

TOWN PLANNING—(Continued).

DISCUSSION.

Mayor Church.—This has been a most valuable paper, and I agree with most of the suggestions in it. I do not, however, believe in the appointment of commissions by the province. Some of the provinces should fix their own affairs first before trying to fix ours by means of commissions. Some of the provinces are the laughing-stock of the Dominion because of the way they are handling their affairs. The larger municipalities want their autonomy. Canada is the most over-governed country in the world. There is no necessity of provincial governments in my opinion.

The municipal government of Canada when placed side by side with the provincial governments, will compare very favorably from the standpoint of business methods.

Ald. Ramsden of Toronto, moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Adams.

Ex-Controller Spence seconded the motion and said: "He (Mr. Adams) certainly advocates the municipal autonomy which Mayor Church is in favor of. The proposal for a provincial department of municipal government for Ontario is not entirely new. It is more than five years since the idea was presented. Deputations have urged it, and the Government has given definite promises that such a department would be formed in Ontario. The sole reason why it has not been done already is because of the strenuous interference of war conditions with the regular program of legislation. They have given us absolute assurance that at the earliest opportunity there will be a department of municipal affairs just along the lines which Mr. Adams speaks of, and which will give advice to the municipalities so that their autonomy will not be interfered with."

Mr. C. J. Yorath, C.E., Commissioner for Saskatoon—"I would like to support the resolution of thanks, Mayor Church has said that in Great Britain there are no provincial governments and that the cities practically govern themselves. That is not the fact. In Great Britain there is a local government board, and even the large cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh and the like have to submit to the local government board any scheme which requires capital expenditure.

Mr. Risk, Chairman of Board of Health, Toronto.—

Mr. Adams said that Toronto had the power to regulate speculation in land values. I hear a great deal about the power we have in this matter, and it has been said that it lies in assessing at present values. How can we exercise that right to assess? Supposing that a big corporation from Toronto or the United States wants to establish some line of business on one of the main streets of Montreal, and pays in taxes three times what the value of the property is, is your assessment department going to penalize the other property owners near this firm by raising their assessment to correspond with the new business' assessment? If not, how are you going to regulate it?"

Voice—"By a municipal standardized system."

Mr. Adams—"The only power at present is that referred to by Mr. Risk, the power of increasing your tax by a higher assessment, but I am not here to plead for any new form of taxation, single tax or anything else, or to suggest that taxation is the method of dealing with these questions because, however open my mind is on these questions, I believe that no form of taxation will control the use and development of land unless you have town planning working along it. You cannot have an equitable system of taxation which places the same tax on vacant land and on the sky-scraper which has taken the light and air from the vacant lots next it. The two things must proceed simultaneously. Because Montreal has not a proper and comprehensive town-planning scheme for the whole of its territory it cannot find its way out of any of its financial difficulties by any form of taxation. I did not say that there was existing the power to deal with the matter by any form of taxation. I said with regard to our land values that it was difficult to conceive that our municipal bodies would continue to permit the speculation which causes those values to proceed without regulation. I said that a Town-Planning Act in Quebec with a town-planning scheme prepared under it for Montreal should make the basis of the whole system of assessment. Where you have large buildings in one place and vacant lots in another, it cannot be an equitable system which declares all to be of

equal value. There must be some regard to the uses of the land. In a district, which under the town-planning scheme would be set aside for residential purposes, you would have to vary your system of taxation. In a district like Calgary where some parts have been reserved for agricultural purposes, they would have to vary their system of assessment and valuation to suit the uses of that land. I claim as a principle that you must have working side by side with any form of taxation and assessment a system of town-planning and regulation. I admit to the single-taxer that Vancouver and Edmonton are isolated cases, and cannot be taken as national examples. They have not been successful in keeping down land values by taxing land values. Prince Rupert is also taxing land values, and there are instances of lots selling there at remarkable prices. Of course, a great part of this value is assessed against people outside the municipality. If I were a resident I would not care how much was spent if 75 per cent of the taxes came from outside the municipality. This has to be regulated. A town-planning scheme controlling the height of buildings would help that. One of the reasons for high land values is that a person may erect a very high building, and use up 92 per cent of his total land space even though he deprives six neighbors all around him of light and air. That man should have been headed off by a building regulation and have been compelled to use only 60 or 75 per cent. of the lot. If you erect a building twelve stories high in a town where there is a limited demand for office space you are depriving some owner of a vacant lot from a demand being made for his property. If you build in the air you do not want land for more space. One of the most prevalent reasons for high land values is this system by which towns become bankers for real estate speculators at a time when there are vacant lots in the city. Whatever may be the fault of an English city it is not that its land values are too high. The land values in the suburbs of an English city are practically agricultural values. Before a man can develop lands for building purposes he is bound to spend money in building improvements, and he cannot ask money from the Council. A real estate man has to be his own banker, and show his own confidence in his proposition. I would like to take up the subject of detailed legislation at a future meeting. You can meet the situation just as they are doing it in British cities because they have no high land values outside the immediate area of development. I could show you land three miles outside the city of Birmingham which could be bought for \$800 an acre. I think Mayor Church misunderstood me, and really believes what I do. I do not want more interference with the autonomy of great cities. You must remember that there are five hundred towns in Ontario which cannot have the wisdom to control their own affairs such as Toronto has. There is only one Toronto. Toronto surely does not want to deprive these five hundred cities from having expert assistance such as she herself is able to pay high salaries for. Even Toronto has a constantly shifting council. The mayor himself is not secure for the next ten years. How do we know we will have the same level-headed judgment at the head of affairs next year? I do not say there should be interference, but there should be co-operation between the province and cities. There is a question of the conflagration in the north of Ontario. I do not care what legislation there is that there should be a fire belt around any town, it is useless unless you have a system of inspection going into each town and seeing that this legislation is enforced. The only effective way to secure that in these small new settlements is to see that the Province should be made responsible. In the case of unorganized territory where new townships are laid out, the province should approve of the plan before any building takes place or a settlement is laid out. As it is now, the railways go out and lay out townships without any authority. You know how a little main street starts alongside the railway with a saloon, one or two stores, and a few shacks to provide for these institutions. The proper way is that a scheme should be prepared and submitted to the Provincial Government, showing how that territory shall be laid out, to prevent a conflagration, and the province should be made responsible for averting such catastrophes. Otherwise we would need a system of inspectors such as we could not maintain."

Commissioner Harris of Toronto—"With reference to the recent calamity in Northern Ontario, I wish to say that