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**ADDRESS BY**

**HONORABLE WILLIAM C. REDFIELD**

**SECRETARY OF COMMERCE**

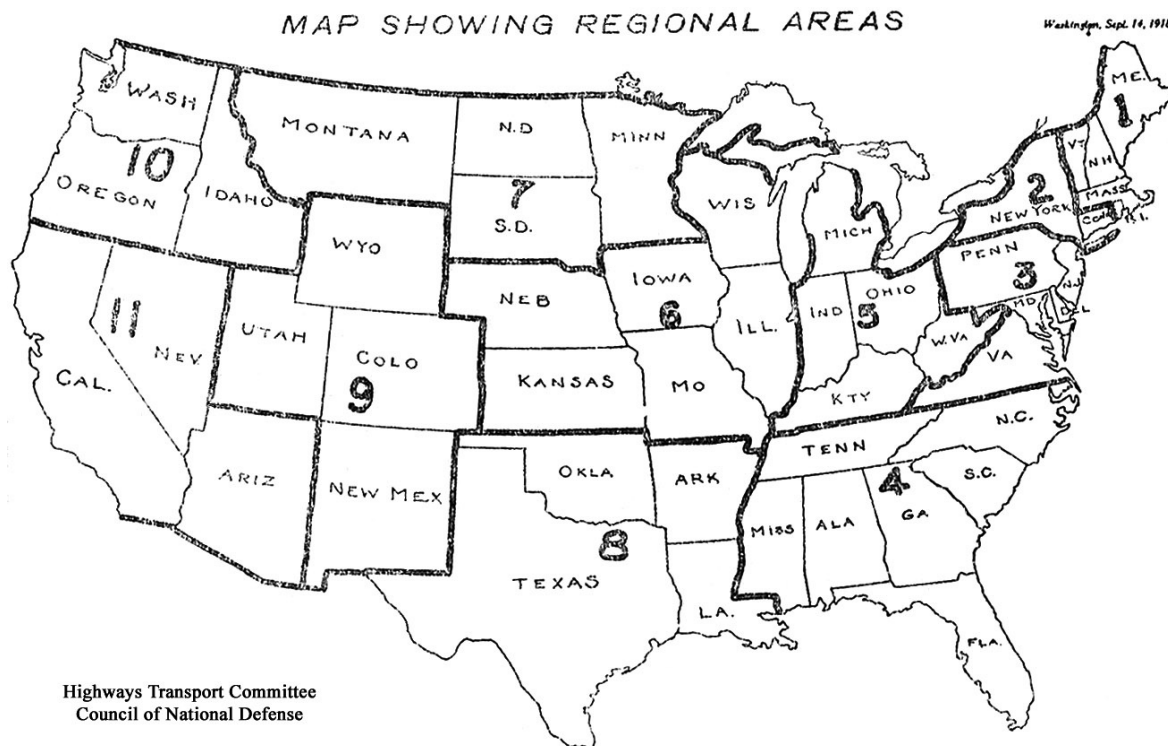
**AT CONFERENCE OF REGIONAL CHAIRMEN  
OF THE HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE  
COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
SEPTEMBER 19, 1918**



**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*

WASHINGTON  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
1918



*Recognizing the national value of our highways in relation to, and properly coordinated with, other existing transportation mediums, and more particularly the necessity for their immediate development that they might carry their share of the war burden, the Highways Transport Committee was appointed by, and forms a part of, the Council of National Defense.*

*The object of the committee is to increase and render more effective all transportation over the highways as one of the means of strengthening the Nation's transportation system and relieving the railroads of part of the heavy short-haul freight traffic burden.*

*National policies are directed from the headquarters of the national committee in Washington to the highways transport committees of the several State Councils of Defense. These State organizations, which by proper subdivisions reach down through the counties to the communities, are grouped together into 11 regional areas, as shown by the map used above. The State committees of the different areas are assisted by and are under the direct supervision of the 11 regional chairmen of the Highways Transport Committee, Council of National Defense.*

**COUNCIL OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.**

**HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE.**

WASHINGTON, D.C.

