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Toronto School Work

As the immediate programme of the City of Toronto provides for the erection of important additions to a large number of existing school buildings, the decision of the Board of Education to divide this work among a number of local architects is certainly to be commended as both a desirable and important change of policy. There is no doubt that it will lead to a better class of architecture in regard to Toronto's educational buildings. One thing certain is that the method of erecting buildings by the Board's own Property Department has proven unsatisfactory. Likewise the recent competition for the erection of two new schools failed in getting the results desired, not so much perhaps in the character of the designs submitted as in a refusal of many of the architects to participate. In connection with the recent meeting bringing about this latest change it must be said that there were indications that certain trustees

tried hard to maintain the existing order of things, or else perhaps to shape a policy of their own. Charges were made that architects had been soliciting the members, but nothing was established to show that there were any surreptitious dealings. Any approach of this kind as we understand it was in the interest of architects who recently returned from overseas and was not made by them personally. To say that the architects refused to enter the above mentioned competition because they could not dictate to the Board, if one of the trustees is correctly quoted, is greatly at variance with facts of the case. Indeed it is on a par in this respect with another unsupported statement made at the time evidently bearing on the question of resident and non-resident designers, to the effect that "it is a peculiar thing that our Canadian architects can go down to the States and build many of the great buildings in New York and other cities, and when a man comes here from the States we refuse him work on that account." It is quite evident that in either case there is some one on the Board who is badly informed. The reason why members of the profession stayed out of the competition was based on a principle that the architectural bodies of both Canada and other countries have supported for a number of years, namely, that such competitions should be conducted by qualified professional assessors. That was the one and only reason and merely represented a necessary condition to assure competency and fairness in judging the designs and making the award. As to Canadian architects designing many of the great buildings in New York and other American cities, well, all that we can say is that to identify them might prove a somewhat difficult task. If a "little more reciprocity" might help, as suggested, it might at least even up a one-sided advantage such as has existed up to the present. Altogether the Board is to be congratulated in seeking an intelligent solution of its problems, and the discussion will have a tendency to clear up much misunderstanding and to bring about a better appreciation of school architecture and as to who is best qualified to do the work.

Building More Active

Building activities in the United States have shown a steady increase since the signing of the armistice and the volume of work now being carried out is about 70 per cent. ahead of this time last year. In Canada the total increase can be estimated as approximate to this gain, and would undoubtedly be still greater if existing labor troubles were settled. Many architects are busier than they have been at any time during the past four years and prospects in general point to a vastly improved condition.