

PREMIER DYSART

(Continued from Page Three)
Paved Roads

In consequence of the change in specifications for the paved roads, it can be said that a saving has been effected of between Three and a half and Four Thousand Dollars per mile. When one takes into consideration the mileage of road laid in this Province, one will appreciate the magnitude of that saving.

No paving however good, can possibly stand up under traffic unless it stands on a stable, rigid, foundation. Because the pavements in contracts originally let were placed upon improperly prepared foundations, so they have cracked terribly, cost much to repair, and will continue to drain the Treasury for years to come. One section of an otherwise good pavement went to pieces a few years ago because of the very want of proper foundation. That section in question was in Westmorland County near the mouth of the Dover Road.

I have asked my engineers for a detailed report, which is as follows: "A section of pavement in Westmorland County on No. 2 Highway, beginning at the Dover Road and extending about three-quarters of a mile east, laid by the Sorms Contracting Co., Ltd. in 1935 showed signs of failure during the spring of 1936. During the spring of 1937 this section failed entirely and we found it necessary to repave the entire section. This failure was due to there not being a sufficient quantity of gravel sub-base material. As this is through a heavy clay subsoil. The Drain did not function properly, causing a very unstable sub-base.

"Our present method under like conditions is to increase gravel quantities sufficiently to overcome the unstable condition by lowering the water table, even to a depth of two or three feet. Suitable rock and sand materials were trucked from our pit at Humphreys and the old pavement covered to a depth of nine inches, over which four inches of gravel was placed. Paving mixture was hauled from the Rayner Construction Limited plant at Painsee Junction, the closest plant available.

"A half dozen or more small failures occurred between this point and Memramcook which were also repaired at this time at a cost of about \$1,400.00. It is our opinion that failures will continue on this section of road, mainly on account of insufficient gravel sub-base."

All of which proves the utter absurdity of seeking to place an expensive pavement on an unstable base. The roads we are building today are costing money, but we are building securely and the foundations today laid shall virtually last as long as the earth's crust itself.

The consolidated material placed in the road bed cannot disappear when once covered and, if the railroad foundation stands, what is to prevent our highway foundations from standing. Since considerably over one-half the cost of our roads being laid today goes directly into foundation, it then follows that that investment will continue to serve the Province for many generations to come.

As to the pavement, this will, in my judgment, stand at least a quarter of a century, notwithstanding the absurd statements advanced by the Leader of the Opposition from time to time. While in Havana a short time ago, I saw a similar pavement to our own on a like stabilized foundation, that has seen seven years of service, and that is being subjected to traffic much heavier than our own, and there is no visible sign of wear. Frost conditions, of course, will play a part, but our engineers are building with a view to overcoming the effects of this hazard by liberal applications of gravel which, of course, steps up our costs.

On the whole, I am confident that we are on the right track, we have the experience of construction work carried on in other provinces under like conditions, and we have the experience of the great Republic to the south to draw from. In point of alignment, grading, etc., our engineers are looking forward a quarter of a century.

An Investment

There are those, including the Opposition, in this House as well as several newspapers in this Province, that seem not to appreciate the fact that the type of road being laid today is definitely in the investment class. Some go so far as to suggest that the costs for such construction ought to be borne out of Current revenue. Such nonsense is not worthy of consideration.

The revenues derivable from our highways will, I anticipate, shortly step up to the point where the entire servicing of the debt incident to our constructions may be met.

Perhaps I might here enumerate some of the advantages of this modern form of highway construction:

"First, it is recognized that the tourist traffic is one of our most important businesses in the summer and present indications lead us to believe that the Maritime Provinces will soon be a summer playground for the millions of people in the adjoining states and these people will not come unless we can assure them dust free roads.

"Second, expert Engineers estimate that on any pavement there is a saving of approximately 2 cents per mile in the operation of a car as compared with the operation of a similar car on gravelled roads. The saving, therefore, to motorists in New Brunswick, if we had our principal roads paved, would be tremendous and to give an example: There are approximately 30,000 cars licensed in New Brunswick. If the average car drives 5,000 miles a year, this gives 150,000 miles driven over our Highways. A saving of 2 cents per mile on this would amount to \$3,000,000 per year to the Motor Vehicle users of the Province which would pay interest in Sinking Fund on more than sufficient money to pave our Main Trunk and important Secondary roads.

"Third, Farmers, today living alongside gravelled Main Trunk roads are having their crop practically ruined on account of dust for at least a quarter of a mile on each side of the highway. It is almost impossible to estimate the benefit which these people will derive from the source alone saying nothing at all of the discomfort they have had to put with in the past.

