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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RETURN-LOADS BUREAUS TO SAVE WASTE IN TRANSPORTATION ***

APRIL 2, 1918

BULLETIN NO. 1

**RETURN-LOADS BUREAUS
TO SAVE WASTE IN TRANSPORTATION**

HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

**RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE COUNCIL OF NATIONAL
DEFENSE.**

"The Council of National Defense approves the widest possible use of the motor truck as a transportation agency, and requests the State Councils of Defense and other State authorities to take all necessary steps to facilitate such means of transportation, removing any regulations that tend to restrict and discourage such use."

WASHINGTON
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
1918

COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.
HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

**RETURN-LOAD BUREAUS TO SAVE WASTE
IN TRANSPORTATION.**

Relief from Railroad Delays and Embargoes.

Through the cooperation of State Councils of Defense, Chambers of Commerce, local War Boards, and Motor Clubs, the Council of National Defense, through its Highways Transport Committee and its State Councils Section is building up a system for more efficient utilization of the highways of the country as a means of affording merchants and manufacturers relief from railroad embargoes and delays due to freight congestion.

This system already is in successful operation in Connecticut and is being extended throughout the country.

The purpose is to take some of the burden of the short haul off the railroads and put it on motor trucks operating over the highways. Very considerable quantities of merchandise and materials of all kinds are now being carried by trucks operated by private concerns in their own businesses and by motor express and haulage companies. In a majority of cases, however, these trucks, after delivering a load, return empty, whereas there are shippers who would be glad to avail themselves of the opportunity to send a load back on such a truck to its home town if they knew it was going back empty. On the other hand, the truck owner would be equally glad to secure a return load because the charge made for hauling it would reduce his own haulage cost.

To bring the shipper and truck owner together serves the interests of both. It doubles the efficiency of the motor truck, enables business men to make prompt shipments or secure deliveries in a day instead of several, relieves the railroads of much short-haul freight, and thereby releases cars for necessary long-distance haulage of munitions, equipment, and other supplies for our Army in France, and for foodstuffs, fuel, etc., for the civilian population at home.

Chambers of Commerce Bring Shipper and Truck Owner Together.

The logical agency for bringing the two interests together is the local business men's organization in each locality—the Chamber of Commerce, Board of Trade, or by whatever name it is known. They are in direct touch with the manufacturers and merchants in their respective communities, they know the present difficulties of shipping and they have the facilities for most quickly and systematically putting the shipper in touch with the man who has the facility for haulage.

The method of doing this is by the establishment of a Return-Loads Bureau—an information department that acts as a clearing house for this particular purpose. Once initiated, the work of such a bureau can, in most cities, be carried on by a single employee of the Chamber, probably in addition to his other duties. If necessary or desirable, a small charge can be made to the truck owner or the shipper for the service to cover whatever expense may be involved in starting and maintaining the bureau. But the plan affords an opportunity to be of such additional service to members of the organization and to business interests of the city generally that the increased support which may be gained through it should offset the cost incurred. Apart from this is the opportunity it presents to be of patriotic service to our country by increasing its transportation facilities at a time when the safety of the Nation depends absolutely upon transportation.

Shortage of railroad cars and locomotives created a shortage of coal during the winter. Lack of coal slowed down production of steel, which in turn delayed ship construction. Insufficient coal for bunkering ships created a critical congestion of freight in Atlantic port terminals and in railroad yards hundreds of miles inland. A certain part of this congestion was due to short-haul shipments of freight within cities and originating in near-by points, 10, 20, or 50 miles from the cities. Much of this short-haul freight can be carried on the highways by motor trucks. It can be picked up at the door of the shipper and delivered at the door of the consignee, entailing only two handlings. It can be delivered the same day it is shipped, whereas the same shipment by rail would require several days if not a week or more. And the shipment can go forward by motor when a rail freight and express embargo precludes shipment by rail at all.

Dependability of Motor-Truck Haulage Proven.

The practicability and dependability of motor-truck haulage not only within cities but between neighboring cities have been demonstrated fully. Hundreds of local and intercity motor express lines are in successful operation in widely scattered sections of the country. The Return-Load Bureau system has been installed in England, where it is now considered unpatriotic to run a truck without a load. Manchester, England, for example, and all the surrounding cities have their Return-Load Bureaus and have reciprocal arrangements whereby they exchange information regarding available trucks and loads. Consequently, any Chamber of Commerce in a city whose merchants are adversely affected by rail embargoes and delays, freight congestion, or lack of sufficient and direct rail transportation, and where there is any considerable number of motor trucks, will not be embarking upon a doubtful experiment in establishing such a bureau.

