

It was a far different war which we fought, however. It was the Second World War. From this cataclysm we emerged and in time reorganized. Virginia commenced her expansion of roads, rebuilding in earnest, and much was at stake. The Associated Clubs of Virginia sponsored legislation at every succeeding session of the general assembly, and our progress was slow but sure. However the awful billboard lobby seemed ever more powerful.

The advent of the Eisenhower years and his magnificent presentation of a plan for a Federal system of highways, was built in protection against billboards seemed to our embattled forces the answer to a prayer. We commenced at once to work for the Federal bill. We believed in the Eisenhower proposals and were so happy to transfer to your broad shoulders the heavy weight of the billboard lobby, which as you know went into full cry against any built-in protections against any restrictions of outdoor advertising along the new interstate.

Virginia was one of the first States to enter into an agreement with the Bureau of Public Roads. We qualified for the bonus plan that came out of the Eisenhower bill. We have been paid bonuses and the interstate highways in Virginia are very beautiful. We believe that this was good legislation. How could we feel otherwise when President Eisenhower introduced the original bill and it was supported by the late John F. Kennedy and further endorsed by President Johnson with the enormously able assistance of Mrs. Johnson.

We did indeed breathe a sigh of relief. It was not long before the billboard lobby, emboldened by our contentment, mounted an unprecedented assault against the highway beautification of 1965. The main feature of the Federal billboard control law says that signs on the interstates and the Federal and primary highways—and I must say bringing the Federal and primary highways under the law in 1965 was one of the good things about the law—that these signs must come down by 1970-72.

The Federal law says that the billboard companies must be paid compensation for taking down the signs. This they were satisfied to write into the bill in 1967. Our forces were battered down by their cries of discrimination against the industry and so unpopular was the weakening of the bill that shamefully indeed, many women's clubs who should have supported the bill ran from it. You have heard all kinds of stories in the press and in the testimony against this legislation, that was a bad bill, that it had no teeth in it, that the Lady Bird bill was just a toothless hag: much was bad, but much was good.

I can speak for my State alone. We who have supported the Highway Beautification Act consistently can tell you that tremendous progress has been made.

I invite you to come into Virginia and see for yourself, just across the State line into a land of no billboard controls and you will soon be in the jungle.

Virginia is now committed to the Federal bill and if the industry forces us to go back to enacting laws on the State level, I promise them that we will follow the example of the State of Vermont, which has banned billboards entirely. Why? Because tourism is the largest industry and can Virginia be far behind?

It is a sorry spectacle that we are arrayed against an industry that said yesterday that we must pay a price to bring down signs and today