerrow: You did not allow anything for the cost of gravel? A. No.
Mr. Hubbard: We build roads up where I live entirely differently. We live in a sandy country. We grade the road up six inches with sand. When that wears out we put on six inches more and the road lasts forever.

But, Mr. President, as Mr. Joiner says, a change must be made in the constitution, otherwise the state cannot assist in building these roads. Therefore, I rise for the purpose of getting an expression from the farmers here assembled in regard to a resolution now pending before both houses of this legislature that the statute may be changed so that the state can assist in this road-building, and I move that:

Whereas, The tax-payers of the state will receive great benefit, not only in the country but in the cities, by such a change in the statute, that, therefore, it is the sense of this assembly that such resolution do pass.

Mr. Faville: I second the motion.

The Chairman: The motion is before the convention.

Mr. Raymer: I am glad the motion has been made. I thought when the paper was being read that, strange as it may appear, the farmers generally would be the people who would oppose a state tax for the purpose of road building. I know that we had the bitterest kind of a fight in the legislature to get the mill school tax through. I was particularly attacked because I published a newspaper in the city of Madison. It showed explicitly and fully that the farmers were not in favor of taxation for the benefit of the children. The same would be true of the road tax. The state ought to pay a part of it as a state tax. That will be the only way that you will get a just system of taxation.

Mr. VanMeter: I would like Mr. Joiner to explain what benefit will accrue to us from state and county aid. I never knew a state or county that was worth a single dollar that did not come from the individual tax-payers. Why cannot we do this work locally without all this.

Mr. Hubbard: The children raised in this state are regarded as state property. Their education is cheerfully borne by the tax-payers of the state. A man with no children will cheerfully
under our laws pay his taxes into the state treasury, and a large portion goes to educate those children. I happen to live in a locality outside of a city. We farmers can build our highways to get to the city, and is not that city benefited by that highway just as much or more than we are? They receive our products. We sell them to the men who live in the city. They get their commission from the goods that we deliver over the roads that we make. I say the state should pay a part of that expense. Am I right? If I am, then every tax-payer in the state of Wisconsin should pay his just proportion of the taxation to build that highway.

The Chairman: Are you ready for the question? All those in favor of the passage of this resolution endorsing the change of the constitution so that a state tax may be levied for the building of high-ways, please rise.

Motion carried.

The Chairman. Nothing has been said about the wheels that we should use on these roads.

Mr. Faville: Not less than a 4-inch tire should be allowed to go upon the road. If I were the law-making power of the state I would decree that every vehicle going upon a road heavily loaded should have a tire not less than 4 inches.

Question: What would you do with the bicycle?

Mr. Faville: I would put a four-inch tire on it. When I came here ten years ago to live there was only one bit of macadam in the city. That was up on Langdon street. It happened to be a very rainy spring and the heavy traffic cut that road up with the narrow tired wagons. I had no interest specially, but I said to the property owners along that street, "you are fools if you sit here and allow those men to tear your street up with those narrow tires. You cannot get a street good enough to stand that. I would have the tire of the heavy traffic wagon widened to three inches or more." It set them to thinking and now we have an ordinance in this city requiring such tires to be not less than four inches.

The Chairman: What is the present law in regard to wide tires.
Mr. Faville: The present law simply exempts wide tires from taxation. We want something better than that,—something to compel the use of wide tires.

The Chairman: The bill that Mr. Cleophas is about to present in the assembly provides for the protection of highways by the use of wide tires. The bill reads as follows:

Section 1. There may be filed with the town clerk at least thirty days prior to the time of holding the annual town meeting in any town in this state, a petition in writing signed by not less than twenty electors and freeholders of the town, requesting that the electors of the town shall at such town meeting, vote on the question of using tires not less than three inches wide on all wagons carrying a burden of over 1,500 pounds, used by any resident of such town in his business on the highways of such town. Upon the filing of such petition it shall be the duty of the town clerk of said town, to post in three or more public places in said town, at least ten days prior to the holding of such annual town meeting, a notice that such question will be submitted to the electors at such town meeting.

