

GENERAL SESSION ADDRESS

by

M. W. Tinder
Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Highways

My Friends - I am happy to be here. I am happy to have this opportunity to welcome you to the 18th annual Kentucky Highway Conference. As Commissioner of Highways I take pleasure in the company of so many fellow Kentuckians who share my concern - and my responsibility - for the highways of the Commonwealth.

Finding me here - making this statement - may come as a surprise to you. The program distinctly says "Address -- Henry Ward". To tell the truth - the events of the last few days have left me a little out of breath.

As many of you know - most of the years of my adult life - thirty years - have been spent in the service of the Commonwealth - in the Department of Highways - and I am delighted that I am now allowed to continue my service on the highest level of the department.

I am grateful to Governor Breathitt for the opportunity he has given me. I have pledged to him - and I repeat it to you - and to all the people of Kentucky - that I will do my best to fill this place honorably and responsibly.

My distinguished predecessor - and my friend - Henry Ward - needs no compliments from me to memorialize the six years - as Commissioner of Highways - he has now ended. During those years - as our road programs have developed - Kentucky has moved to a position in the very front rank of the states. During his tenure - the tremendous interstate system has given us - to date - 323 miles of modern highways - open to traffic. Our expanding system of parkways has provided the Commonwealth with 275 additional miles of up-to-date roads - highways already beginning to make a substantial contribution to the economy of the Commonwealth. During Ward's term of office - the Appalachian program was born. The immediate future will see a burst of activity on the roads of our eastern counties - activity inspired - and financed - by the Appalachian Program.

I will not try to detail - one by one - the accomplishments of Henry Ward. You know them as well as I do. Let me mention only one more - one I think directly attributable to the confidence the people of Kentucky have shown in him. I refer to the victory of the bond issue of last November when the electorate - by a majority of 425 thousand to 138 thousand - more than 3 to 1 - authorized the Commonwealth to proceed - full steam ahead - on our highway programs - and other construction essential to the education, health and welfare programs of state government.

Ward's reputation as a highway administrator has gone far beyond the borders of the Commonwealth. His voice has been heard with respect in Washington. As he goes from the Department of Highways - to seek another place in which to serve the people of Kentucky - I believe I speak for 8,000 employees of the department in thanking him for the leadership he has given us in the past six years. Quite aside from any involvement we may have in his political fortunes - we wish him well.

During the last three years - I have served as Deputy Commissioner. I have been involved in all the programs and activities of the Department of Highways during that time. I have considered myself a part of the highway "team". In all modesty I can assert - the programs of the Department of Highways are - in part - my programs. I have aided in their development. I have participated in their accomplishment. I now declare my formal adherence to these programs - and my intent to pursue the same goals - with the same team - using the same plays.

This is not to say the immediate future does not hold its special responsibilities - its special needs - its special challenges. You are all aware of the deadline that confronts us as we move toward completion of the interstate system. Although a recent action of the Congress has extended this deadline by six months - the fact remains we must work with all possible dispatch to meet our goal. The total mileage allotted Kentucky is 733 miles. Miles now open to traffic are 323 miles. 137 miles are under construction. The department's schedule has been based on the premise that we must complete our work by 1971. This means we must have the last mile of surfacing under contract by January of 1971 - if our schedule is to be met. As an aside - let me note - all our schedules depend on Federal allocations - the availability of Federal aid funds.

We must assign this task the highest priority of all. We must not allow the remotest chance our work will not be done by the date the Congress has set. I call upon every employee of the Department of Highways - from the State Highway Engineer to each draftsman and rodman - to dedicate themselves to this effort. I know no greater contribution we can make to the prosperity - the happiness - the safety of our fellow Kentuckians.

Although I have mentioned specifically the employees of the department - this challenge is directed no less to the local officials of Kentucky - the highway contractors of the Commonwealth. Each of you bears your special responsibility - can make your particular contribution to the achievement of our aims.

