Looking at What Can be Done NOW—Not Backward, Not Forward.

Higher Association of Man Must be Looked to, Not Higher Wages, Salaries, Profits, Interests, Dividends, Tariffs, or Taxes.

THE UNION OF THE TRADES, NOT TRADE UNIONS, ARE WHAT IS NEEDED.

Part I—By Albert Kimsey Owen

In an interview in the Independent Magazine, Thomas A. Edison says: "The Kingdom of Labor is coming."

In 200 years by cheapening of commodities, the ordinary laborer will live as well, and have a far greater annual income, Automatic machinery and scientific agriculture will bring this result.

Had Mr. Edison been acquainted with the present day which unite, automate, machine, and scientific agriculture—had Mr. Edison known about the plan to lay out, construct, pay for, and operate railroads, streets, etc.—he would have known that the machine would make a public commission, that has been specifically set forth in a bill (H.R. 23591) now before Congress, he would have seen that the essential part of that prediction can be brought about inside of ten years.

At this stage of our complex society, before the cost of living or any other basic problem can be settled, the first thing for us to do in these United States is to get the entire people together. We must not be only the United States—we must be the States united. Yet, as paradoxical as it may seem, this can be done only by scattering the people further apart. The problem is to get the whole people into coherent touch without having them massed into unmanagable, uncontrollable, disease and vice-breeding cities at any place. The people's labors must be brought into order and system, in ways to be co-related and to prevent the constant waste of labor, time, or material, before they can be fully useful, economic and progressive; and to live upon the best social and intellectual intercourse, families must each have its own distinct, separate and beautiful home. Henry Clay said: "The love that lies in the home, that binds families, that creates order and makes powerful of all our country's pillars."

It is the mutuality that exists with the inmates of the home that makes the highest power for good, and the greatest of all forces in a nation is the mutuality of its citizens in their common weal. This is not yet understood. In times of panic and war it is the mutual interests that the soldiers have in the public good that holds the nation together. In times of great public danger the peoples' mutual interests in the public welfare are always appealed to by public men in authority. At such times the people are aroused to unify their thoughts, labors, properties and credits to save the Republic, and the people never fail to act in enthusiastic accord.

Hence, the mutuality of the common interest of the people has been employed to destroy and to kill in wonderful and varied ways. But the people are good and it is hoped the mutuality of the people in their common weal and destiny has never been appealed to for the conservation and the general betterment of the labors of the people. What highroads are planned to do.

It is the higher association of man with man and not the higher wages, salaries, profits, dividends, taxes that must be looked to. Higher association is the gospel—is the new message of evolution that must now be preached. Higher association is the open sesame to the promised land of mankind: the land of God on earth or to all that is good and beautiful here and now. We stand at the threshold of the industrial reformation—at the open way of the re-ordering and re-systematizing of productive, useful and related activities that is to give industrial freedom without political liberty but one step removed from slavery. It is only by higher association that the "automatic machinery" and the lands, laborers, tools and good roads necessary for our industrial freedom can be gotten into the service of the many—into the use of the men, women, girls and boys who do the world's work. If the peoples' industries are not to be made interdependent and coherent then the better the "automatic machinery" and the more extensive the good roads and the "scientific agriculture" may be, the greater will be the drudgery and taxes of those who do the labor—who do the service. But with higher association man will be attracted to render the service of his better mind ideas, inventions and discoveries—to the uplifting of society. Then it will be seen that the noblest service of man is to advance the public good; and this service—our duty to conserve labor and to promote the public good—will be the tie-that-binds will be the religion of the auto-mechanic and cultured civilization such as Mr. Edison sees coming.

