

January 16, 1929.

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MR. BERNARD E. MACDONALD: Mr. Toastmaster, distinguished guests, members of the American Road Builders' Association, ladies and gentlemen: We, of the United States, are delighted when it is possible in a gathering of this kind, to make our visitors feel at home. I feel that with your help, Mr. Toastmaster, we have on this occasion already succeeded to a degree in that hospitable object, since our distinguished guest, Senor Madrazo, a member of the Mexican National Highway Commission, has confided to me that the gathering tonight reminds him considerably of a meeting of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. He says that they have a great deal to talk about in that Chamber, and in that respect he apparently finds this gathering very similar.

Out on Georgia Ave., in the District of Columbia there is a colored church, at which a few days ago a funeral service was being conducted. The minister was about to conclude, when he noticed at the back of the hall a deputy sheriff. Having in mind a transaction in the way of a check drawn or issued by himself against funds which did not exist, he suspected the sheriff of designs upon himself, so he decided to continue the oration for some time longer in the hope that the deputy would tire of listening and withdraw; which, in fact, he finally did, but only to be replaced by a second deputy. So, the funeral continued, and the first deputy having held the fort from eleven to twelve, the second remained from twelve to one, and he was relieved by a third, who continued on duty from one to two, at which time the orator finding nothing further to say about the deceased, the

warrant was served. I will not assert that the orators who have addressed you this evening have been moved by an uneasy consciousness of past misdeeds, but if any of us should trespass unduly upon your time, you might look in the back of the hall and see if a gentleman in uniform is looking this way. (Laughter)

For myself, I shall ask your indulgence for but a few moments. There are only two topics upon which I would like to speak and both of them can be disposed of in a short time. Both relate to certain responsibilities which, in my opinion, devolve upon the highway industry of the United States - responsibilities that rest upon it because of its large opportunities in this country and abroad.

The first I shall deal with very briefly indeed. It is this: We have undertaken to build in this country a great system of national roads by the cooperation of forty-eight States. It is a task which many people would say is impossible; yet it is being done, and rapidly.

But it must be counted a failing of the American people that they do not take kindly to prolonged effort. They are restless; and they want always to be about new things. So, there is always a tendency to depart from the idea of building the major roads; to divert the resources now used for that purpose, which have come in such large measure from the road users themselves, and distribute them among the local and municipal governments; and so to halt or retard the improvement of our major highways while the goal of a completely improved system is yet a long way off.

We all join in the demand that the public business must be carried on as economically as possible. In conformity with that demand the cost of carrying on the road work should be reduced as much as possible by the introduction of efficient and scientific methods, but we must not reduce the amount of the investment until we have built a system of roads that is adequate to serve this country.

There is no reason to feel that we are spending too much money. Anyone who will make a study of the expenditures and their results will be convinced that the return is far greater than the cost; and we should make that very clear to our people. We must impress upon them that the money that is devoted year by year to the building of these great highways is an investment in the truest sense of the word, to be placed upon the books at the close of each year as an asset and not as an expense.

And now, as my second topic, I should like to say just a word about our responsibilities in the new fields of activity for American road builders in other lands than our own.

I have been impressed by the roll call of nations represented here tonight; and as each representative has responded, the thought that I have been turning over in my mind is: How similar are their problems to our own!

Certainly we all have a great deal in common, and there is no doubt that our foreign friends can profit greatly by the experience we have acquired in recent years; as there is also no doubt that we will have much to gain from the study of their development.

As I contemplate the probability of American road builders entering rather extensively into work in foreign fields, there comes to my mind that phrase which explains in five words, as well as a volume could, the reasons for the success of our British cousins in their international relations, especially in the world of trade.

"The word of an Englishman!"

Those who have heard it used know the fullness of meaning that is packed into that simple phrase by those who use it. Truthful statement, proper representation, the keeping of the word as spoken, sterling integrity in business relations - all these are accepted throughout the world as implied by that proud, yet quiet assurance. The word of an Englishman.

I confess it arouses a feeling of jealousy in my breast whenever I hear it. And, now that it appears that the road builders of the United States will certainly be called upon to employ their skill in furtherance of the programs of improvement planned by other nations, it is my aspiration that we shall similarly, by our just dealings, win the confidence of the peoples with whom we shall deal.

It is apparent that our relations will be especially intimate with the republics and nations of the three Americas. It will be of the utmost importance not only for our industry but for the United States that our conduct shall be such as to convince our sister republics that the United States, while desiring to extend relationships of a commercial character, desire also that those relationships shall

be mutually profitable. And, let me remind you that it will make a great deal of difference to these United States in the course of the next quarter of a century whether we have established close and friendly relationships with our neighbors to the south and north, or whether we have not.

Someone has said that the development of the United States up to the present time has been determined by the fact that its eastern shores are bathed by the waters of the North Atlantic Ocean; and that its future course will be most strongly influenced by the fact that its western mountains look out upon the broad Pacific.

With the first part of that statement we must all agree; for it is doubtless true that, by reason of its geographic position, the United States, of all the nations of the new world, has drawn in largest number from the countries of Europe, those men of pioneer stamp who have made our nation what it is today. And it is also true that throughout the epoch of our history, now fast drawing to a close, the epoch in which our service to the world has been rendered as a great producer of raw materials, our nearness to the markets of Europe has been a major cause of our prosperity and progress.

We now enter another epoch in which we shall see a profound change in the character and alignment of our foreign trade. Encouraged by the most tremendous home markets that exist anywhere

in the world - the markets of a continent-wide nation of forty-eight States between which there are no tariff barriers - our manufacturing industries have developed a capacity for mass production which exceeds even our own large needs. It is certain that our exportable surplus in the future will consist of manufactured products far more largely than of raw materials; and our trade must take that direction in which it is possible to exchange our manufactured products for the raw materials we shall need.

Probably it is true that we shall eventually find our largest markets across the Pacific. But the nearer and more natural markets for our exportable manufactures are the countries to the south of us from whom we also draw for raw materials of which this nation is the largest consumer.

It is these larger aspects of our relations as a nation with the other nations of this hemisphere that are in my mind when I urge that within our own industrial relations we shall keep constantly in mind, as an admonition and an example, that attitude toward our commercial responsibilities which is expressed by "the word of an Englishman."

To these representatives of our neighboring countries who have honored us with their presence tonight, and some that are much further removed but whom we shall still call neighbors, I am pleased,

as a representative of the Government of the United States, to say that any facilities which the Federal Government has at its disposal are freely yours. Anything that we may do to show you, or make it possible for you to see, the roads of the various types that have been built in any section of the country, we shall be more than glad to do. And I am sure that it is equally possible for me to speak for every state, since that has been our experience in the past, and that you will be welcome, more than welcome, thrice welcome to use all of the facilities which they may have, for any inspection you may wish to make.

I feel a very deep responsibility in bringing a message of this character to the road building industry of the United States, because, as countries, we do not live for a day; we go on for all time, so far as we know. And, I sincerely hope that we will here and now, all of us, take the pledge that so far as it lies within the individual possibilities and capabilities of those of us who are here and those whom we represent, that we will do nothing that will interfere, but rather that we will do everything that will help to improve and to make permanent and solidify the relationship between the nations of the Americas and those other continents further removed with which we shall be brought into contact. I thank you. (Applause)