

Radio address based upon the annual report of the Bureau of Public Roads for delivery Tuesday, December 9, 1930, by Mr. MacDonald.

Ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience:

The first appropriation for Federal-aid road construction was made by Congress in 1916. At that time the possibility of effective cooperation by the Federal and State governments in a great constructive enterprise was a somewhat doubtful experiment, and Congress ventured cautiously in the untrodden path. The first appropriation was limited to \$75,000,000 to be expended over the five year period from 1916 to 1921; and even this small appropriation could not be expended because of the preoccupations of the World War which shortly intervened.

The war over, it was believed necessary to provide employment for our returning soldiers, and Congress, by that time a little more sure of the success of the Federal-aid experiment, appropriated an additional \$200,000,000 to be expended during the period from 1919 to 1921.

Of these two early Federal-aid appropriations a large amount remained unexpended in 1921, and was available to help in the relief

of unemployment during the financial depression of that year. It was in 1921 that the total highway expenditure of this country first passed the billion dollar mark; and that expenditure, made up in part of the enlarged Federal disbursement, not only resulted in a very important improvement of the roads of the country but also gave employment to hundreds of thousands of men who would otherwise have suffered deprivation.

Under the stress of the large operations of 1921 the co-operative relationship of the Federal and State governments, established by the original Federal Aid Road Act, received its baptism of fire. The practicability of the scheme in its general features was then abundantly demonstrated, and the defects revealed were corrected by the Federal Highway Act which was passed by Congress and approved by the President on November 11, 1921.

The principal provision of this new act was the requirement that all future Federal appropriations for road purposes should be expended upon a definite system of the country's most important interstate and intercounty roads, to be selected jointly by the Federal and State highway officials and limited to not more than 7 per cent of the total road mileage in each State.

This Federal-aid highway system, designation of which was begun immediately, now includes approximately 193,000 miles. Toward its improvement all Federal funds appropriated since 1921 have been devoted and whatever sums may now be appropriated for unemployment

relief will be expended in greatest measure upon the further improvement of the same major system of highways.

Up to the close of the fiscal year 1930, on June 30 last, the cooperative Federal and State activity had resulted in the improvement of just a few miles less than 87,000 miles of these important roads. While 87,000 miles is a good round figure you will perhaps get a better conception of what it means by thinking of this mileage of roads already improved by the cooperating governments - largely in the last 10 years - as equal to three roads girdling the globe at the equator and another passing more than half way around.

During the last fiscal year alone the Federal government aided the improvement of over 7,300 miles of the designated system on which Federal funds had not previously been expended. It also took part in advanced stages of improvement on over 2,000 miles previously improved to some extent with Federal aid. The mileage of construction aided during the year may therefore be pictured as equal to that of three roads entirely across the country from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The stage construction, of which in the last year there was more than 2,000 miles, is becoming a larger part of the entire program from year to year. In this respect, the building of our national highway system is following the course marked out by the railroads.

The first job tackled by the highway builders has been that of getting the traffic through by giving a certain degree of improvement to as large a mileage as possible within the limits of the available appropriations. The initial improvement must, of course, be reasonably adequate for the traffic of the present; but it has not been possible to make the provision for future traffic increase which must later be made.

With nearly 87,000 miles of the system initially improved with Federal aid and perhaps a slightly greater mileage already improved to some extent by the States without Federal assistance, it is now possible to return to the more important roads and increase the value of their service to the traveling public by further improvement.

It was precisely this course that was followed by the railroad builders. When the golden spike was driven at Promontory Point, Utah, in 1869, and communication was established between the Missouri River and the Pacific, the Union Pacific Railroad was not completed. Rather there was then begun a process of steady upbuilding of the rail and roadbed which has not ceased at the present time, without which the steadily increasing transcontinental rail traffic could not have been so splendidly served.

For several years prior to 1930 the Federal-aid appropriations authorized by Congress were \$75,000,000 annually. Last April an increase to \$125,000,000 was authorized for the fiscal years 1931.

1932, and 1933. The apportionment of the 1931 funds to the States was followed immediately by a very considerable increase in the amount of work undertaken. When the fiscal year began - on July first last - the amount of Federal money allotted to definite construction projects under way or approved for construction was upwards of \$102,000,000 as compared with \$70,000,000 at the same time in 1929. As a result the number of men employed throughout the past summer was considerably greater than in the preceding year.

To permit a still further expansion of the program in the drought-stricken states and so provide additional opportunity for employment of farmers to the extent possible under the existing laws, the Secretary of Agriculture apportioned the 1932 funds on September 1 last, advancing by several months the normal date of apportionment.

The Federal-aid road law stipulates that at least 97½ cents of every Federal dollar appropriated must go to the construction of the roads - to pay for the necessary labor and materials employed. Not more than 2½ per cent can be used for administrative purposes by the Bureau of Public Roads.

The law also carefully defines the method by which the appropriations shall be divided among the States; and prescribes that the money must be expended for the improvement of the country's most important roads which make up the Federal aid system.

The law under which the Federal-aid road work is carried on thus gives a three-fold assurance to the taxpayer:

First, that the money appropriated will go almost entirely into the actual construction of roads;

Second, that all States will benefit in a definite proportion; and

Third, that the Federal expenditure will not be wastefully distributed but will be confined to the improvement of our most important roads.