

## SILENCING A NOISY WORLD.

The Report of the Second Conference on the Abatement of Noise, held at the Science Museum, South Kensington, in June last, and published by the Anti-Noise League, 66, Victoria Street, S.W.1, price 6d., is extremely interesting and informative. In his Foreword, the Chairman of the Council, Lord Horder, states that the Conference can be regarded as a very definite expression of public interest in the question of the control of noise, as well as public exasperation with all forms of needless noise."

In opening the Conference, Lord Horder reminded those present that this was the first of a series of important discussions.

### "Sound and Noise."

This subject was introduced by Dr. G. W. C. Kaye, O.B.E., Superintendent of the Physics Department, the National Physical Laboratory, who remarked that the study of sound, which not many years ago was mainly of academic interest, had laid the foundations of present-day acoustical industries of world-wide importance. Side by side had come the growth of noise to which many inhabitants, particularly of large cities, were being subjected, though only in this and a few countries was the problem of its mitigation being tackled scientifically. He remarked in the course of his lecture that the Minister of Transport's beneficent suppression of horn hooting at night had taught many people to drive more quietly in the day time also. In his opinion, from over twenty years' driving, a horn need only be used very infrequently indeed, though he did not share the view that horns should be abolished altogether.

### The Law and Noise.

Mr. H. G. Strauss, Barrister-at-Law, in a learned and very expert address dealt with the two main ways in which noise may come within the reach of our law. Noise, he said, may be a nuisance at Common Law or it may offend against a statute. He emphasised that the nuisance must cause not merely transitory disturbance, but "substantially interfere with health, comfort or convenience," and gave instances of cases and judgments in the Courts in this relation. "For the prevention and control of a great variety of noises, for which the law of nuisance does not provide an appropriate remedy, statutory regulations have been made," the most important of which are the Regulations of the Ministry of Transport, of which the speaker gave instances, and also of the By-laws of Local Authorities. Thus "Brighton and some other seaside towns have obtained power, for the purpose (*inter alia*) of preventing noise, to make By-laws dealing with the construction, equipment, and use of motor boats." Also "A Public Authority, for example, might insist, when placing contracts for road-breaking operations, on the use of silenced drills by the contractor. Such a course, it is understood, is now being adopted by the Westminster City Council and other authorities. Again it is not an unlikely development of the future that tenancy agreements will frequently contain warranties in regard to the noise insulation of the premises. These are two only of many possible developments. To further the abatement of noise the law of nuisance, statute and contract must each make its proper contribution."

### Noise and Housing.

"Noise and Housing" was dealt with by Mr. Hope Bagenal, D.C.M., A.R.I.B.A., who, in this connection said:

"Noise is a confession of failure—failure of good building, failure in machine design; a failure in courtesy to our neighbours; it is an invasion of property rights—a failure

to protect the public; and where our electric supply companies give us current causing noisy equipment (like single-phase motors) it is a failure of public services. And so we must all help towards a remedy—estate agents and surveyors, architects, builders, engineers, manufacturers, salesmen, and last, but most important of all, the public itself."

A wise piece of advice is in regard to "the menace of the loudspeaker, and the inadequacy of the ordinary party wall in flats. The first thing to ask when inspecting flats is where is your neighbour's wireless in relation to your bedroom. If it is just the other side of a thin party partition then don't take the flat."

### Methods for the Mitigation of Noise in Budapest.

Immediately following on Mr. Hope Bagenal's address, Dr. Möller, the chief consultant to the Municipality of Budapest, read an extremely interesting paper on the "Methods for the Mitigation of Noise in Budapest." Concerning these methods Dr. Möller said: "The results have been so gratifying that nobody in Budapest is sorry for the small restriction of personal freedom which the regulations involve." The paper is of such practical interest that it should be read *in extenso*.

### Education and the Noise Problem.

Sir Henry Richards, C.B., LL.D., Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Anti-Noise League, who opened the discussion on "Education and the Noise Problem," said that he had no intention of embarking on any attempt to define either Noise or Education but this would not draw him from the position of the ordinary man that he knows quite well, without any scientific assistance, what noise is, and that *Noise is increasing*. It is the child of the age of machinery and of the internal combustion engine, and it assails us not only from the ground but the heavens themselves. In the towns its presence is obvious and has always existed, but now not a quiet lane, not a wide moor, not a mountain peak is safe.

"The rape of the countryside is perhaps the most striking, as it is the most lamentable result of this 'progress.'

"To those who have sought for quiet and peace in the country, is there now" (the lecturer asked) "anything more painful and pathetic than Gray's *Elegy*? With what bitter humour can the modern villager read:

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.  
Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds;  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

Concerning Education the speaker said: "I am not thinking only of Organised State Education or Education in Public Schools or Universities or Professional or Technical Institutions.

"The world over there is an absence of quiet thought, and in its place much 'sound and fury' which often signifies nothing but sound and fury.

"In other words, education is concerned with the *Mental Health*, the *Spiritual Health*, the *Physical Health*, of all individuals, whether collected together in organised schools or not.

"*Mental Health*.—The power of acquiring knowledge—the power of giving to it a proper perspective, and the power of using it wisely.

"*Spiritual Health*.—Reflection on the deeper visions of life—love of Beauty and Harmony.

"*Physical Health*.—The wholesome mind in the wholesome body—the balance of nerves as well as the strength of muscle."

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