As a particular aim - let me remind you again of the need for a continuing effort to abate - to what extent we can - the sickening slaughter on our highways. The State Police have told me 910 people have died on our roads this year - to date. The police expect this toll to reach the figure 1050 by December 31.

It is said there are three elements that contribute to a traffic fatality: a man - a car - a road. There is nothing we can do about the first two. We

can push on - with all dispatch - the design and construction of modern highways - safer highways.

As you and I use these roads - we are all conscious of the tremendous gains - in pleasure and convenience - they offer. We are less likely to be aware of the enormously improved chance we have of arriving safely at our destination - a whole and healthy human being - of not becoming - on the way - another digit in the grim accounting of death on the highways.

Another item of intense personal concern to me is the safety of our workmen. I fear we have not displayed enough concern - devoted enough time and thought - to the risks our workmen face as they construct - and maintain - our highways. Last year 833 employees of the department were involved in accidents. This represents more than 10% of our total personnel. The cost of workmen's compensation and medical payments totalled \$192 thousand. While these figures include all employees - it is obvious the area of greatest risk is among those who actually work on the roads.

You know - we can persuade our workmen to do very nearly anything - even vote for the revised constitution - more easily than we can educate them to a sensible concern for their own safety - and the safety of their fellow workers. Every supervisor - who has ever been responsible for the life and limb of another man - knows the difficulty of achieving safe working practices. Yet we cannot excuse ourselves from the effort on the grounds that workmen themselves are indifferent. We must try all the harder to drive home to them the chance they take every time they pick up a tool - or stand in the presence of highway equipment. The Division of Personnel is now working to develop a better approach to our safety program. I direct them - here and now - to hurry their efforts along.

Again - I address these remarks to contractors and county officials - as well as departmental people. All of us bear our share of responsibility. While my immediate concern is for employees of the Department of Highways - I feel the same interest - the same consideration for the employees of industry and local government. I ask you to join me in an effort to improve safety practices in all areas of highway work. I must say - I regard this as a moral responsibility we have - far beyond any consideration of efficiency or economy.

Let me say this too - while I have your ear. The concept of limited responsibility for the Department of Highways - responsibility limited to a system of highways - is one in which I concur wholeheartedly. The money available annually to the Department of Highways provides an absolute ceiling on the amount of work we can undertake. Without regard to administrations or personalities - the fact is - we can spend no more than we have. The concern of every highway administrator must be to provide - for the people of the Commonwealth - the most service their taxes can pay for. In an attempt to provide this ultimate degree of service - we have come to the inescapable conclusion - it is necessary to identify those roads which are of primary importance to the Commonwealth - its counties and communities - and for the Department of Highways to assume total responsibility for them. Studies have

been made - over a period of five years - and decisions have been reached - on the various systems of highways. While there will be inevitable differences of opinion - - please do not let your objections obscure your understanding of what we are trying to accomplish. Only by limiting - and identifying - our responsibilities can the department provide that kind of service - that degree of efficiency - our fellow taxpayers have a right to demand. Incidentally - let me reassure you - about particular roads - we are always prepared to review and reconsider any decision that seems to merit such attention. Our planning engineers are smart men - but I have never conceded them to be infallible.

Most of you know that my background is in fiscal management. As one who has always felt a special interest in efficiency of operation - I assure you of my intent to operate the Department of Highways - to direct its 8,000 employees - to manage its \$262 million budget with a day-to-day concentration on efficiency. Again I invite the cooperation - more than that - I ask for the enthusiasm - of my fellow workers.

I conclude by restating my welcome - from the Department of Highways - to you all. We are glad you have come to this conference. When I spoke earlier of the highway "team" I was thinking primarily of the executives of the department. It occurs to me now - in a larger sense - we are all members of the highway team. Departmental executives - departmental employees - local officials - contractors - concerned citizens - each of us is an integral part of the highway team - each makes his special contribution to the highway program. Since at the moment I find myself - if I may say so - Captain of the team - I say to you all now: "Let's go - team".