At this stage of our evolution, the two essential or basic factors to do things are lands and laborers. In the United States we are among the great landholders, tenancy and in abundance in the public land, and in the public dance and in exceptional varieties and qualities. The only reason that every citizen and immigrant, who has worked five years or more in this country, has not a garden-home, a run-about and things in general for use and pleasure at their best and in plenty, is owing to the fact that there never has been a concrete set of specific plans formulated, published, illustrated and explained to show the people how and why they must live along the lines of their own, to own their own vehicles of intercourse and exchange, be upon their own lands and work for themselves under public "Captains of Industry" in diverse and interesting buildings that belong to themselves and that are co-related and co-sustaining. This is precisely what auto-highways or civic-roads are planned to do. So sure is this the case that we may say the plan for "automatic machinery" and "scientific agriculture," foretold by Mr. Edison, is set up and all that is required now to put into action this continent-wide and hemispheric-long automatic-mechanic-business concern is for Congress to press the button—for Congress to pass the bill giving one added care or one dollar of expense to the Government. On the contrary, the more miles of auto-highways constructed and the more land-holdings that are made the richer, every year, will be the United States Treasury and the Treasury of every State that the National Auto-Highways pass through or over or that grow: Highways, and consequently the less taxes the people should have to pay to the Federal Government and to the State Governments.

This is not a wild—it is a conservative statement. This is the age of wonders. Within the present decade, we have successfully navigated under the ocean and through the skies, and have put wireless telegraphs, telephones, lights and powers in course of every hour service. Amid such marvelous, don't the surprising and the seen miraculous or unexplainable that there is a plan at hand that will lead working men and women to enjoy to the fullest what they, by their own creative labor, can grow and invent and discover. In face of the wonderful advances that are being made every day in science, mechanics, chemistry and safety, is not the sanctity of the American people that some one has not long before this worked out a plan by which we each can have environments, encouragements and protections to live decently, to assert our own individuality and to enjoy what we have made or done, or what we may fashion for use, or what we may do to adorn the public good or to conserve the public welfare and exchange. They will run east-west, north-south across and up and down North America. They are to link, with lands of steel and co-related interests gathering zest, fading sciences, colleges, mines, farms, forests, mountains, valleys, lakes, rivers and seashores, and they will facilitate and encourage their denizens to visit and enjoy frequently whatever may be best in any or in all of these.

At the close of Nov. 26, 1910, there were 95 towns and cities in the United States that were governed in every detail of management, towns and cities that have had a year's experience under government by commission show better results than the Government by ward boss. However, towns and cities, to get the best results, will have to incorporate their respective commissions and then improve upon the business methods of incorporated business concerns—private trusts; for good government—city, state and national—is simply good business.

"Not any bill of importance that is not for private trusts will be considered by Congress before there is a panic or war; or before there is a public sentiment to enforce it.
Auto-Highways are planned to utilize both of these ideas. Auto-Highways will attract the entire nation to get upon wheels. Every one will be encouraged to move about within their near and distant places and frequently.

The convenience, safety and attractiveness of the steel-plated, cement, and other roadways and pavements, and the centers of business, accommodation and entertainment will do this. These improved and enjoyable conditions will call into universal use running about, motor-cycles, motor-tricycles, cycles, skates, motor-skates, electric carriages, carry-alls, trucks and cars, and every one will be influenced, in one way or another, to move about in and joyously to and from everywhere, and thus the whole people will become acquainted and facilitated to do, well and rapidly, all things that may promote the common good.

On auto-highways the laborer becomes his or her own employer and any work he or she does is for himself or herself; to say that everything done is to build, sustain and perfect a great, general plan to build-up his or her city, state and nation. Again, consciously and deliberately, a man or woman who works for himself or herself on the roads or farms, or in any of the thousand and more varied industries, now along and on an integral part of civic roads, will be working for all the other persons who are working on or in them; and, consciously or unconsciously, all those other persons who work at the same time and in a thousand and more ways, for him or her. Now as wealth is having at one's service the services of others, it stands to reason that every man lives in his own beautiful-park-surrounded home and works along a civic road he is made richer by the addition of every one who comes to settle and work along the same causeway or its branches. Therefore, if it be true, as Thomas Carlyle has stated, that “The wealth of a man is the number of bags and bundles he blesses and which he is loved and blessed by,” then it is true also that when there shall be a million, or better still ten million families living among these palatial highways, every family will own within a decade from the time its members begin to work, a beautiful and up-to-date furnished and appointed home and will have at command better schools, libraries, amusement parks, public utilities, transportation systems, farms, factories, fisheries, gardens, and services, such as the recreation for limb, life and property and all that goes to make life honorable, progressive and enjoyable than any man with the largest bank deposit can have in the United States today. That is to say, every person who works at least ten years on or in the associated industries of a civic road can have at his or her service everything that he or she can enjoy and to advantage that can be furnished by the greater civilization that will be in vogue at that time under such circumstances and that more than this can a multi-millionaire or a king have? A multi-millionaire or king can not possibly have more things and conveniences than labor has or can furnish for use and luxury and if laborers can furnish everything for multi-millionaires and kings, is it possible that some one of us ninety million people can not devise a plan so that laborers can do as much if not more for themselves? It should be easier to formulate than the Poppy-like plan for the nonesoteric detail of common usages, that have simply “grown,” now used by some people. Those who do not do any productive or serviceable labor get the first choice of everything that is grown and made, and every yard take and waste more and leave less for those who grow and serve. What society lacks and must have, before it can move forward and upon a higher plane of thought and action, is a constructive plan, a plan made universal in its extensions, that will conserve and utilize the technical efficiency of labor and land. And this is just what auto-highways, or public trusts will do.

