

## TOWN PLANNING CONFERENCE AT HAMILTON

**A**BOUT 150 delegates (from municipalities, boards of trade and other organizations) to the third annual town planning conference of southwestern Ontario, assembled last Thursday and Friday at Hamilton, Ont.

Proceedings commenced on Thursday morning with the registration of delegates, and a meeting of the executive for the purpose of striking committees.

At the noon luncheon, Dr. Horace L. Brittain, Bureau of Municipal Research, Toronto, gave an address on "Citizen Co-operation and Government." Owing to the vaccination requirements enforced at the international boundary, Lawrence Veiller, secretary, National Housing Association, New York City, who was expected to speak, was unable to attend, and Thomas Adams, town planning adviser, Ottawa, spoke in his place, taking as his theme, "The Housing Situation from an International Standpoint."

Mr. Adams stated that the housing question was essentially international, for in every country there was a shortage of houses, and men were finding difficulty in obtaining places of abode. The question had become very acute during the war in the U.S.A., and the government had found it necessary to build houses for workmen employed in shipbuilding, munition plants, etc. Specialists had been sent to Great Britain to study the question, with the view to building permanent dwellings.

### Millions Spent in United States

Under the auspices of the Housing Corporation, Department of Labor, controlled by Mr. Eidlitz, New York, \$60,000,000 had been allotted to the United States Shipping Corporation, and \$100,000,000 to the Labor Department to finance housing schemes, which had been started in all parts of the United States—in Philadelphia, Wilmington, Norfolk, Charleston, Portland, etc.

In his opinion, said Mr. Adams, the scheme which had obtained the best result in the creation of a garden suburb, was that at a village outside Camden, N.J.

The housing scheme had been started by the federal government under pressure, owing to war conditions, and unfortunately that same spirit of doing things only under compulsion still predominated, with the result that although \$100,000,000 had been expended on good houses, congress had decreed that no more houses were to be built.

Contrasting conditions in Canada with those in the U.S.A., Thomas Adams declared that Canada had no housing policy during the war, but was now able to commence a policy of reconstruction without adopting extravagant housing schemes.

The housing policy in the Dominion is the result of co-operation between federal and provincial governments, and soon after the armistice, provincial governments were called into conference at Ottawa in order to draft legislation for good housing.

The federal government decided to loan \$25,000,000, and an Order-in-Council of February 20th, 1919, gave the conditions of the loan, and recommended:—

### Conditions of Federal Loan

1. That a provincial scheme of housing be prepared.
2. That a house should not cost more than (a) \$3,500 when built of timber or brick veneer, and (b) \$4,500 when built of brick, stone, or concrete.
3. That the period of loan be (a) 20 years, (b) 30 years.

That loan be made to housing associations having a dividend paying less than 6% to its shareholders, and to individuals owning lots.

The order further states that the loan should be made to assist returned soldiers; and is not applicable to anybody having an income exceeding \$3,000 a year. Conditions are laid down specifying the minimum size of rooms, external light and air, and sanitary arrangements.

Legislation had been passed in all provinces to deal with the housing scheme, but it was futile to pass legislation and not carry it into effect with good administration. Ontario had made the most progress, and had appointed a

Director of Housing, J. A. Ellis, responsible for the carrying out of the scheme, and Mr. Ellis had an architect and a town planner to assist him. A large number of municipalities were taking advantage of the scheme, and had spoken for the full amount of money available.

Ottawa was cited as having the best scheme in Canada, and Mr. Adams described how 22 acres of land had been purchased at \$3,000 an acre, and divided into 168 lots. Streets were planned to suit traffic requirements, a high spot selected as a clubhouse, 1½ acres devoted to children's play-ground, 1 acre to a bowling green, and 1 acre as a public space for recreation. Each purchaser of a lot paid towards this arrangement, which was so satisfactory that every lot was sold in a short time.

### To Counteract Social Unrest

Private enterprises, said Thomas Adams, never attempted to solve housing problems. The best way to counteract social unrest was to house people well, and this could best be done by effective town planning. The chief weakness in a municipality was its peak in expenditure, because no attempt had been made to apply business principles to the government of a city. Money spent on local improvements and developing land by proper planning, would help to keep down wasteful expenditures. Wasted pavements, sewers, and water mains in front of vacant lots, should be made revenue-producing by building houses upon these properties. Money spent on constructive municipal work, in building houses, developing a city on some lines, was justified even if it meant an increase in taxes. The peak should be kept down by directing expenditure along productive channels.

The speakers at the afternoon session were S. Baker, city clerk, London, whose address was on "Municipal Government and Reconstruction," Sir John Willison, and J. A. Ellis.

Sir John Willison said the best council a city could have was one in which every element was represented, including labor, women and capitalists, viz., a council which maintained a close co-operation with public life. Good government was a matter of good citizenship, and an educative body should be created, and an endeavor made to inculcate duties of citizenship in public and secondary schools. He did not think that the reason given by some citizens, that many good men refused to serve their city because of the criticism or treatment given public men by the press, was a true one. As a rule, the men most successful in private affairs made the best public representatives on account of their training and business experience.

### Ninety-seven Municipalities Adopt Housing

J. A. Ellis told of the work of his department in connection with the Housing Act. The housing scheme, said Mr. Ellis, was a matter of reconstruction, and a very important matter for all municipalities.

Ninety-seven municipalities had adopted housing, 70 municipalities were now building, and 93 proposed building next year. All cities, with the exception of three, one of which was now passing a by-law, and all towns, had taken advantage of the scheme. Next spring, it was anticipated, 5,000 houses would be built. A stage had now been reached, where a number of houses had been built in many municipalities, and the public were able to see the kind of house they may expect to obtain. Efforts had always been made to have municipalities follow the best lines to obtain the best houses with the best results.

Two items were both cheap and common, namely, sunlight and fresh air. The bureau had aimed at obtaining reasonably sized rooms, proper windows, a reasonable amount of land round the house, with the house so placed as to obtain the maximum of fresh air and sunlight, and good sanitary conditions. The result had been that 95% of the houses built, were absolutely satisfactory and first class in every way.

Mr. Ellis stated that some weeks ago he went over 80 houses. The total amount of taxes, insurance and payments ranged for \$26 to \$32 a month. Houses of a similar class were rented at \$35 to \$40 a month, which proved that houses