

REMARKS BY
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Kentucky's Annual Highway Conference has become a high point in the Department of Highways year and a major event for the Commissioner of Highways. Spending this time with others who share my commitment to the highway programs of the Commonwealth is a stimulating experience. I have looked forward to the opportunity to talk to you for a little while about these programs and how they look from where I sit. In other words, I intend to brag a little and gripe a little. You will see that this is a typical highway speech.

I can promise you it will not be too long. I know you have the same regard for brevity (not to mention practicality) displayed by a young soldier I once knew. He was home from the wars on a short furlough. Quite late one Saturday night he and his young lady-friend went to the home of a local clergyman and asked him to marry them. The preacher told him it was impossible. In the first place, he pointed out, they had no license and the Clerk's office was closed until Monday morning. Further, no arrangements had been made for the necessary witnesses. And finally, the preacher stated, it was not his practice to officiate at a wedding on such short notice. After hearing all these reasons why the ceremony could not take place, the young man inquired, "Well, Reverend, could you just say a few words to tide us over the weekend?"

I hope what I have to say this morning will do more than just tide us over until lunch. But even the best of intentions offer no guarantees.

When I assumed the office of Commissioner of Highways on August 14th it gave me a great deal of pleasure to contemplate the opportunity I was being given to find a place of distinction in the history of Kentucky's highways. Dan'l Boone made an immortal name for himself hacking out the Wilderness Trail. Bill Hazelrigg will be long remembered for the great toll-road program which began while he served as Commissioner. And the enduring good reputation of my predecessor, Gene Goss, will always be related to his re-organization of the Department of Highways.

I had hoped that my own name would be associated with a record construction program and that Kentuckians would not forget that in 1970, while Bill King was Commissioner, highway construction awards reached an all-time high.

Instead it seems I am to be remembered as the Commissioner who planted a road-block in the path of women's liberation by disapproving the pants-suit. Mr. Bartlesmeyer is probably not aware of the attention I received recently when I took a fearless stand against pants-suits in the corridors of the State Office Building. Let me seize this opportunity to explain to him and to you why I adopted a negative attitude toward this peculiar garment.

Not long ago at a football game I remarked to the stranger sitting next to me, "I am completely baffled by

the clothes and hair-styles of these college youngsters. For example, I can't tell whether that one over there is a boy or a girl."

The reply I received was indignant. "Well, I can tell you. She's a girl! She's my daughter!"

And I said, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to offend you. I didn't realize you're her father."

The answer I got was even more outraged, "I'm not! I'm her mother!"

Aside from the great pants-suit controversy, things are going quite well at the Department of Highways, and at the end of the year we will really have something to brag about. In 1970, we will set a record for construction projects awarded. It now appears the total will be about \$270 million, more than a quarter-billion. And in 1971, if present projections are realized, construction contracts will reach the level of \$230 million. Even this second figure, \$230 million, is greater than the previous high-water mark, \$220 million, that was reached in 1967.

Some other high-points of this year and next:

As you know, construction of the Audubon Parkway is now in its final weeks. Since Kentucky weather is as independently minded as a Kentucky voter we cannot be sure, but we hope this splendid addition to Kentucky's highway system will be in service before the Christmas holidays. By the end of next year we will have all our toll-road mileage under construction, and the Daniel Boone Parkway will be in service from London to Manchester. The last two sections of Interstate 64, in Franklin and Carter Counties, will be under construction next year, and major construction projects on Northern Kentucky sections of the Interstate System will begin in 1971.

The Shively Interchange on the Watterson Expressway, one of the most complex and expensive projects ever undertaken by the Department of Highways, will be let to contract in the next twelve months. Just one statement will tell you the size and consequence of this project: In 1990 it will serve an average daily traffic of 91,000 units.

Major construction projects in Appalachia, particularly on US 23 in Floyd County and in the Ashland-Greenup County area, will begin next year. These are only samples from a \$230 million box of goodies.

Now that I have finished bragging, let me get on with the griping. I mean, with the rest of my speech.

The tremendous programs we have undertaken, projects accomplished in the past decade and ones we look forward to in the 1970's, may suggest that Kentucky's transportation problems are either solved or on the way to solution. I wish this were true. But the fact is, the Commonwealth has great needs yet to be met. There are many important projects not yet programmed.

