

8-5-30.

MR. CROCKER AND MR. MOERDYK

REPLY TO CRITICISM OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor H. J. Crocker, vice chairman of the Johannesburg Library Committee, interviewed this morning on the views expressed by Mr. Gerard Moerdyk in The Star last evening, said he regretted the intemperate language used, which he thought proved that Mr. Moerdyk could not have acquainted himself either with the terms of the proposed library competition conditions nor taken account of the careful manner in which the Library Committee had considered every representation made by the Institute of Architects.

"I feel sure that the City Council of Johannesburg will be able to survive the strictures voiced by Mr. Moerdyk," said Mr. Crocker. "To ascribe 'anti-South African feeling' to a Council which is deliberately confining the library competitive designs to South African architects, is, to say the least of it, absurd.

"The facts are that the Library Committee has, at a time when every week is precious, delayed its final decision upon the competition conditions solely in order that full consideration should be given to the criticisms offered by the Institute of Architects; that several additional meetings have been held on that account; that every amendment or substitution suggested by the architects has been taken into review and in many instances adopted, and that the final draft conditions are a reasonable compromise between the contending parties.

FIRM ON CLAUSE 29.

"In only one respect has the committee taken up a firm stand, and that is in deciding to retain clause 29, which provides against the contingency—admitted by the institute itself to be a remote one—of the competition being poorly patronised and yielding a first premiated design which the Council and its advisors might consider to be clearly unworthy of the subject and the site.

"Such a contingency may indeed be a remote one, but the Council has a duty to discharge to the public and the ratepayers, and that is to ensure that value is received for the large expenditure contemplated, and that the new library shall not be unworthy of the magnificent site to be devoted to it. Without clause 29 the Council is in a defenceless position, and even if only one design was submitted the Council would have to accept it and actually proceed with the erection of a building costing £200,000. No reasonable and responsible citizen would like to see the Council placed in such a position in connection with a building project of this magnitude.

"It cannot be too clearly understood that if the Council launched this library competition without the saving protection of clause 29 it would, in certain contingencies, be reduced to a condition of helplessness. Mr. Moerdyk, however, makes the suggestion that this clause is 'an attempt to dope South African architects,' and one can only leave this remark to the judgment of public opinion."