Mr. Edison, the greatest genius living or dead, clearly sees that he or any other man can not do anything worthwhile the doing if it were not for the labor services of others, and that there should be a plan made by which everything that is grown or done may be necessarily owned but enjoyed by everyone and do it.

Mr. Edison saw this when he wrote: “All power is cumulative and the virtues of bygone days work their worth in this.”

PART II

Mr. Edison says: “Not individualism but social labor will dominate the future. You can’t have individual machines and every man working by himself. Industry will become more social and inter-dependent.”

The socialization of labor—that is to say unite the farmer, mechanic, teacher, accountant, and general helper into a cooperative-internal union is the basic idea upon which civic roads are formulated. Civic roads will attract these producing and sustaining forces in society to range themselves, with order and system, along their own good roads, upon their own lands and into their own factories and mines, and where there is a cooperative company, industry will put every family into its own home and every girl and boy into school and industrial college and will do this with the middle-man, from the manipulator, the man of the three-wheel game, broker, merchant or shopman, the insurance, real estate and commission agents, the landlord, railroad road, hotel proprietor, private banker, private employer of labor, and private contractor. The trade unions will then become the union of the tradesmen, maids, women or child employed by a man or by a private company, on civic roads or in their associated industries, there can be no antagonism, strikes or boycotts or injunctions.

There is a general demand that the people “go back to the farm” and as impossible to put the country into the cities and put the cities into the country. Along or close to these roads the cottage or bungalow home of every man can be owned by him and his family, and for every industry factory window can open upon green fields and beautiful gardens, and the songs of birds can be heard in the groves close by. Under such conditions the first and best thoughts of man and woman will be how best to live—how best to work, how best to protect the public well, how best to assist man to assist himself, and then the necessity for alms, charities, tithes and taxes will be all diminished as the desirous of civic roads are concerned. The power to do good will then be the ruling force.

Auto-Highway Commissions will give prizes for the best contributions and exhibits of city and industrial colleges, factory-centers, industrial-colleges, commercial-terminals, public buildings, clock and chime towers, parks, fountains, arches, statues, etc. It is unanswerable the accumulation of finished accomplishments that civic roads will call forth, encourage, utilize and perfect, and how everything that is grown, made or done will go first to the use and betterment of those who do the work. These civic road management, that is to say these public companies, are to be holding or parent companies in much the same way as Dr. A. J. P. Morgan’s Merger or “Community of interests” is; and as they will be automatic in their construction and will furnish their own credits to purchase themselves the means to start their sub-companies, they will have ever-increasing revenues at hand to take over and to put to use the inventions, discoveries and new ideas that can serve mankind and advance the commonwealth. And, it is just possible that not any person will be more surprised and delighted than Mr. Edison to see how quickly and easily his storage batteries and every other electric device that can aid man in his work and entertainment will be put into service, how rapidly and well his varied and beautiful plans for concrete cottages, bungalows, factories, etc, for the millions will be poured up, and how soon and grandly staged hundreds of factory-centers and industrial-colleges will have his cinematic-phonograph dramas, operas and lectures opened at nominal prices every evening and holiday. Then, as Mr. Edison has told us in a previous interview, he has no further attraction for the working man” for under such circumstances, he with his wife and children, will look for dividends, instructions and ideals that lecture halls and refreshment and music gardens where the revelations of science, chemistry, discovery, travel and invention will be explained by lecturers and illustrated with moving-picture exhibits.

