ROAD CONSTRUCTION

By Raymond G. Schmitt

We're out to get a job with the county surveyor, but there's nothing for us. So we grab ourselves what we can get and we finally land a job on the road. It's not with the "lean on the shovel" gang, W.P.A. to you, but with the Highway Department. In this gang we just reverse the methods used by the W.P.A. Instead of leaning on the shovel, we let the shovel lean on us. That's giving the shovel a break, now, isn't it? But coming down to earth, we have lots of work to do, and I mean work.

One of the first jobs is building in a new curve on a secondary road. The original curve is too sharp and branches off in the middle of another. The proposed curve, therefore, is laid out to begin on the straightaway and end on the straightaway, thereby eliminating a double curve. Technically, this is not a curve but an external spiral superelevated on the outside.

Work is begun with a grader that pushes all the excess dirt in towards the bank and brings the ground to the desired elevation. When the grader has finished, a heavy roller moves back and forth, packing the ground in firmly to give a solid base. Meanwhile the men are at work making an eight foot "berm" of the right height, approximately ten inches from the base of the bed. The "berm" may be described as being the distance between the edge of the road and the point where the bank slopes down in a one and one half to one slope. Next comes the first course of stone which is spread, to a great extent, by a spreader box, to a depth of six inches per course. The rest is spread by hand with a ten-prong stone fork. Everything is smoothed over evenly with hooks. Spreading with the "box" is accomplished by having a hoist truck back up to it, hitch up, dump enough into the box at intervals, and move forward slowly.

Weather permitting, our road will be finished tomorrow when two courses of chips, little stones, are put on to complete the surfacing. Between the first and second courses, a light coating of tar is put on to hold the chips in place. No rolling is necessary as the traffic does the trick. "Chipping" is done with trucks and a rotating spreader attachment whose width of spread is determined by the speed of the truck.

Interesting? Very. You really know what it's all about in a while. And let me tell you, it's worth while just to join up with a gang for a few weeks and see how it's done.