

THE THOMAS H. MacDONALD AWARD

Remarks by Francis C. Turner, Director of Public Roads, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, prepared for delivery at the 54th Annual Meeting of the American Association of State Highway Officials, Hotel Leamington, Minneapolis, Minnesota, December 3, 1968.

Many of us sometimes feel in these days that the lot of the highway official at any level of government is not always a happy one for he is frequently blamed for just about everything wrong with our society, and consequently he must spend an inordinate amount of time defending himself and his actions.

But there are still rewarding features of his profession in the knowledge of real accomplishments. I have the honor and pleasure of experiencing another one of them today -- the honor and pleasure of presenting the 1968 Thomas H. MacDonald Award to a close friend and respected colleague. I don't know of any recipient in the history of the Award who has been more deserving of it than Edward H. (Ted) Holmes, who is this year's recipient. And I'm sure that Mr. MacDonald himself would have been pleased with this choice to honor his memory.

As you probably know, the recipient selects the person to make the presentation and I feel that as I perform this function today it is almost as great an honor as the Award itself. In asking me to make the presentation, Ted's down east humor came into play as usual. He wrote: "I'd make only one request -- keep it short. I don't think anyone would be interested in where I went to grammar school."

So I'll keep it short and leave out the grammar school bit but there are certain things I want to say about Ted Holmes because he is faithfully following the great tradition and teachings of Thomas H. MacDonald, for

whom the Award is named.

Many of you, even in this audience of today's highway leaders, may not be fully acquainted with the career of Mr. MacDonald and his outstanding contributions to the cause of highways, not only in this country, but throughout the world. He was known as "the Chief" and for good reason. He headed the Bureau of Public Roads for 34 years with great distinction, imagination and almost prophetic foresightedness. The original title for the head of the Bureau was Director, just as it is today, but this was changed to Chief when Mr. MacDonald took over in 1919; and although changed subsequently to other titles, he always remained "Chief MacDonald" because that was actually what he was.

During his tenure the Bureau developed a number of landmark reports that formed the foundation for the highway program that we execute today, including the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Mr. MacDonald first proposed this System for consideration in a 1938 report to the Congress. He was also a promotor of roads in the best sense of the phrase and some of his statements on behalf of highways are still quoted because they are still apt today, many years after they were made.

For instance, he said:

"We were not a wealthy nation when we began improving our highways....but the roads themselves helped us create a new wealth, in business and industry and land values....so it was not our wealth that made our highways possible. Rather it was our highways that made our wealth possible."

A goodly number of people would do well to read and follow this advice today.

The Chief was a man of great vision. He and his close associates

pioneered in fields which many relative newcomers to the highway scene consider to be of fairly recent origin. He foresaw the need for limited access back in the 1930's when it was thought to be a revolutionary concept.

He also sensed the urgency of an adequate urban highway program back in those years and advanced a plan for meeting the needs. He initiated and pioneered the first scientific planning surveys, which were made possible on a large scale by the Hayden-Cartwright Act of 1934, and which we would today describe as a systems analysis process. These Statewide highway planning surveys have produced a continuing supply of necessary fundamental data on roads and their uses -- data which have served as a solid and factual foundation for highway planning during the past three decades, and which are now actually the present comprehensive, cooperative, continuing planning process now required by the 1962 law in all urban areas of more than 50,000 population as the condition precedent to all highway program approvals.

These research and planning studies led to two reports which in turn laid the foundation for the Interstate System. These were Toll Roads and Free Roads, submitted to Congress in 1939, and Interregional Highways, presented in 1944. For the first time, the findings of the research and planning surveys were spelled out in detail -- that the most urgent highway needs were not only improvement of the principal routes connecting the larger centers of population, but relief from growing urban congestion on main routes approaching and running through cities.

Indeed, Chief MacDonald was years ahead of his time and his vision and foresight were not dependent on nor assisted by computers or the other

exotic gadgetry of today. Because of his enormous contributions in the fields of highway administration, engineering and research, AASHO appropriately established the Thomas H. MacDonald Memorial Award in 1957. It is presented each year at the annual meeting of this Association to an individual who is deemed by the Board of Award to have rendered long and outstanding service to the art and science of highway engineering. Significantly, the first Award went to H. S. Fairbank, who was the Chief's right hand man for research and who was responsible for the planning survey, research, and report writing operations under Mr. MacDonald.

Also significantly, the man who succeeded to that position at Mr. Fairbank's retirement was Edward H. Holmes, whom we honor today. Ted Holmes presently heads the Office of Policy Planning in the Federal Highway Administration, a position to which he was named in July 1967. He had been acting in this capacity since the establishment of the Federal Highway Administration in April, 1967. Prior to that he had served the Bureau of Public Roads as Director of Planning and as Director of Research. His entire professional career has been with the Bureau of Public Roads, which he joined in 1928 after graduation from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In that career he helped to create the planning studies of the 30's that I have mentioned, and to be a contributor and co-author of many portions of the landmark reports to Congress which blossomed into the Federal-aid Interstate program which we are engaged in today.

Ted is a member of the Institute of Traffic Engineers and has served on many committees of AASHO, the Highway Research Board, the National Safety Council and other organizations. In his 40 years of Federal service

He has received numerous awards for outstanding accomplishment, including the Department of Commerce Meritorious Service Award in 1950 and the Department's Gold Medal for Exceptional Service in 1962. He has also received the Roy W. Crum Award for distinguished service by the Highway Research Board in 1958.

Mr. Holmes' reputation is international. He has lectured in foreign countries and contributed to international publications. He has an inquiring, restless mind and an enormous capacity for work. These attributes are coupled with a dry New England wit and an easy-going disposition. Although he is a good golfer he doesn't get much chance to play any more. He has a host of friends across the Nation and abroad.

Like Chief MacDonald before him, Ted Holmes is a strong supporter of the Federal-State partnership in roadbuilding which was a key principle of the pioneer Federal Aid Road Act of 1916. This cardinal principle has been retained through all subsequent Federal-aid legislation, making the Federal government and the States equal partners, even when the Federal funding contribution is 90 percent as in the case of the Interstate System.

It is unfortunate that there are attempts or movements being made from time to time to dilute or dissolve this partnership arrangement, with the Federal government taking over the dominant role. Along with Ted and many others, I have in the past and I shall resist in the future, as I know all of AASHO will resist, the spread of this philosophy wherever and whenever it arises. Because this system which has worked so well for more than a half-century, and which has given to the United States the greatest highway transportation network in the world, must certainly not be discarded for schemes which experience shows cannot perform in nearly so successful a manner.

This system was developed, defended and made workable by men of the stature of Chief MacDonald and Ted Holmes, hand-in-hand with AASHO and its great leaders from the State highway departments. In honoring Ted Holmes and the memory of Mr. MacDonald here today, let us remember that the partnership in which we have joined, demands not only joint management and administration, but mutual responsibility and trust. We can't -- either partner -- go our separate ways and remain equal partners for the maximum benefit to this program.

Ted, on behalf of the Bureau of Public Roads, which Chief MacDonald created and headed, and of AASHO which likewise bears his imprint, I am proud and honored to present to you the 1968 Thomas H. MacDonald Award. It is a well-deserved recognition for your career and with it go the best wishes of all of us for your continued success and achievement.