

## Cathedral Square Improvements Competition.

### Criticism by the Tramway Board.

Last month we described and illustrated the winning design in the Improvement Scheme for the Christchurch Beautifying Society. This scheme was submitted to a committee of the Tramway Board which drew attention to several points. Since then a meeting has been held of the Christchurch Beautifying Society, the City Council and the Tramway Board to consider the question of adopting the plans for the improvement of the Square that were allotted first place in the recent competition assessed by Mr. Hurst-Seager, F.R.I.B.A.

Dr. Chilton requested the Mayor to preside over the conference, and asked him and the chairman of the Tramway Board to accept the winning plans of the suggested improvements to the Square.

Mr. Hurst Seager, referring to the care taken by Mr. F. Thompson, of the Tramway Board, in his report on the Beautifying Association's plan, said that the suggestion made in one of the Christchurch papers that the Tramway Board had "turned down" the Society's plan was not in accordance with fact. As a matter of fact anyone who read Mr. Thompson's report would realise that he had thought very highly of the first prize plan, which in nearly all points met the necessities of the case. The few points in which the Tramway Board's officials did not see eye to eye with the designers of the prize plan could be, the speaker thought, easily modified. In the main the prize plan was excellent, and was spoken of very highly by Mr. Thompson and his confreres.

Mr. Seager, who was aided by a good series of slides, explained in a most interesting manner, the good points of the prize plan, and painstakingly compared it with the B and C schemes as submitted by the officials of the Tramway Board. The main objections which the Board had to the Society's plan were firstly, that passengers from cars would have to be educated to enter and leave a car on opposite sides, and secondly, that the existing bars and gates on the trams were usually closed on the proposed shelter sides, and could not be conveniently operated because the conductor was busy on other more important duties. The speaker thought that it was within the skill of the engineers of the Dominion to design bars that could be more easily handled and trolley poles that would not leave the wires and do damage. He then moved:—

"(1) That as the object of bringing the cars into the Square is that passengers may conveniently change from the cars of one line to those of any other, the central shelter shown in the Beautifying Association's plan (scheme A) is the best and it therefore be recommended for adoption, providing that the present defects in the car equipment which alone prevent its adoption be overcome."

"(2) That in order that the present defective car equipment may not influence the selection of a scheme, the Tramway Board be asked to offer substantial prizes for—

"(a) Improved self-acting safety trolley poles.

"(b) For improved methods of manipulating the bars and gates at the sides of the cars."

Mr. J. A. Frostick seconded the motions.

Mr. C. M. Gray said he would like to point out that the Tramway Board had not yet formerly committed itself to any particular scheme. The members of the Board might personally approve of the Society's proposals, but the Board had to think of a good many points. There was the question of finance, and after all, why did they want to change? It would cost a great deal of money for a benefit which, in his opinion, was problematical. Mr. Seager talked lightly of the difficulties which had been put forward, such as altering Orders-in-Council, etc. He thought that if the people were allowed to get off on the wrong side of a car there would be many accidents and a constant danger to life and limb. The Board had received many designs for safety trolley-poles, but so far the suggested improvements had not found favour with the Board, which considered that its present equipment was good enough. He made these remarks just to show those present that the Board was not entirely unanimous on the question.

Mr. Reynolds asked if it was not true that in any case the Board would have to expend a considerable sum of money in track renovation and alterations.

Mr. Gray said that some expenditure would be necessary in the near future.

His Lordship Bishop Julius said that with regard to the removal of the Godley statue, he could not guarantee that the position marked in Mr. Seager's plan—right in the middle of the plot on the north side of the Cathedral—would be approved by the Chapter, but a site on the north side could be depended upon.

Mr. G. T. Booth said it was evident that neither the Board nor the City Council had properly considered the scheme proposed, and he thought the resolution should hardly be put to the vote at present. With regard to the schemes, he felt that they hardly went far enough, and he considered that the point as to whether it was not possible to deflect all the traffic from the Square instead of attracting it to it had not been given proper thought and consideration.

Mr. J. A. Flesher supported the view taken by Mr. Booth. He, too thought that there might be even better and more expansive schemes to be considered which might relieve traffic in the Square.

Mr. Seager said he would ask permission to withdraw his motion, and would propose:—

"That the prize plan of the Beautifying Society be submitted to the Christchurch City Council and the Tramway Board for favourable consideration."

He pointed out that it was not fair to estimate the cost of the scheme at £12,000. The actual shelter would cost £2800, and the necessary alterations to the track would cost possibly £1000 more. Mr. Thompson in his £12,000 estimate, had allowed for a complete renewal and alteration of all the tracks in the Square.

Mr. J. R. Hayward supported Mr. Booth's view of the whole subject.

It was eventually decided to form a committee of members of the Tramway Board, City Council, and Beautifying Society to consider the matter and report.

The meeting terminated with a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Seager for his address.