Section 2. It shall be the duty of the town clerk of such town, to prepare written or printed ballots for the use of all voters who may desire to vote on said question; which ballots shall be in the following form:

For wide tire wagons ........................................ [ ]

Against wide tire wagons. .................................... [ ]

Said ballot shall be marked by each voter, voting on said question by making a cross at the right of the words "for wide tire wagons," if he desires to vote for said proposition, or by making a cross opposite the words "against wide tire wagons," if he desires to vote against said proposition. The votes so cast shall be deposited in a separate ballot box and shall be publicly counted and canvassed by the inspectors of the town meeting before they shall adjourn on the day of election. And said inspectors after canvassing said votes shall draw up and sign a statement, and file the same with the town clerk of said town.
showing the whole number of votes cast upon said proposition, and the number of votes cast for and against said proposition respectively.

Section 3. If a majority of the votes cast on such question be in favor of wide tire wagons, then after ninety days from the date of taking said vote it shall be unlawful and is hereby declared to be a misdemeanor for any person residing in said town to use or drive upon the highways in said town, any wagon carrying a burden of over fifteen hundred pounds, with a tire less than three inches in width.

Section 4. Any person violating any of the provisions of this act shall for each offense be punished by a fine of not more than ten and not less than three dollars and costs of the action.

Section 5. This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and publication.

Mr. ———: I do not wish to attack the gentleman’s views on that subject, but I would like to offer an amendment. I like the law and I am willing to go in and vote for wide-tired wagons, but a law in that form is almost useless. I think it was in 1897 that the lower house of this legislature passed a bill worded the same for the working of the road tax,—to leave it with the voters of the town whether they wanted to stay under the old system or adopt the township system and get good commissioners to make roads with half the money that they were using in the old way. They would simply vote for the old way. A lot of prejudiced people would go in and vote the thing down. They will say “We don’t want wide-tired wagons.” I think if this legislature wants to pass a law requiring wide-tired wagons it should pass it and give them a reasonable time to get in line, but do not give them an opportunity to vote. I hope we shall have the bill amended so as to leave out the opportunity to vote.

Mr. Faville: That is all right. If it is left to the township it won’t amount to anything.

Mr. True: I want to favor a resolution endorsing the bill of Mr. Cleophas. We cannot accomplish any great thing in a short space of time. I appreciate the position taken by the gentleman at my right. It might be a good thing if he could force the whole state of Wisconsin into using wide-tired
wagons. Mr. Cleophas has the right idea, to take one step in advance. There will be townships that will adopt this provision in the law. Let them take this step and it will be a lesson to surrounding towns which will soon drop into line. But my idea is that if Mr. Cleophas should introduce a bill making it obligatory upon all farmers to put wide tires on their wagons, he would lose his measure and the whole matter would be set back two years. I favor the step that Mr. Cleophas proposes in this bill and hope that it will be endorsed by this body.

The Chairman: A number of towns in this state have done better since that township law went into force.

Mr. Scott: I will second the motion of Mr. True and wish to say that many towns have improved wonderfully under this law, and the work in Columbia county on the roads has been at least 50 per cent. better than previous to that action.

Mr. Culbertson: In our vicinity the majority of the people who have used the four-inch tire are going back to the three-inch. They say they are more satisfactory than the four-inch for general purposes,—easier on their horses. They pronounce them horsekillers among the salesmen, and consequently when I was about to buy a four-inch I could not find but two men out of twenty-five that would advise buying a four-inch tire. Since that law passed giving townships the right to work their taxes or pay it, our township has improved wonderfully. For the last ten years, even before this happened, it was voted that the township was to pay for all gravel that the district would haul for the township, and I can say as far as we are concerned we have a very few pieces of road in the town but what are well graveled and we can haul a good load at any season of the year, consequently we have not given much attention to this matter of late. I live ten miles from Appleton and there is no season of the year we cannot haul a good load to the city.

Mr. True: I would rather it would come from some one in the body of the house, but I will move that this convention endorse the bill now pending before the legislature for wide-tired wagons, introduced by Mr. Cleophas.

Motion seconded.
Mr. Thorp: I want to talk a little about wide-tired wagons, and the conditions in our country roads. I have both wide and narrow tires. I cannot go out with a wide tire and draw anything but the wagon. When we get good roads wide tires will be all right. But there are places in this state where they have not good gravel roads and if you compel people to use wide tires, they will have to stay at home until the roads are dry.