**ADDRESS BY HON. WILLIAM C. REDFIELD, SECRETARY OF COMMERCE,**

## BEFORE THE REGIONAL CHAIRMEN OF THE HIGHWAYS TRANSPORT COMMITTEE, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 1918.

MR. CHAPIN AND GENTLEMEN: It would be a truism to say that I have always been interested in transportation. It has always been a subject of keen interest to me, I presume, because I was born with it. By the fortune of birth I came to live in a region where transportation has been through every one of its stages in this country. If you go back into the history of the Colonies, you will find the two first lines of through transportation in America were east and west—the St. Lawrence River and the Lakes—while for over a century the one great central north and south line was the Hudson River, Lake George, and Lake Champlain. In that entire length from the St. Lawrence to New York Harbor there was but about 13 miles that could not be traveled by water with such boats as they used. You will recall that great historic events of our early history centered about this transportation line. Burgoyne's surrender, Arnold's treason, the great contests of the French wars, Macdonough's victory on Lake Champlain were all associated with this water route. Such names as Montcalm, Schuyler, and Champlain are linked to it. Historically, it is true both for war and peace that transportation has been formative and controlling in our national life. One of the early evidences of the growth of transportation in this country, and therefore of our national progress, was the act of connecting the Great Lakes by the Erie Canal with the Hudson River.

The largest number of railroad tracks paralleling any navigable stream follows to-day the line of the Hudson. There are six much of the way—four tracks on one side and two on the other. I am going to make that historical line of water and rail transportation the basis for a little study with you, to see what the normal development of transportation is, and whether, as I believe, the particular form that concerns you is a natural outgrowth of all that has gone before. If it is so it is here to stay. If in the process of transportation evolution we have reached the normal use of the highway, together with the waterway and the railway, then you are doing a constructive work for your country. But if that work is not normal, if you are trying to impose upon the body politic something strange and artificial, then your work will, and ought to, fail.

The transportation system of the United States is not a unity. It can not be run on what we may call unitarian lines. It is a trinity, and has to be run on trinitarian lines. You must link up railways and waterways and highways to get a perfect transportation system for this country. If there were no railroads we would have little transportation. If there were no waterways there would be insufficient transportation. If we had an abundance of railways and waterways and lacked the use of highways, we should have imperfect transportation. We should fail to bring it to every man's door, and it must be brought to every man's door to be perfect.

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The early transportation in the Hudson River Valley was by sloop. The history of the river is full of the traditions from the old sloop days, when it was sometimes five and sometimes nine days from New York to Albany by water. The river was just as navigable then as it is now; the difference lies in the tool that was used. Now in that use of the fit tool for the route lies the whole truth in transportation, and yet so far as I know the full bearing of the application of the tool to the job is almost new to our discussions of the several phases of transportation. In due time comes Robert Fulton and the *Clermont* begins to flap flap her weary 36 hours from New York to Albany. A new tool but the same route. In time she passed into a more modern type. The steamboat developed, and came the canal with its mule power. How strange it seems in these days to think of mule power ever having been considered. Yet I have in my possession a letter to the constructing engineer of the Erie Railroad urging that it should be operated by horses between New York and Buffalo and giving 10 very excellent reasons why horses were far better than steam locomotives could be. It took a lot of argument to keep the horses off the Erie Railroad.

Came the steam locomotive. Now the rail was not new any more than the river was new. The railroad or tramway in England is far back, earlier than the railroad in America. There were tracks laid many years before anybody thought of a locomotive engine. The invention lies not in the railway but in the tool put upon it. Again the principle of the tool to the job. Also a new principle that the way, whether it was waterway or railway or highway must adapt itself also to the most effective kind of tool that could be put upon it. You could apply it but partially to the river. When canals came along later, it became apparent that you must not only have the best tool for your waterway, but must suit the latter also to the tool. We understand this about railways; we have not been so clear about it as to waterways and highways.

It is within two years that the governor of a great State has suggested to me that the use of large motor trucks be forbidden because they destroyed highways. I ask you if you will warrant the removal of locomotive engines because they are made 100 tons heavier and would break the light rail made 40 years ago? The problem is a duplex one. The best tool must be had for the job and the opportunity must be provided for the tool to do its work.

