

garden flats. Others, again, are persuaded that it is concerned primarily with slum clearance; and they think there is not much need for it in a country where there are no slum areas comparable with those in the old world.

Town planning *is* concerned with the appearance of a town and it *is* concerned to prevent overcrowding, but these are only a small part of its purpose. Moreover, although it is not a problem in most New Zealand towns, under-population is a problem. Disperse a town too widely, and you make it difficult to provide, at reasonable cost, such services as transport, lighting, heating, and water. In addition, you add to the overhead costs of delivering commodities like meat, bread, and milk. Town planning is as much concerned to avoid this under-population as it is to prevent overcrowding.

But to think of town planning in terms of garden plots or slum clearance is to think of it in terms of its incidentals. The central purpose of town planning is simple and practical; it is to ensure that towns are healthy and convenient places to live in. If you can get to work in a reasonably short time, if your children are near a school, if you have room for a garden, if your washing does not get fouled with factory smoke, if you are provided with gas, water, and electricity at a reasonable cost, if you are handy to a shopping centre, if your children do not risk being run over every time they stray out on to the road, and if your neighbours have also these conveniences, your town—or at any rate your own neighbourhood — is reasonably well planned.

We talk of "planning," but we really mean "replanning" because the New

Zealand task will generally be the transformation of existing communities, rarely the building of completely new ones. Planning a new city is simple compared with the difficulties of replanning. The reason for this should be evident: a city, town, or village is not only buildings, streets, and sewers, but a tangle of ownerships, deeds, investments, mortgages, human hopes, and fears—in short, a bewildering complex of human relationships, mostly of a contractual kind.

Community replanning is therefore the most profoundly social of all human activities. It involves every one from the mayor to the messenger boy. No replanning scheme, no matter how perfect, is likely to get very far without the active and enthusiastic participation of the whole community.

This calls for simultaneous activity at both top and bottom of the civic pyramid. At the bottom, citizens' planning councils, voluntarily organized in each neighbourhood, could survey their local needs, make rough plans, and thus start a flow of suggestions and demands towards the City Planning Commission at the top. The latter group would, of course, have the last say. It would be responsible for the city as a whole and would therefore be the appropriate body to deal, for instance, with traffic problems. It would also have the technical competence to execute the work in detail and the continuity of authority to guide reconstruction over the long years such a job would inevitably require.

Organized public participation on these lines would be much more than a device for winning public support. It should be regarded as part of the actual process of planning, a process which may continue even in Erewhon for half a century.