Mr. McKerrow: This bill leaves it to the township.

Mr. True: You are simply allowing towns to do as they see fit in this matter.

Rising vote upon motion of Mr. True called for and carried in the affirmative.

Adjourned until 7:30 p. m.

EVENING SESSION.

Meeting called to order by Chairman McKerrow.

The Chairman: Our secretary took the liberty of making the statement upon the program that the president of the state board of agriculture would address you. This is a mistake for I do not deal in addresses. That is not in my line. If it were "wool" or "sheep" that I were to talk to you about, I might furnish it to you all wool and a yard wide. Instead of making an address I will read you a communication from one of the gentlemen upon our program who failed to materialize this afternoon,—Mr. Rietbrock of Milwaukee, who is a farmer in Waukesha, Columbia and Marathon counties, and a lawyer in Milwaukee, and was to have talked upon "What the Farmer Fails to Do." He says: "I cannot be at Madison at this time on account of the serious illness of my wife. I regret this very much."

While we are waiting for the next speaker I suppose I will have to fill in the time by saying something, not in the way of an address, however,
Standing here as I do as a representative of the State Board of Agriculture, representing in a sense the greatest industry of the state and, as we think, the most important, when I start out to talk along this line of agriculture and our relations as a board to it, I am pretty apt to get to boasting, and you will have to pardon me for this. The very air of this country of ours produces enthusiasm as is well demonstrated in the story of the young man who grew up in this country, etc.

We who live in Wisconsin and are farmers or agriculturists have a right to be proud of the advancement that our state has made along this particular line. I was especially proud a few days ago when a paper published in Michigan fell into my hands and I saw an editorial upon a part of the governor's message, which said that the governor of Michigan had called attention in his message to the fact that the farm lands in the southern portion of Wisconsin as compared with the farm lands in southern Michigan of equal quality were worth ten per cent. more per acre; and then he noted the fact that in Wisconsin much more attention had been given to the education of the people along agricultural lines; that we had more farmers' institutes and conventions in Wisconsin; that we had built up the live stock and dairy interests of the state until they were ten-fold as compared with those of Michigan. Naturally I felt somewhat proud. We should feel proud of the advancement which Wisconsin has made, but there is a chance for further advancement, and the Wisconsin Board of Agriculture feels this. We are asking to have the legislature of Wisconsin give us funds to build amphitheaters where the people may sit in comfort and witness the handling and judging of stock. But I will stop, as I see that our speakers for the evening are at hand, asking your pardon for thus breaking off abruptly.

It has been customary at farmers' conventions of this kind to listen for a time at least to the chief executive of our state. The Wisconsin State Board of Agriculture called upon our present governor and he was very loath to promise to be here this evening, stating that he had refused to go out and make
talks everywhere; but we knew full well that the best of the
Wisconsin farmers would be in attendance upon this convention,
and we insisted that they must hear the governor of this great
state. He, therefore, kindly consented to be here if he could
so arrange matters. I am pleased to present to you at this
time a gentleman who needs no introduction, as his name is
a household word throughout the length and breadth of the state,
Governor La Follette.

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR LA FOLLETTE.

It is a pleasure to welcome the representatives of agriculture
as you assemble to consider questions of concern to your indus-
try. Your proceedings will be followed with the deepest interest
and your presence here prove beneficial not alone to you but to
the general public as well. Whatever is important to agriculture
is equally important to the state. Whatever the state may prop-
erly do in aid of agricultural advancement should be done to
the uttermost limit. In no other direction can it more strongly
and securely build for its own future. We all rejoice in the
development of our commonwealth along every line of human
achievement. We are justly proud of its high commercial
rank, its stable financial and business institutions, its marvelous
progress in manufactures. But, welcoming and encouraging
all this growth and diversity in every direction, it is still my
earnest hope, that agriculture may ever remain the foundation
of our statehood.

In no way can government be more helpful to the great in-
terests you represent than by furnishing with liberal hand
the means to thoroughly reorganize and radically improve the
district school system of our state. There is authority for the
statement that attendance upon these schools is actually dimin-
ishing, and further that "for every hundred pupils now attend-
ing district school only one pupil reaches a high school." In-
vestigation of this subject increases the interest and excites
the concern of every thoughtful citizen, and the power and in-