So the railway came along and since the mechanical engine fitted so perfectly into the American temperament and the national needs, the railway and the tool for the railway developed together side by side. Still with the coming of the railroad we thought of transportation as a unity. Highways did not amount to very much. Men went by horseback often, because they had to, not always because they wanted to. And after the railroad came, the waterway was all but destroyed, because we thought of transportation as a unity of railroads. Up to a very few years ago all of us who are not far-seeing would have thought of public

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transportation as meaning essentially the railroads. Yet so rapidly in the last five years has the law of transportation been developed that it is a little bit difficult for us to keep up with the rush of this movement.

There came into the world a new tool—the internal-combustion engine—destined to work almost as great a change in the human life as the steam engine in its time, making possible a tool for the waterway that the waterway had never had before, making it possible to use for the highway what the highway had never had before, making necessary the alteration of the highway to suit the new tool built for it. It has never been true until now; it has just now become true that the waterway and highway have been, as regards the tools for their use, on a technical and scientific level with the railway. The Government is just putting in operation this month the first great barges for the Mississippi River intended to carry ore south and coal north, made possible because of the internal-combustion engine. The tool has come, the internal-combustion engine is altering the face of the marine world. So that we do not really need but over 6 feet of water in the northern Mississippi to carry 1,800 tons of ore in one boat. We look upon the development of the New York State barge canal with a certainty of its profitable use for the Nation, for with a 12-foot draft we know we can carry 2,500 tons in any vessel constructed for the purpose, driven by internal-combustion engines. The tool for the job and the way made ready for the tool.

I go into my shop to put up a hammer. What is the essential feature of my hammer's operation? The foundation. It may be the most powerful hammer made, but unless given a sufficient sub-structure it can only be destructive. So for the waterway, so for the highway. You may have the most perfect equipment for their use but the instrument must work in a proper environment. So the waterway, then, the last few years—in fact, very recently—has come rapidly into its own. It is within 18 months, gentlemen, that I stood upon the first load of ore going south on the Mississippi River and saw it enter the port of St. Louis. It was only yesterday that I sent to the Senate my formal report urging Government ownership and operation of all the northern coastal canals from North Carolina to New England, with the certainty that adequate and efficient vessels could be provided for their use.

Now, these three ways of transporting developed to their full are not hostile to each other. In the days of our ignorance we thought they were. In other times the railroad bought canals to suppress them. But we have learned a larger outlook now and the congestion so recently as a year ago taught us that there are certain kinds of goods, certain types of transportation, that the railways of this country can not afford to do. Certain great items of bulk freight they must always carry. We should starve for steel if we had to depend upon our railroads to bring the ores from Minnesota to Pittsburgh, and the Northwest would be in a hard case if we had always to send coal to them by rail from the region of the East. We are learning that there is a differentiation in transportation. So these two enemies of the past are likely to operate as friends to-day. It is not a strange thing that the internal waterways of the country are at this time being operated by the Railroad Administration. It means an advance in thought.

I told the Director General of Railways that two-thirds of the job was fairly well in hand, but that he had left out one-third, and that I thought he would not get his unity complete until he made it a trinity by taking in the highways. I told him that the highways as a transportation system and their development both as to roads and as to means of using the roads were quite as essential to the country as the other two. In reply he suggested that it was a larger job than he himself could undertake, with the railroads and the waterways on his hands, and asked me if I would not do it. To my regret I was obliged to refuse. The law does not give me authority. I should have been glad if I could have had more of a part in it, because, given your perfected railroad—and I speak as a friend of the railroad and a friend of the waterway, which I think is also coming into its own—I am convinced that neither will reach its normal place as a servant of the people unless linked up with motor-truck routes.

There is a steamboat line running from New Haven to New York. At New Haven lines of motor trucks radiate out in several directions. From this radius around New Haven for many miles in three directions the motor trucks come down in the evening to the boat. The boat leaves a little before midnight and arrives in New York in the morning, when the freight is transferred and goes out on the early trains for the West. It is a good system of interlocking service such as we have got to have.

