

TOWN PLANNING

By W. H. Breithaupt

Chairman, Kitchener City Planning Commission.

THAT there should be consistent and harmonious planning ahead of large centres of population is obvious.

That most of our larger cities in Canada have grown by haphazard, without any prearranged scheme or plan, is nevertheless a fact. In the early stages of development it may well be doubtful of any town whether it will ever attain to large population. Later along, however, definite indications of future growth demand forethought, and this has been generally neglected. Growth is left to private, individual initiative, the primary cause being real estate exploitation, until the available contiguous area becomes filled in with unrelated plots, each laid out on the governing idea of getting as many saleable land parcels as possible. Then comes the necessity for thoroughfares, which have to be provided at much cost and local inconvenience, and are even at that likely to be narrow and indirect. Provision of park areas or other open spaces, or of adequate room for public buildings, presents almost insuperable difficulties.

An awakening of interest in this question is now becoming increasingly evident. The need and great benefit of intelligent city planning is recognized the world over. The war-devastated cities of Belgium and France will arise from their ashes, sanitary, convenient and beautiful, in many respects as never before, and in this there will be recompense to an extent for features of art and historic veneration which are lost forever. National and local bureaus are already strongly active in planning for reconstruction. This spring, at the moment when the Germans were only sixty miles away and making their supreme effort at Verdun, there was held in Paris a City Planning Exhibition. It included plans for the reconstruction of Rheims and the towns and villages in the war zone. The French Senate has passed a bill requiring every town, whether in the devastated area or not, to carry out its future development on modern principles of city planning. The spirit of rational modern reconstruction is evident in all fields of the war. To distant Saloniki, destroyed by fire, a noted Canadian engineer has been called on this work.

In Canada the national Commission of Conservation has recognized the importance of the Town Planning movement in making it one of its principal fields of activity. The Province of Ontario has been behind other provinces of the Dominion in legislation on this question. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick there have been Town Planning Acts since 1913, in Alberta since 1915. In Ontario there have been special Acts referring to Toronto and other large cities. The Municipal Act and other Acts have served in various respects; but the first definite recognition in a general Act of the principle of public initiative in Town Planning is in the Act entitled "An Act respecting Surveys and Plans of Land in or near Urban Municipalities," passed by the Ontario Legislature at its last session.

This Act provides for a general town or city plan, also for changes in existing streets, etc.; for zones adjacent to the municipality over which its authority for street planning shall extend, and for a central, provincial authority, the existing Railway and Municipal Board. The local authority is either the Municipal Council or the Town Planning Commission. Appointment of a Commission is optional with the Council, but, once appointed,

the Commission is the local authority. The Commission consists of the head of the municipality and six rate-payers, members of the first Commission being appointed, two each, for one, two and three years. Each successive Municipal Council has appointment of two Commissioners for a three-year term. The Commission is thus a continuous one.

While this Act is a distinct advance in the right direction, in that it gives authority for a separate Commission charged with the important question of planning for the future, it does not cover various features of first importance, such as land expropriation, disposal of land remnants, the checking of undue holding up of land values, authority as to fixing residence or business districts, and others. One Commission appointed under the Act, that of Kitchener, Ontario, has found considerable scope for beneficial work. The mere fact that an independent Commission exists whose sole work it is to correct existing defects and to study and plan for the best future growth is an incentive to the general public.

Utility, convenience, is the first consideration in Town Planning. After that comes embellishment. The Kitchener Commission has regular monthly sessions, and at every session plans for connecting streets or for opening up of areas closed off by the existing street system are presented. The local Civic Association had a general plan for prospective growth for Berlin and Waterloo and the immediate surrounding territory prepared four years ago. The city is over one hundred years old. Its street system is mainly of two parts; the older part, the growth of the first fifty years about, more or less parallel and normal to King Street, the main street, and the later part parallel and normal to the Grand Trunk Railway, which was opened through in 1856. King Street changes direction several times and crosses the Grand Trunk Railway at a sharp angle. This gives confused, inconvenient turns where the two street systems meet. Adjoining the city on the north-west is the town of Waterloo, with a street system of its own, more or less matching that of the city. The surrounding township roads are also very irregular.

CONTRACT FOR STEEL COMPANY'S WHARVES

The Great Lakes Dredging Company, Limited, of Canada, Port Arthur, Ont., have been awarded the contract for the construction of wharves, slips and dredging in connection with the steel plant to be erected for the Canadian Steel Corporation, Ojibway, Ont. The company, who have handled some large contracts in Canada, including the terminal works at Port Arthur and Fort William, bid against 15 contractors. Tenders were placed by equal number of United States and Canadian companies.

The Canadian Steel Corporation have acquired 2,500 acres of land at Ojibway with a frontage of two miles on the Detroit River. The proposed docks to be built by the Great Lakes Dredging Company, Limited, of Canada will be on this frontage. The slips to be built are 2,100 feet long by 250 feet. The Canadian Steel Corporation are asking for tenders for 150 houses to be built to accommodate the workmen. The Canadian Steel Corporation's total expenditure for this industry will be about \$25,000,000.

Mr. Ambrose Monell, president of the International Nickel Company, has tendered his resignation to accept a commission as Colonel on the staff of the Commander of the American aviation forces abroad. Mr. Monell is well known in Canada.