No Responsibility Assumed.

A Return-loads Bureau can be established by a Chamber of Commerce without creating any legal liability to the shipper or assuming any other responsibility. The function pure and simple is to advise the shipper where and when a truck can be obtained to haul his goods and to advise the truck owner where a load can be obtained. It has been found in England that very often, when such a relationship has been established between the shipper and the truck owner, an arrangement is made between them for regular service, and they do not need to call on the bureau for further assistance, thus lightening the work to be performed by the Chamber.

It is left entirely to the shipper and the truck operator to make their own agreement as to the

rate to be paid for haulage, liability of the truck owner or driver for safety of the goods in transit, and so forth. It is expected, however, that the Chamber of Commerce will exercise reasonable judgment and precaution, inquiring into the reliability of truck drivers and endeavoring to correct any abuses that may arise.

How to Start a Return-Loads Bureau.

No difficulty and no great amount of work are involved in establishing a Return-Loads Bureau. All that is necessary is to follow the example of Connecticut where through the initiative of the State Council of Defense, Return-Loads Bureaus have been established in 15 cities. The Council addressed letters to the Chambers of Commerce, inviting their cooperation in the movement. Return post cards were printed and mailed to motor-truck owners in the different cities. On the reverse side of the cards was a brief questionnaire to be filled out by the truck owner stating whether or not he would carry "back loads" for reasonable compensation, whether he would rent his truck at full capacity or partial capacity, number of trucks owned, number of hours a day or days a week the truck would be available under the return-loads plan, its capacity in tons, etc. As these reply cards came back, they were filed in a 3 by 5 card index drawer, arranged by cities and by routes out of the respective cities. It developed from this canvass that there were in the 15 cities more than 700 trucks of 1-ton capacity or more available for such service and that they operated over 49 main routes.

Names and addresses of truck owners may be obtained from the automobile registration bureau in the office of the secretary of state or the commissioner of motor vehicles, as the case may be.

Duplicate Records in Neighboring Cities.

Duplicates of this master file were furnished by the State Council of Defense in Connecticut to the Chamber of Commerce in each of the 15 cities, together with a map showing the location of each Return-Loads Bureau and all of the truck routes, numbered serially. Thus, the head of the bureau in each city knows just what trucks are available in the other cities and the routes over which they operate.

It is desirable that the State Council of Defense, where one exists, should indorse this movement, but it is not necessary that the Chamber of Commerce in any city should wait for it to do so. It is perfectly feasible for the Chamber to initiate the work itself in its own community and then propose to similar chambers in neighboring cities to do likewise and establish an exchange of information.

Having ascertained what trucks are available for hauling, the next move is for the Return-Loads Bureau to circularize the merchants, manufacturers, and other business enterprises in the community, advising them of the establishment of the bureau and asking them to report to it whenever they have any goods or materials which they wish to have hauled, either within the city or to near-by cities or villages. These reports may be made by telephone or on postal cards. Blank cards of a size (as 3 by 5 inches) suitable for filing may be supplied to shippers in quantity by the bureau for the purpose.

List Return-Loads Bureau in Telephone Directory.

The telephone company should be asked to list the Return-Loads Bureau under the title "Return Loads" in the local directory and truck owners and shippers be notified that by calling "Return Loads" or the telephone number of the bureau they can learn where a load may be obtained to carry back to the city from which the truck brought a load or where a truck can be obtained to carry the goods the shipper desires delivered.

Publicity should be given in all the local newspapers and in those of neighboring cities of the establishment of the bureau, so that all interests may immediately begin making use of the facilities afforded.

It will be found that there are two classes of business to be handled by the bureau—regular and irregular. In many cities there are motor express lines operating on daily schedule over regular routes and there are shippers who have regular shipments to make. Having brought these together once, further service of the bureau will be unnecessary so far as these particular parties are concerned. Then there are many companies, firms or individuals that own trucks which they use only in their own business but which stand idle part of the time or which from time to time deliver a load in a neighboring city and return home empty. There are also shippers who have depended on the railroad but in emergency wish to make a quick shipment. It will be necessary to keep a daily record of these and cross off the truck or the shipment as soon as it is learned that the truck has gone back to its home city and is no longer available or the shipment has been completed.