My conception of the future of the New York Barge Canal and the canal across New Jersey and the Chesapeake and Ohio and all the waterways is that the companies operating on them shall pick up and deliver at every important terminal point by lines which shall radiate out by motor trucks from 50 to 100 miles, and they shall take from these places goods thus brought to their station. So that if when, for example, they were delivering goods from Kentucky to Illinois, it might start from a farm or from an inland village by motor truck and go to the nearest waterway station, there to be picked up by a vessel and to be carried down the Kentucky and Ohio to a point sufficiently near in Illinois to where it was to go, there to be picked up by motor trucks which would carry it to its destination, and it should be billed through by one bill of lading. That would definitely establish that the vehicles and highways are not accidental or incidental but an essential factor. That, it seems to me, is what we are coming to before very long. I imagine we will come to it almost before we think of it.

From that are a number of inferences. The public authorities have got to be sufficiently educated to make a good thing possible. They have got to learn, as many a farmer has to learn, that the most costly thing in the world is a bad road; that as compared with seal-skin furs and platinum mud is far more costly an item; and that there is no such evidence of a muddy state of mind in a community as a muddy state of highways in the community. They go together—mental

and physical mud.

Now, let us see whether our idea is false or true in its application. The Hudson River has by it six tracks of railroad. The fleet of vessels upon the Hudson River was never as great, never so new or well equipped as to-day. The vessel with the largest passenger capacity, or at least second largest (6,000 persons), is in operation on that river. The freight carried on the river amounts to over 8,000,000 tons a year by water. I put a factory at Troy because I could get by water express service at freight rates, loading machines on the boat in the evening and have them delivered in New York the next morning, while to ship the same material by railroad to New York would require three to five days by freight.

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Directly back from the river bank on either side are two of our fine highways. Neither the railroad nor the river meet all the needs of the men living on those roads. You might build the railroads up until they are 10 tracks wide, but you do not fully help the farmer 10 miles away to get his produce to market. And you might fill the river with steamers, and he may be still isolated. There must come something to his farm which transports his produce easily and systematically and in harmony with other methods in duplex action going and coming. So our friend the farmer must have the rural express or its equivalent, which comes to his door, which in the morning connects him up with all the round earth and brings him what he wants of the earth's products back to his door that night.

I can not think of that except as a matter of common sense. It is a thing which has got to be, and in a very few years, at least, will be as accepted as such things as the rising of the sun and the setting of the sun. It will be considered normal. You will even find, if you have not already found, farms offered for sale on the basis of having a rural express coming and going on one side of it—perhaps on two sides of it as we get into it more thoroughly. The whole rural postal-delivery system was the promise and pledge of the rural express. What we do when we send the motor truck through the rural centers is to push the rural free-delivery and the parcel-post service just one step forward. I have had motor trucks put on the Pribilof Islands, in the Behring Sea. They are building the roads to run on before they can run on them. And there, 250 miles north of the Aleutian Islands, we can make motor trucks pay for themselves in a single year by the force they add in effective transportation. We have a seal rookery 13 or 14 miles from the village of St. Paul Island. We have not been able to kill seals there, because we could not get skins down to the village. Now a couple of motor trucks bring them down without the least difficulty, and in order to get the road there they carried down materials to build the road. So in the same way we have a great many fishery stations isolated. You can not put fish hatcheries in towns. We get them as far off as practicable. The problem is to get sufficient water and isolation, and so those stations are rather difficult to reach. In those places to-day we have put motor trucks. Here with these important stations 6, 8, 9, and 10 miles and sometimes more away, it was perfectly obvious that the best, simplest, and quickest means of access was necessary and for several years now we have been putting little Ford trucks in there, if you can call them trucks, and I presume some of you anyway still do. They have changed the effectiveness of the whole thing.

That is all very simple. I imagine that one great difficulty in this world is that the simple things are sometimes very hard to bring about. It is true in a certain sense that if we bring to a man something that is difficult and complex it catches the mind by its very complexity and strangeness. But if we come to him and say that mud is one of his worst enemies it seems hard to him that it could be as bad as it really is, as he is sort of friendly toward the mud. So many are familiar with the automobile—not as familiar, I believe, as they are going to be—that it seems hard to think it can work as revolutionary a change in their life as it is going to do. But I am perfectly certain that there abide these three elements of transportation—railway, water way, and highway—that they are one, and that none of them will reach its full value to the community without the other, and that each is the friend of the other.

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