As we look forward to completion of the Interstate Program, all 738 miles, as we foresee 668 miles of Parkways (the largest and finest system of toll-roads in the nation) in service to our people and economy, as we anticipate construction of 416 miles of developmental highways in Appalachia, our attention must go next to Kentucky's primary and secondary highways; to the 10,300 miles of the Federal Aid Primary and the Federal Aid Secondary Systems, including important urban mileage. A review of these systems prepared by our Division of Planning has disclosed that approximately half this mileage is deficient, considering its present condition and the traffic demands it is assigned to meet.

These deficiencies exist now. Today! They are not the gloomy expectations of 1990, and a long look ahead tells us we can expect to add to our needs and our problems.

A recent transportation study of Greater Louisville's long-range needs (made by Vogt-Ivers) disclosed a probable cost of a half-billion dollars on our side of the river alone. In Lexington a similar study showed the 20-year needs of that community total \$120 million. But look ahead just one decade. I know that highway planning is conventionally based on 20-year periods but let's consider something more immediate. In 20 years I may be dead - or fishing in Florida.

By 1980 the population of the Commonwealth will have increased seven percent, to 3,400,000. However, by that same date the number of vehicles in the Commonwealth will have gone up 20 percent. There will be 2,150,000 cars and trucks on Kentucky's highways, six vehicles for every ten Kentuckians, including babes in arms and not including Hondas. We expect an equivalent increase in mileage traveled; 20 percent. Just think what this means! A total of more than 22 billion miles!

Very recently Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe told the International Trade Club of Chicago that: "If our forecasts are accurate, truck tonnage will increase 50 percent in the next decade." If it happens in America, it will happen in Kentucky!

Our transportation needs will not only increase, they will change. Our population will continue its shift from rural areas to urban centers, from downtown to suburbia. So how will all these goods and people and vehicles move? They will be carried by the highways of the Commonwealth and the nation.

Are there any alternatives? Air freight, increasing at the rate of 10 percent annually, still provides only a fraction of our total freight tonnage. American railroads also add to their tonnage each year, but over ever-shortening lines.

I quote from the first two paragraphs of a learning article in the Wall Street Journal of September 30:

"The nation's railroads are moving toward a massive truck abandonment drive that will eliminate rail freight service over huge portions of their systems."

"The effort is only in its early stages now, but some industry officials predict that it will lead to the abandonment of tens of thousands of miles of track in the 1970's...as much as half the 210 thousand miles of track that criss-cross the country..."

All the evidence we can accumulate seems to lead to this conclusion: the changing and increasing transportation needs of the Commonwealth and the Nation in the foreseeable future must rely substantially on highways.

Highway systems rely on money, and the intelligent use of the funds assigned to highway programs. Recognizing this truth, that increasing transportation demands will be directed (for the most part) at our highway system, the Department of Highways believes that revenues which have been traditionally assigned to highway programs should not be given any substantially broader objectives or increased obligations. They are needed where they are. We are convinced that the State highway departments, including ours, are best qualified to give direction to highway programs.

Mr. Bartlesmeyer, we are concerned by continuing threats to the Highway Trust Fund. We are alarmed by constant efforts to extend its mission and responsibilities. We are offended by the idea now being advanced that decisions about highway programs should be made either by urban or by regional authorities, minimizing the traditional role of the State highway departments.

I know that we are on tricky ground in taking this position. We may find ourselves accused of indifference to every value except the technical standards of highway construction. We may seem to oppose responsible regional planning and the legitimate interests of our cities. I submit that these accusations cannot fairly be made against the Kentucky Department of Highways.

Does Kentucky ignore the economic needs of its people? The Commonwealth and the Department have long since given evidence of their commitment to economic development by assigning \$800 million of Kentucky's own funds and credit to construction of our Parkways. The Administration in which I serve has committed itself to construction of 254 miles of toll-roads at a probable cost of \$375 million. We have justified much of this mileage and most of our investment by their promise of economic opportunity for isolated and deprived sections of the Commonwealth.

Is Kentucky indifferent to highway safety? At considerable political risk the US-25 (C&O) bridge over the Ohio was declared unsafe and closed at a time when its deficiencies were far from apparent to the laymen's eyes.

Are we indifferent to the environment? We offer in evidence a pin-oak tree in Lewis County and a tunnel in Seneca Park, demonstrating the value the Department assigns to the traditions and aesthetics of the Commonwealth we serve. We are still struggling with all the federal and state agencies involved so we may restore the historic contour of Cumberland Gap while US-25E is being reconstructed.

Obviously, these are all relatively small and simple incidents from a great and complex program. But the straws show where the wind blows.