"Fourth, there is no question at all but that the value of property situated on a paved highway is much enhanced by the laying of the pavement. In fact during the past year I have seen numerous notices advertising property for sale and in several of these the point was stressed that they were situated on a paved road. In fact, I was credibly informed that property between Westfield and St. John is at the present time worth fifty per cent more than before pavement was laid."

My friend the Leader of the Opposition offered some criticism respecting the diversion at Park's Hill, so-called, in Carleton County. I think my friend was exceedingly unfair in his criticism as he seems to be in most of the criticism which he levels in this House as well as out of the House. It is rather disturbing to think that one who aspired to the leadership of a party should content himself with a mud-throwing campaign. The offices of this Department are open to my friend for any information which he at any time desires. If he were interested in knowing the true conditions, he would have inquired of the engineering staff or of myself, or if he preferred, he might have prepared one of his inquiries. It serves his purpose, however, best to throw out the suggestion of extravagance on the part of the Department and he impliedly hinted at the contractor having something to do in the determination of that change. Such insinuation is quite beneath contempt. The very home town in which he lives is most anxious and has consistently urged the hardsurfacing of that road to the American boundary and the active progressive men in that community were instrumental in inducing the American authorities to hardsurface to that point Houlton.

I may say that we are building our roads to a definite standard and an 8% grade is the peak. We try to get easier grades wherever possible, but to attempt to hardsurface our roads on a gradient above that point is just out of the question. Many of the grades on the old site exceed 12%, which renders motor traffic during the winter months impossible. Even for summer traffic, the 12% grade places an undue strain upon traffic, hence the most exhaustive and careful study on the part of the engineers for a new location with grades within our standard. The proposed alignment has achieved that end.

Had we endeavoured to gouge through these 12% grades so as to be within our grade limit, the cost would have been just unthinkable.

My friend further made reference to contract 171, awarded to the Rayner Construction Company. This contract, of our thirty miles in length, like all of our contracts, is laid on a definite unit price basis. That means the contractor bids to do certain specified work, excavation, earth removal, rock removal, gravel application, etc., all at so much per yard. The engineers give a rough estimate as to what they regard to be probable yardage. Sometimes their estimates are high, very often low and, in this particular case, because of soil conditions encountered, the yardage stepped up materially. The point I wish to emphasize however, is this, that there were no extras allowed and the contractor, as all other contractors, was paid on basis of his tender. If a greater yardage has been found to be necessary in order to build the proper foundation to stand for all time, then the taxpayer of this Province gets value for his money. As I have stated a moment ago, it is the height of false economy to lay pavement on an improper foundation.

More Comparisons

But let me give my friend a comparison of pavement costs. The one to which he has referred, namely contract 171, the other, Contract 149, laid by his friends in 1934. The cost per mile of pavement under Contract 171 amounts to substantially \$7,500.00 per mile, while that under Contract 149 cost over \$12,000.00 per mile. These costs are for pavement only and not foundation.

You well might ask why the

spread. The answer, I think, is to be found in the fact that we secured finer prices, largely because contractors knew that they had to bid in order to secure the work and another factor, was the length of the contract awarded, securing to the contractors a complete season's job both for the foundation construction as well the pavement.

From the foregoing facts as to pavement costs, I leave it to the House and the country to say whether our policy is right, having regard to all factors.

If I mistake not, my friend was a successful school teacher and he might profitably turn his energy to a calculation of the mighty sum which we are saving the Province in comparison with what would have obtained had the voters of the Province not been so emphatic in 1935.

Since the matter of costs of our pavements seems to come in for some criticism, I think it fair that I bring to the attention of the House certain factors respecting pavements laid by the former Government. From this, the public may the more readily determine the soundness of our policy. May I refer to Contract No. 151, at or near Westfield, awarded in 1934. The type of pavement laid there was according to the original specifications, namely three inch asphaltic base and a one inch sheet asphalt top. The type presently laid is a three inch asphaltic concrete base, material somewhat finer, and a seal coat of approximately a quarter of an inch in thickness. Our average pavement cost for contract let in 1936 is a shade under \$8,000 per mile while those laid in 1937 are a shade over \$8,000 per mile. The contract just referred to, namely 151, laid in 1934, cost \$17,524 per mile. In a word, our type of pavement based on a province wide average costs the province substantially one half of cost of above particular contract under substantially like conditions.

Let me refer to another contract laid in 1934, namely contract No. 153 of the same type of construction as in Contract No. 151 mentioned, where the average cost per mile reached \$13,391. Now let me refer to Contract No. 176, issued in 1936, Moncton — Barachois, where the average cost per mile is under \$9,000, and Contract 172A, McKinley Ferry — Allandale, let in 1936, wherein the paving cost just a little below \$8,000 per mile.

