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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1937

FREE BRIDGES

The following article was written by B. J. Lenihan, vice president of the Kentucky Free Bridge Association:

Kentucky is one of the most beloved states in the Union. It is often facetiously stated that Kentucky is famous for its beautiful women, its fast horses, and its good referendums. The Kentucky Derby each year, for the last one month, focuses attention of the entire world on Kentucky. It is recognized as one of the premium sporting events on the face of the globe. For these and many other reasons, Kentucky is well known and well thought of. It is a treasure house of history. It is the birthplace of Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Henry Clay and a remarkable roster immortals. It is rich with the lore of Daniel Boone, George Rogers Clark and their kind. It is strongly famed among "My Old Kentucky Home." Brings a tear to the heart of people who have never set one state. Pages and pages of fiction have been written about Kentucky. Movies featuring her have been shown in theatres everywhere. There is an aura of romance about our state. With all of the advertising publicity and good will that has been provided for Kentucky, there are literally millions who would like to visit here and scores of thousands who can afford to do so. These scores of thousands would like to visit our historic landmarks, they would like to see the Blue Grass region, they would like to see Ashland, the Mountains, Cumberland Falls, Berea, Berea College, Churchill Downs, the Home of the Derby, Louisville, the Old Kentucky Home, Lincoln's birthplace, Dale Fork, Jefferson Davis Monument, Mammoth Cave, Bowling Green, the Majestic Tennessee and Cumberland Valleys and Paducah, the home of Irvin S. Cobb. They'd like to travel our beloved state from Paducah to Ashland, and a majority few of them do. Toll bridges bar these thousands who want to see our state. They bar the vast majority of our own citizens who want to hunt their own state and see the other places of Kentucky they have heard and read about.

Analyzing tourist travel, we find that while tourists may not mind the accurate toll bridges which they encounter coming into the state because they feel the other state is equally responsible for these tolls, they resent and will not travel in a state that imposes upon them for the privilege of traveling from one section to another within that state. Before coming into our state travelers are warned of the toll bridges by automobile club books, hotels and other tourist agencies. Most road maps given to tourists by gas stations and elsewhere have toll bridges indicated as they on tourists may route them selves around them if possible. On the road to most tourist high ways north of us, traversing Illinois, Indiana and Ohio with which our U. S. 60, is one of the most important for business, a tourist may travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific for approximately 15 toll fare to cross the Mississippi at St. Louis. It is not hard to understand why Kentucky with one intra state toll bridges costing 55 cents each to cross is avoided like a plague by tourists and thousands of tourists annually who otherwise would visit the Commonwealth. Study reveals that there is no reason why East to West tourist travel through our state and that there is negligible around the state tourist travel. It is estimated that over 90 per cent of our tourist travel is on the North and South highways on which there are no intrastate toll bridges. Valuable as this North and South tourist patronage is, it is not profitable to our citizens and state than the same amount of East and West tourist patronage would be. The reason for this is the North and South tourists on account of the shorter distance may go straight through our state without the necessity of spending any money within our borders even for gas. Tourists from south of the state the East and West tourists must patronize many Kentucky places of business for gas, food and lodging. The toll free bridges where we need to encourage travel most, we discourage it completely.

No one must feel the intrastate toll bridges are a problem of just certain sections of the state. Definitely, they are not. They constitute a major problem for the entire state. They affect one unit politically and should be one unit economically and socially. Anything that strangles business in one of several sections of the state or diverts it one of the state seriously retards business all over the state. Anything that does even a reasonable job of keeping some from section to other is a boomer about the state. Anything that keeps the people of the state from the state is a tragedy and that because he is a resident of a section in which no intra state is located that he is not concerned. He is incorrect. The mobility of travel in the country directly affected means that he pays a greater share of the gas tax revenue to the state and he pays more gas taxes to travel on that he would otherwise.

Operation of state highways is not a business or running a business for profit like a transportation unit. The duty is the State Highway Department for the operation, maintenance and building of highways is derived mainly from the gas tax, which is paid by every motorist when he buys a gallon of gasoline. Like any commercial institution, it is good business for the Highway Department to endeavor to increase its income so that it may render better service to the citizens of the state in the form of better roads, better roads, and improved maintenance of existing roads. There is only the way in which the highway department can increase its revenue from the gas tax is to increase the number of people who travel the roads of our state. Pages and pages of fiction have been written about Kentucky. Movies featuring her have been shown in theatres everywhere. There is an aura of romance about our state. With all of the advertising publicity and good will that has been provided for Kentucky, there are literally millions who would like to visit here and scores of thousands who can afford to do so. These scores of thousands would like to visit our historic landmarks, they would like to see the Blue Grass region, they would like to see Ashland, the Mountains, Cumberland Falls, Berea, Berea College, Churchill Downs, the Home of the Derby, Louisville, the Old Kentucky Home, Lincoln's birthplace, Dale Fork, Jefferson Davis Monument, Mammoth Cave, Bowling Green, the Majestic Tennessee and Cumberland Valleys and Paducah, the home of Irvin S. Cobb. They'd like to travel our beloved state from Paducah to Ashland, and a majority few of them do. Toll bridges bar these thousands who want to see our state. They bar the vast majority of our own citizens who want to hunt their own state and see the other places of Kentucky they have heard and read about.

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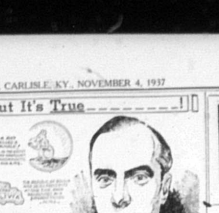
BUT IT'S TRUE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