There is, however, a limit to the commitments we can make, to the obligations we can assume, considering the limited funds at our disposal and recognizing our primary mission to serve the traffic needs of Kentucky. Today in Washington a Congressional conference committee begins its reconciliation of Senate and House bills which will eventually evolve into a Federal Highway Act. Mr. Bartlesmeyer, we are concerned that the product of this conference may make even further demands on the highway program and Trust Fund.

It is true we are now less fearful of the diversion of Trust Funds to other modes of transportation. The Federal Mass Transit Assistance Act has reassured us, to some extent. But we are alarmed by provisions of the two bills, particularly the harder lines of the Senate bill, which would require even more consideration of the social and economic impact of highway projects and, apparently, compensation for damages. Taken at face value these provisions seem to have a laudable objective, but we foresee a veritable Pandora's box of new costs, litigation and delays if highway departments are to extend their liabilities to include economic and social damage inflicted by new highways.

We might as well face up to it, every highway project inflicts some damage. Our only justification for building a new road or improving an old one is our belief, with evidence to support it, that we are doing more good than harm. When we can identify and appraise the harm, as in the case of right-of-way, we pay for it.

We cannot deny that relocation of a highway may take away the traffic that is life's blood to businesses on an old road. Yet we see no practical means of identifying or quantifying such damage and no hope of compensating it without greater damage being inflicted on the budgets and schedules of highway programs of the Commonwealth.

If Federal legislation takes us much further in this direction we may find ourselves in a position of a retarded farm boy I heard about. He was attending a church meeting at which the good members were testifying to the innumerable benefits they had received from the Almighty. Eventually the boy had a chance to offer his testimony and he said, "What has He done for me? He's just about ruined me!" The decision to be made by the Conference Committee may not bless us, but ruin us instead.

We are also concerned by the possibility that future federal programs will be based on the transportation needs of the great northeastern megalopolis extending from Washington to Boston. Kentucky is not New Jersey. The Commonwealth has not much more in common with Connecticut than a capital "C".

I am convinced that the best national highway program for the 1970's will be one that allows state highway departments to have the widest latitude in determining and meeting their own needs.

It may be that highway dollars in the urbanized states of the North and East should be devoted to other solutions, but this is not true in Kentucky. Figures I cited at the beginning of these remarks should establish that we have a substantial and continuing need for conventional highway programs. The greatest economic and social benefit highway-user tax-dollars can confer on the people of Kentucky is more first-class highways, built with all possible dispatch.

We are convinced that the Department of Highways can make sounder decisions about highway programs for the Bluegrass State than any other agency can, whether it be higher or lower in the scale of government. The views of city governments are necessarily parochial and frequently distorted by unresolved conflicts between old down-town interests and the interests of suburbia. We have little more confidence in planning and programming that might be accomplished by arbitrary and artificial regional agencies. They are at best unnatural.

The natural divisions of the Nation are its states. Geography and history and unique traditions have made them what they are today. Their governments vary. Their economies vary. Their enthusiasms vary. For example, few of the states surrounding Kentucky can match commitment to improved highways that the people of Kentucky have shown. I cite three bond-issues overwhelmingly approved in recent popular referendums. I cite again \$800 million for toll-road construction.

Incidentally, my opposition to regional agencies does not include the Appalachian Commission. We in Kentucky applaud its tremendous program for solving the economic problems of an identifiable region. There is nothing arbitrary or artificial about its regional assignment. But Appalachia is, I think, unique.

If I were in a position to lay down guidelines for federal legislation they would be simple ones. I can spell them out in a minute. Suppose I phrase them as a resolution:

Whereas, present highway needs, particularly on primary and secondary roads, are not being met by existing programs,

And whereas, highway needs will expand in the immediate future,

And whereas, different states have different transportation needs and the best opportunity to identify them,

Now therefore, be it resolved that federal highway tax-dollars continue to be devoted to highway improvement, without adding burdens of indirect costs, and that the state highway departments retain the dominant role in highway programs of the future.

I think I have talked long enough. I remember a story about an old-time politician who found himself in this same position and realized it was time to quit. He had started

to apologize for the length of time he had already taken when one of his supporters yelled, "Never mind the time, Senator. Tell us all about it. Take as long as you need!" The chairman got up hastily, hurried over to the Senator and whispered, "Pay no attention to him! He must be drunk!"

Hearing no protest, I will close with an expression of my thanks to you all for the interest in Kentucky's highway programs that has brought you to this 22nd Annual Highway Conference.