Bearing in mind our construction costs in the two instances I have quoted, then prepare for a shock.

Back in 1929, Contract No. 124, embracing two and a half miles for a three-inch asphalt macadam pavement on Rothesay Avenue, was awarded to the Maritime Construction Company. The total cost of that work was \$114,598, or an average cost per mile of \$45,839, over five times the average cost of our contracts of 1936 and 1937 and yet, in the face of these facts, our friends of the Opposition, the mouth piece of our audible critics throughout the country, dare

challenge the soundness of our policy.

In 1930—election year—another contract, No. 128, for 2.6 miles, was let to the same company for the same type, namely three inch asphalt macadam pavement, which cost \$112,967 or an average per mile cost of \$43,448.

It might be recalled that there was a very strong election breeze in the air in 1929, when the first tender was let and that breeze had reached hurricane proportions by 1930, which probably best accounts for the unwarranted and wholly unjustifiable capital outlay.

Back in 1926—one of the first achievements of the late Government was to lay some hardsurfacing through Richardsville, near Campbellton. One Robert St. Onge had figured in this picture as I well recall but, unlike Montgomery, who left his election earmarks in vast heaps, St. Onge stealthily buried these several thousand yards of stone beneath a three inch bituminous macadam penetration. The total length of the project was 1.24 miles, total cost, \$44,901.51, average cost per mile \$35,485.09.

In 1934 and 1935, as might be expected, this road virtually blew up, became almost impassable, and had to be resurfaced with three inch asphaltic concrete surface and a one inch sheet asphaltic top—the type of pavement laid by the late Government which cost \$16,923, or an average cost per mile of \$13,648. This was virtually a repair job.

In short, this one and one-quarter mile of road way under the very eye of the ex-Minister of Public Works, and constructed under his supervision, cost the taxpayers of this Province a total of \$60,925, or an average cost per mile of \$49,133.

I think these instances ought to still criticism as to construction costs carried on under our program.

Our friend, however, the Leader of the Opposition, has last year, in several public utterances, bemoaned the fact that it was necessary to employ heavy machinery in connection with this heavy construction. In one of his utterances, in Shediac I believe last year, the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition rather frowned upon our policy of calling for tender for both grading or foundation work as well pavement.

Our purpose is to buy as much value for our dollars as we possibly can and, while providing as much hand labour as possible, we find it necessary, in the interests of economy, to carry on this foundation construction work by contract. In justification of that, may I point to the fact that, in 1935, on project Shediac east, 1.37 miles, where under drain work was carried on by departmental forces using stone instead of tile, the cost for that project reached the appalling figure of \$17,742.80, or an average cost per mile of \$12,951.

Like work, carried on under Contract No. 176, on the Lewisville—Shediac east, cost on an average \$4,295, or something less than one third of the former.

In the light of these facts, who will say that this Department was not justified in stipulating that this work be carried on under contract.

I hope I have shown to the House the prudence of our course and I trust the presentation of these facts may lead the public to an appreciation of the character of work which this great organization is carrying on in the interests of better roads.

I wonder if our opponents would pause for a moment to take stock of what the financial position of this Province might have been today had they steered a sane prudent course in 1930. The Legislature of this Province authorised a ten-million dollar loan specifically earmarked for hardsurfacing. Had they then embarked upon a hardsurfacing program similar to the type which we are laying down it is clear that substantially every mile of our main trunk highway would have been completed by the end of 1935. That was the one great blunder of the old Government. It filtered away these vast sums and substantially the only thing to show for that expenditure is the outstanding bonds.

Had that been done it would have not been necessary for this Government to ask the taxpayers to assume obligations today being imposed, but I again repeat that this was the opportunity to go through with the program and which the people of this Province in 1930 approved, but like so many more of the old Government's undertakings they were interested in winning elections—not building hard surfaced roads or conserving the assets of the Province.

May I now say a word respecting the matter of snow plowing of our winter roads.

From a small beginning in the winter of 1935-1936, we have reached out prudently and carefully, so that today we have maintained open for traffic, virtually 3000 miles. It is true that, following some of the severe storms, we were late in reaching certain areas, but on the whole I believe the service has been useful, profitable and, shall I say, appreciated.

Our policy is that this service be self-supporting. That is, the cost of operation shall not exceed the returns through gasoline sales. If the public show appreciation of this service during the years that lie ahead, I have not the slightest doubt but that the extension of the service in various parts of the Province will go forward.

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