

Should Town Planning be Postponed on Account of the War?

This question exercised the minds of the members of the Greater Wellington Town Planning and Municipal Electors' Association at its meeting last month. The President, Mr. J. G. W. Aitken, read a letter from the Hon. Mr. Russell stating that in his opinion the time was not opportune to bring up Town Planning legislation. Some time back Mr. Russell made a definite promise to a deputation of members of the above Association that legislation would be introduced this session, and we cannot see any reason why this very important matter need be any longer shelved.

It may be of interest to Mr. Russell and those who think with him that the same views are not held in England, as the following excerpt from the *Municipal Journal* of December 24th shows.

"The necessity for economy has been brought so prominently before us lately that it has, perhaps, had the effect of making people uncertain as to the truest economies to practice. Local authorities have been urged to curtail expenditure, and to postpone all work having no direct bearing on the prosecution of the war. One of the results of this policy has been to engender a feeling that at the present time the preparation of a town-planning scheme is an unnecessary and costly undertaking, and it is in the public interest to draw attention to several points which show the time to be a most opportune one.

The general attitude was brought into prominence recently at a conference of owners convened by the Tadeaster R.D.C., when objections were raised in connection with the authority's resolution to apply to the Local Government Board for leave to prepare a scheme dealing with the district of Barwick-in-Elmet, to the east of Leeds, several of the owners maintaining that it was an unsuitable time to incur expenditure of this nature.

Their objections were ably met by the chairman (Mr. Prater), who was supported by Mr. Bromet, clerk to the council, and Mr. Longstreth Thompson, of Messrs Allen and Thompson (late Pepler and Allen), who are advising the council on the preparation of the scheme. The chief points in his argument have a general application.

It is in the interests of the owners and the general public that the local authority should have full control of the future development of the district, and in this way a very real economy may be practised. For while the cost of preparing a town-planning scheme is very small, a very large saving is effected by the avoidance of costly "improvements" in the future.

Owing to the war, building is practically at a standstill, and it is therefore a most opportune time to prepare a careful town-planning scheme in order that, at the end of the war, when builders begin to supply the acknowledged shortage of housing accommodation, a well-thought-out scheme may be ready so that the work can be expeditiously carried out on ordered lines.

While many activities of local authorities have been suspended, the Local Government Board, for the foregoing reasons, has encouraged rather than discouraged the preparation and prosecution of Town-planning schemes.

It is of interest to note that Mr. Prater, who is agent for a large landowner in the district, is thoroughly convinced of the expediency of town-planning at the present time, both from the council's point of view, and (this is perhaps more instructive) also from the point of view of the owner."

Better Concrete

WHAT THE KINEMATOGRAPH SHOWS

A Motion Picture Analysis of the flow on concrete from the mixers used in combining its elements shows that those elements are largely unmixed by the time they reach their destination, owing to the influence of gravity, under which the liquid part separates from the solid and the finer ingredients from the coarser. This is explained by Nathan C. Johnson, a consulting concrete-engineer of New York City, in "The Engineering Record." Mr. Johnson does not say that this partial undoing of the mixer's work is producing unsafe results, but he hints it very strongly and believes that the motion-picture analysis warns us of the necessity of improving the present methods of mixing and pouring concrete.

The pictures show that a liquid runs first into the forms, carrying dirt and scum and light particles—"a poor bond," as Mr. Johnson remarks. Then—"After this first rush of dirty fluid comes the gray of the finer cement and sand, in a sort of soup that constantly thickens with increasing quantities of coarser cement and sand as the pouring goes on. Next come the heavier sand and finer stone, sometimes washed nearly clean of cement; and at the bottom of the barrow lies the heavier stone, which, refusing to flow, has to be scraped out with shovels. All this is done in a few seconds—not more than a minute after the mixture was delivered by the mixer, for the cost of placing must be kept low—yet the materials have become almost completely separated. A little more time, as in a longer haul to the forms, and this separation, or 'segregation,' might be complete.

"But what of the mass in the forms? How does it lie—in layers, as it went down? What of its endurance? And what of its strength? Is careful design useless? Or is the concrete being used in such bulk, regardless of initial cost or actual possibilities, that nothing would matter, save almost total lack of cement? The answer is that, consciously or unconsciously, "Everybody's Doing It," and it is "Getting Away With it"; and if Luck turns thumbs down, and if something happens in the far-off future, there are so many inanimate things that can be blamed when the time comes that the risk is held to be negligible and unworthy of consideration compared to present profits.