

N.Z. BUILDING PROGRESS

(With which is incorporated "The Scientific New Zealander")

A Journal for Progressive men interested in the development of New Zealand's
Architecture, Building, Engineering and Industries

Official Organ of the Institute of Local Government Engineers of N.Z.

PRICE 6d. per Copy: 7s. 6d. per annum post free.

(Note: 1s. Discount allowed if paid in advance).

WELLINGTON, AUCKLAND, CHRISTCHURCH, AND DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND, AUGUST, 1914

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Editorial Comment

Once again a large number of Architects have expended a great amount of thought, time and work for the benefit of the community at large only to have their efforts summarily dealt with in what appears to us to be an unfair and unreasonable manner by the Board which was directly responsible for the competition.

We have more than once referred in these columns to architectural competitions, and we feel constrained to revert to the subject owing to the method adopted in adjudicating upon the designs submitted in a recent competition for an important building.

We have always urged that it is absolutely essential that a thoroughly competent assessor be engaged even if it be necessary to go outside New Zealand for him. Indeed, as far as we can see, it is necessary in most cases to go abroad, and to be entirely successful to go further abroad than was done on one notable occasion. In our opinion we have at present in this country only two or three architects who, by reason of their artistic temperament, power of imagination and training are competent to design important buildings such as Parliament Houses, Art Galleries or large Schools and, meantime, for the sake of architecture in New Zealand, we should prefer to have these few men competing on the chance that their designs may meet with the success which they merit.

We maintain that it is unfair to competing architects to have their designs judged by laymen. However accomplished the members of any Board may be, as business or professional men they cannot possibly have the necessary knowledge to discriminate between the designs excepting in the most rudimentary manner. It is only a degree less unfair to call in an architect to act as assessor or advisor unless he is thoroughly competent and has proved himself to be so on the architectural worth of his executed work. We have no hesitation in saying that in a number of competitions within the last few years the best designs have not been recognised, and this because no assessor was called in or the judge was much less competent than many of the competitors.