

which the conference adopted. On this committee were representatives of city and country local bodies. One of the delicate problems of town planning is to reconcile these interests, and above all, to satisfy the local administrators of the Dominion that the existence of a Town Planning Board and a comprehensive Act on the subject is not an infringement of their rights and privileges. The Committee of Legislation dealt with this point candidly, and allowed no soft generalities to interfere with the duty cast upon it to decide whether town planning should be made mandatory or permissive in the Bill. It was decided to leave the initiation of schemes to the local bodies, subject to an important provision that in default of action where it is obvious that the growth of a district requires attention to be paid to future planning, the necessary steps can be taken by the central Board without the consent of the local body. If a plan is prepared and submitted to the local body, and it still remains indifferent or obstructive, the Committee proposed that the central Board should carry out the work. This is no revolutionary idea, for the English Town planning and Housing Act makes such a provision in connection with housing. However, if any case arose in New Zealand, we expect that once a good scheme had been prepared and submitted to a local body, public pressure would do the rest, and the administration would be undertaken, as is the case in the normal course of events, by the local authorities in the area concerned. The proposed Bill, far from undermining the powers of local authorities, strengthens them. It was remarked more than once at the conference by members of local bodies, that they envied Wellington in its possession of statutory authority to control all sub-divisions. The necessity of having more elastic provisions in regard to street making was generally recognised, and approval was also given to the main principle of a town planning measure, which is to secure the co-operation of all local bodies interested in an area subject to development, where more than one authority exercises jurisdiction within the town planning boundaries.

A Lost Opportunity.

We have always looked to the architectural profession for the greatest help in forwarding the principles of town planning, but experience of the conference shows that in the main, the architects of New Zealand sadly failed to their opportunity. Engineers were well in evidence, and were very useful members of the conference, but architects modestly, or indifferently, took a back seat, though they ought to be the leaders in this modern movement so closely associated with their profession. Their lack of active interest in great questions such as town planning and housing tends to lower them in the regard of the general public, which will look upon them merely as servants to be employed and directed, instead of leaders who will provide guidance and inspiration. If this deficiency was marked in the conference, it was even more so, we regret to say, in the exhibition. With housing prominent in the public mind, one would have imagined that scores of New Zealand Architects would have been willing to give a lead in solving an admittedly difficult problem, but the greatest assistance was given by those practical men, not of the profession, who tackled the financial aspect, and submitted proposals which the Government will consider very carefully, without much help from the

architects. We hope that architects will take a keen practical interest in the local aspects of town planning, and be ever ready to suggest improvements which they are so well able to think out as a result of their knowledge of things artistic and beautiful.

Future Work

The practical results of the conference will emerge in a Town planning and Housing Bill which will have to be commended to the people, and forced on the attention of all candidates at the next general election. We hope to see the Minister of Public Health circulate an improved measure as a result of the conference, though we admit that in the present uncertain state of politics there is absolutely no chance of getting it passed this year. New Zealand has yet to get a settled government. The two great parties are almost even, with a small Labour group ready to vote impartially against both. At the most, the National Government can only bring Parliament together to deal with some necessary and almost formal legislation. Then comes the appeal to the people, and we hope that the voluntary associations which brought the Town Planning movement to life in New Zealand, and after persistent representations, induced the politicians to take it up, will stir themselves into activity during the election campaign. The official report of the conference will serve as a splendid store of knowledge for the education of the public in town planning ideals, and what can be conserved of the very fine exhibition ought to be maintained as the nucleus of future exhibitions of the kind, to be held in the chief centres of the Dominion. Several of the Australian States believe in this form of education, and but for their collections the New Zealand exhibition would have been a sorry affair. It was hoped that the Town Hall display would have been transferred to some of the cities, but the Australian exhibits were urgently wanted for a continuation of an educational policy in the Commonwealth, and they had to be sent back at an early date. Sufficient time was, however, given to permit of a very successful display in Christchurch, where a good deal of practical interest is taken in the housing and town planning movement. The Association formed in that city to push the ideals is based on a wide representation of interests, and should do valuable work. Opportunities are awaiting in other centres, and they could be greatly assisted by a town planning exhibition on the spot. Possibly the Government will make a start with the exhibits which remain, and gradually build up a good collection. The lantern slides shown at evening sessions were as attractive as they were educative, and it would not cost much to create a library of slides which could be drawn upon to illustrate the advantages of town planning. The success of the conference is due to the whole-souled energy and enthusiasm of the honorary organiser Mr. Hurst Seager, of Christchurch, who was not only responsible for all its features, but took the lead in the arduous work of carrying them out. Months of his time were spent in preparation, and the thanks of all town planning supporters are due to Mr. Hurst Seager for his devotion to the movement. The Hon. G. W. Russell is to be congratulated upon having secured the aid of so untiring and well informed an ally in his praiseworthy effort to prepare and introduce New Zealand's first Town Planning and Housing Bill.