Interchange Information on Irregular Work.

A system of daily interchange of information regarding this irregular service should be arranged with bureaus in other cities, so that a truck operator in Hartford, for example, who has a load to

haul to New Haven can learn from the bureau in Hartford before starting where and on what day or at what time he can secure a load in New Haven to take back to Hartford. He may find that by delaying his own shipment a day or by making it a day earlier he can get a return load, whereas otherwise he might have to return light. Shippers, therefore, should be urged to give as much advance notice as possible of shipments they wish to make.

Within a short time this system will extend to long distances. Recently a company in New York called up the Chamber of Commerce (before any Return-Loads Bureau was established there) and stated it intended to send a motor truck to Vermont to bring back some machinery and wanted to know where a load could be secured to take to Vermont or at least a considerable part of the way. Another company called up and said it had a truck coming from Philadelphia with a load and wanted to get a load going back. Motor express lines are already operating on daily schedule between New York and Philadelphia, between Hartford and New York, and between Boston and Hartford.

It is the purpose of the Highways Transport Committee to bring about, just as quickly as possible, the organization of Return-Loads Bureaus in all the cities where it will be beneficial and to establish reciprocal relations among them on the plan of the Connecticut system.

Secure Cooperation of Motor-Truck Dealers.

Motor-truck dealers can be of great assistance to the Chambers of Commerce in promoting this movement and in helping to get the bureaus started. They are in direct touch with truck owners, know the routes over which trucks are operated, condition of the roads, railroad shipping difficulties, etc. It is recommended that the Chambers of Commerce call on them to appoint a representative committee from among them to cooperate with it. They can furnish a great deal of useful information and will be a valuable factor in disseminating information regarding the work of the bureau and making it 100 per cent useful.

(Copy of a bulletin is reprinted below, which was issued to its members by the Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Riggs Building, Washington, D. C.)

MOTOR-TRUCK TRANSPORTATION.

RETURN-LOAD BUREAU.

The motor truck is a part of the transportation equipment in every community. Its use more nearly to capacity will help solve local problems.

More complete use means loads both ways. A motor truck usually carries a good load to its destination, whether the destination is in the same community or in another city. Too often, however, the truck makes the return trip with no load. Every time this occurs there is waste of at least half the capacity of a truck to do work in transportation.

Owners of trucks do not wish half the earning power of their vehicles to be lost. Manufacturers and merchants with goods piled up and awaiting shipment do not like to see empty trucks pass their doors. Both need a local clearing house for information about the trucks that are available and the shipments that are ready—i. e., to bring together loads and empty trucks.

Such a clearing house the local commercial organization can easily provide. It will not ordinarily entail any special expense. It will promote cooperation in the community. It will render a very real service for which business men will be thoroughly grateful.

Return-Load Bureau is a convenient name for a clearing house. The bureau should ascertain the established lines of trucks that run regularly on fixed routes and the part of their capacity that is not being utilized. It should then obtain information from all owners of trucks used for private hauling, getting statements about the capacity of each truck, how far its capacity is used, between what points the capacity is unused, if the unused capacity can be made available for other persons at a reasonable price, etc. Besides gathering this information the bureau can make known to everyone that whenever a truck is to make a trip without a load the bureau will respond to a telephone inquiry by endeavoring to give the name of a person who wants to send a load over the route in question. Efforts can be made also to have drivers who bring loads by truck from other points telephone to the bureau in order to get return loads.

At the same time the bureau can enlist the cooperation of business men who may have shipments to make.

In order that any driver or other person from out of town may quickly ascertain if there is a return load for him, each bureau should be specially listed in the telephone directory.

With incidental questions the bureau will not usually need to deal. For example, it can leave the compensation that is to be paid to negotiation between the parties.

In England Return-Load Bureaus have proved of great assistance. They have been most

developed in the United States by commercial organizations in Connecticut. Experience has demonstrated that the assistance they can render is very real and important, and that they can be organized advantageously in many communities where they have not as yet been tried.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK RETURN-LOADS BUREAUS TO SAVE WASTE
IN TRANSPORTATION ***

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