On civic roads, electricity will be used in everything and in every way possible; for manufacturing, communications and entertainment—for manufacturing, transportation, motors, batteries, street cleaning, house keeping, plowing, harvesting, transportation, etc. There will not be any occasion for the use of coal or steam power. These two great sources of dirt, smoke, cinders and noise can be done away with entirely by the harnessing of electric power and by generating electric power and heat and at the mines and transmitting them by wires rather than the coal by cars. In the future, in his interview, June 1910, “The To-morrow of Electricity, Invention,” says: “As for the electric motor, it will not be perfectly utilized until everything we now make with our own hands, and every mechanical
motion, can be effected by throwing a switch. I am ashamed of the number of people who have my house and say that it is done by animals—human beings; I mean, and ought to be done by a motor without any sense and fatigue or pain. Wherefore a motor is a most beautiful thing. There is absolutely no reason why horses should be allowed within the city limits, for between the gasoline and the electric cars, no motor is needed. There are, however, some demands that are needed. The cow and the pig have gone and the horse is still more undesirable.

A higher public ideal of health and cleanliness is working toward such beautiful and efficient streets as the whole people and now they simply hire those men, women and children who have the labor power and the necessary technology to do whatever is needed. The auto-highways—the public companies—are to do for the men, women and children who have the labor power and the technology just what the private companies or trusts have done and are doing for their few directors, and in these "intrinsic good ways of doing things," the houses that Mr. Edison says, under present conditions, will cost $1,200 will probably $600, and will be better made and be more beautifully park-enriched than Mr. Edison yet dreams.

Mr. Edison says: "These houses can be built in batches of hundreds and then the plants can be moved elsewhere. When built these communities of poured houses may become flowered towns with wide lawns and blooming beds along the roadways. Rats and mice and croton bugs will have as much show in them as in a steel safe in a bank. Certain neither houses nor harbors it. There is nothing in all this that is not common sense and easy of practice."

Who would not forsake the crowd-ed apartment or tenement on such terms for roomy, substantial houses, fitted with modern conveniences, beautified with artistic decorations, with no out-lay for insurance or repairs and with no thread of servitude? And if the plans for auto-highways—Public Companies—will take from profits that go, under existing conditions, to the merchant and to the numerous small men, in the form of the taxes, must be complicated. I must mold a house instead of a brick."

The plans for civic roads are very simple also. Instead of leveling and paving 3,000 to 4,000 miles of tangled streets, lanes, and avenues all in a bunch that are forever being torn up and are always filthy and expensive to live on, and at a constant expense, as are those, for instance, of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, etc., civic roads will be a series of a thousand or more miles of straight, level, paved surfaces on which traffic and travel will be separated and kept upon distinct ways; and on or near to which every family will own its own garden, house, and factory and part of amusement will be built and operated with a view to make life sweeter and better for the denizen as well as for the stranger within.

Mr. Edison says: "A single house can be cast in six hours. I believe that the houses can be erected and completed with plumbing and heating apparatus for $1,500 each. Whole houses may be different in combination or design, color and other features; and an endless variation in style is possible. In one case that I would recommend has a floor plan of 25 by 30 feet, four stories high, with cellar, six large living and sleeping rooms, tiny baths, and every comfort, in fact every feature that one could desire. There have been such advances, within the last few decades, in machinery and general technology that the productive power of the individual laborer has been increased many times; but all these advantages have gone to those few persons who have incorporated to monopolize the credits, deposits, transpositions, and so forth of the whole people and now they simply hire those men, women and children who have labor power and the necessary technology to do whatever is needed."

Again, if "coal is the stored up sunlight—so the storage battery of the sun to what we owe about all our energy," then Mr. Edison says it is also, also, also, also, that the laborer is the stored-up intelligence that has used the stored-up sunlight to feed, clothe, house, transport and entertain the people of the past and present civilizations. And if after all our boasted intelligence, scientific research and application of mechanics and chemistry we have not been able to get more than 15 per cent of the energy from the coal we use, and that we are still ignorant of what constitutes electricity, heat, light or gravity, it need not surprise any person, however seriously, to any subject, that as yet probably not one hundredth of one per cent of the force and intelligence of the laborer has been utilized to serve himself by uplifting his fellow laborer and his nation.

