TOWN PLANNING IN SOUTH AFRICA

AN ARCHITECT'S CRITICISM

Strong criticism of the town planning in Johannesburg, Durban, Capetown, and other towns of South Africa was made by Mr. J. S. Cleland, Chief Government Architect, at the Pretoria Rotary Club luncheon today.

Mr. Cleland said that the functions of the department carried the designing and erection of several kinds of buildings required by the Government, the provinces and other public authorities. The architectural section had a greater variety of work than any other similar section in any part of the world. It had to deal with the designing of offices, stamps, and last year it even built a sugar mill in Natal. The Department had dealt with 588 building sites, 120 bridges, valued at about £4,700,000, as shown in the report of the department from 1926-27. During the same year were completed 233 buildings worth over £500 each and with about 500 miles of repairs, renovations, and repairs at the total cost of £1,417,383 and, contrary to public conception, there was very little red tape in this department. Touching on the lack of interest shown in town planning, Mr. Cleland said there had been a deep-seated lack of forethought in respect of the future. Snowwards and the result was now being seriously felt in the lack of open spaces and squares. Traffic difficulties were increasing owing to the motor car, but during the past 10 or 15 years municipalities had not taken any really concerted action to deal with these problems.

Following a suggestion in Capetown that the war memorial be erected in the Avenue with a fine, large lay out and ornamental water, the scheme was enthusiastically taken up by the Town Council. As a result of this successful choice there was every hope of a fair body being arranged for the improved town planning in Capetown.

Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria, he went on, and other large towns were growing rapidly without very much co-ordination of action being taken in regard to the general layout of South African towns. He suggested that active bodies should be formed to deal with town planning and consist of the town clerk, a member of the Council, the town engineer, the town architect, a representative of the railways, and two architects. The professional men he said would do the work and the others would be the driving force to push it through.

Mr. F. V. Pocock, who presided, congratulated Dr. N. M. Hoogenhout on his appointment to the important position of Director of Education for the Transvaal, but though the province as well as the Department, but the province as well could be congratulated on obtaining the services of so excellent a man fitted for the post.