

30 SEPTEMBER 1940.

32. TOWN PLANNING.

The development and progress of our City on scientific lines is an aspect of the Council's activities which the Council has kept well in mind for many years, and for the improvements which have been effected in the layout of the more modern portions of the city, we have good reason to thank the Engineers who have been responsible for the planning of those areas. Town planning on a comprehensive scale is a matter which calls for vision, imagination, and practicability. It will be recollected that nearly two years ago a contour survey section was established for the purpose of surveying and delineating the topography of the Incorporated Areas, and the formation of the Town Planning branch was the well warranted and logical second step towards more co-ordinated civic and engineering development. It was therefore a great step forward when the Council last year approved in principle the establishment of a Town Planning Branch of the City Engineer's Department. In pursuance of this decision and to make a commencement on this very desirable aim, the Council in March, 1940, approved of the addition to the City Engineer's Establishment of a town planning engineer, a senior architectural assistant, and a statistician, and provision for the expenditure involved in these appointments was made in the Estimates. Unfortunately the development of the international situation and the depletion of the staff owing to enlistment in the Forces has rendered it impossible to make further progress, and the establishment of this new Section has had to be deferred until the conclusion of hostilities. This is a postponement with which the Council has perforce had to agree, but I am confident that when affairs return to normal no time will be lost in implementing the intentions of the Council so that the Durban of the future may benefit by intelligent and long-range planning. In this connection I take this opportunity to express thanks to the Greater Durban Town Planning Association, and the members whom they nominate to serve on the Council's Town Planning Advisory Committee, for their abiding enthusiasm for the proper application of Town Planning principles, and I would also thank Mr. Carl T. Schelin for his interesting monograph on "Planning and Administrative Control in the Durban Metropolitan Area."

33. INDIAN PENETRATION.

Agitation in regard to the alleged "penetration" by Indians into European areas in the City, resulted in a deputation from the City Council interviewing the Honourable the Minister of the Interior in Cape Town during the early part of the current year. The Honourable the Minister intimated his intention to set up a "fact-finding" Commission to investigate and report upon the question whether, and if so to what extent, such alleged penetration had taken place in the Province of Natal and the Transvaal, and urged that the City Council of Durban and the Natal Indian Association (as representing the Indian Community) should agree to the establishment of joint Committees who, by joint consultation and co-operation, should arrest any further cases of such "penetration" as might arise before the Commission had concluded its work. This suggestion was agreed to by the City Council and the Natal Indian Association, and resulted, on 14th March, 1940, in the inauguration of the "Lawrence Committee", which has continued to function ever since, upon terms of reference framed by the Honourable the Minister as follows:—

"The Natal Indian Association having expressed its willingness to co-operate with the Durban Borough Council in preventing the acquisition by or on behalf of Indians of property in areas within the Borough of Durban which are wholly or predominantly occupied for residential purposes by Europeans. It is therefore agreed that Committees will be appointed by the Durban Borough Council and by the Natal Indian Association respectively which will co-operate by joint consultation and otherwise in respect of specific instances of such intended acquisition and generally in respect of matters having a bearing on this problem which both Committees accept as appropriate for consideration in this way".

The Honourable the Minister's promise to establish a fact finding Commission was implemented by the formal establishment on 22nd May, 1940, of a Commission of Enquiry, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice F. N. Broome, K.C., M.C., with the following terms of reference:—

"To enquire into and report whether, and, if so, to what extent, Indians have since the 1st January, 1927, commenced occupation of or acquired sites for trading or for residential purposes in predominantly European areas in the Provinces of Natal and the Transvaal (excluding land proclaimed under the Precious and Base Metals Act, 1908, as amended, of the Transvaal) and the reasons for such occupation or acquisition."

The Commission has not yet commenced its sittings, but the City Council has resolved to appear before it to lead evidence, and has engaged its Standing Counsel (Mr. H. G. Mackeurtan, K.C.) to take charge of its case.