The first step to solve Twentieth Century Problems is to get the whole people into coherent touch in ways and under such order and system that even the man with the most selfishness and the greatest brute instinct, consciously or unconsciously, will be attracted to employ his services in connection with the best "automatic machinery" and the "most scientific agriculture" of his day under such conditions that the more he works for himself, the more beautiful and civilized he will make his environment, the more he will assist himself and his fellow workers to be his and their better selves and the greater he will make his city, state and country.

This is the mission of auto-highways!

They will harness up the selfishness of man and use this selfishness to serve our wants and values as Mr. Edison has harnessed up the Thunder Bolts of Jove, that were the terror of our forefathers, and has made them the most wonderful of all the forces and the mightiest civilizing influences of our epoch; and this will be doing right now and here just what Mr. Edison predicts shall be the case in the future.

House of Governors.
In conference,
Louisville, Kentucky.

GENTLEMEN: While the forceful and ringing words of Governor-Elect Wooldred Wilson, November 29th at Frankfort, Kentucky, are still fresh in my mind and hope in heart, permit me to call your attention to the enclosed Leaflet No. 11 and to add the following paragraphs:

Our Sovereign States—particularly New Jersey—have been the Frankensteins that have created and set in motion the incorporations, the frauds, the business concerns or trusts that "centralized business has built up" which overtop all states and seem to have no match or competition except the Federal.
Government itself which was not intended for such competition. Amidst a confused variety of states and statues stands now the colossal of business, uniform, concentrated, poised upon a single plan; governed not by votes, but by command; seeking not service, but profit,"—trusts that are running amuck over our land devouring anything and everybody that their insatiable appetites are hungering for, and as our Sovereign States have created these private monsters and have permitted them to grow bigger, richer, more powerful, and beyond state control, these private monsters now not only trample over their sovereignty whenever and wherever it is to their pleasure and profit to do so, but they make our National Congress, our State Legislatures, our City Councils, our Courts and our Administrations do their bidding, and it now remains for them but to say: "We private and Exclusive Trusts are the Nation—whatever is grown or done here belongs to us—those persons who do not agree to this must go out of the United States. Their Territory of Alaska and their outlying territorial possessions or they must die for want of the shelter and food that we are content to give them."

Therefore, mark you gentlemen Governors and Governors-Elect of the forty-eight States of the United States! It is up to the whole people—to the Federal Government, and to the Government of the States, respectively, to unite—to our Frankenstein and to create incorporated public trusts—monopoly business concerns or trusts that will be sufficiently all-embracing and overpowering to meet these incorporated private monopoly business concerns or trusts in their own lines of business and in their own accepted and loudly lauded ways that have been run by the chartered legislation, not by condemnation, physical valuation, publicity or exposure, but by competition—and in doing this to carry into effect the mission of evolution, and to demonstrate the basic principle of Democratic Republican Government that private corporations must give place to public corporations as private interests have had to give place to public interests and state interests to national interests.

To incorporate public trusts to compete with incorporated private trusts in their own lines of business is the one and only way to show private trusts that they can no longer dominate this people—their labors, lands, credits, productions, distributions, governments, and modes of life. They are not, but they shall be content to follow better and bigger business concerns or shall be absorbed, or shall be crushed out of existence.

In the House of Governors will ask that the bill (H. R. 23501, as corrected and revised) be passed by Congress, inside of two months, after its passage every sovereign state, respectively, in conjunction with the Federal Government can be engaged in laying out and constructing auto-highways, and every private company, trust and merger will be doing its level best to keep within its charted powers and will be trying its utmost, to please and to accommodate the public for which it was created.

It is only competition that can regulate private trusts, and as the existing private trusts are stronger than any other private trusts, can come while the existing private trusts monopolize as their own the deposit, credits, railroads, fuels, lights, powers and vehicles of travel and exchange which any other private trust must have for the basis of its business, it is up to the nation in cooperation with the sovereign states, respectively, to incorporate public trusts and to go at the private trusts in a business way and regulate, control, absorb or destroy them in the identical business way, that private trusts have gone at, regulated, controlled, absorbed or destroyed every private company of lesser power than the trusts in the history of the wishes and profits of the directors of said private trusts.

Respectfully,

Albert K. Owen.