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The Secretary's Review of The Annual Meeting

The Young Architect Cries for Leadership

Department of Technical Services

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The Seventy-fourth Annual Meeting Viewed in Retrospect by The Secretary

AT the conclusion of any Annual Meeting of The Institute the Officers and Directors, as well as the delegates, are moved to view in retrospect the trend of thought and action of the representatives of the profession whose interests we are striving to promote.

It was fortunate that Detroit, a city teeming with war activities, should have been selected for a meeting which the Officers and the Convention Committee had determined should deal with the relation of the profession to the existent state of war with a forward look to the reconstruction period that is to follow.

Prior to the meeting there were times when those charged with the responsibility of arranging the program had grave doubts of its successful execution. Threatened curtailment of means of transportation, enlistment of members in the service of our country, the probability that key men and scheduled speakers would not be able to absent themselves from their national duties, all contributed to a feeling of uncertainty regarding the outcome. Therefore it was gratifying to note as registration of delegates proceeded that in spite of adverse conditions the Chapters throughout the country were sending their usual quota of delegates, bent upon giving serious consideration to the matters at hand; that our invited guests, with few exceptions, were able to be with us, including Senator Thomas, Congressman Beiter and General Knudsen. The meeting took note of the absence of the usual representation of the

Hawaii Chapter and by resolution extended its affection, respect and best wishes to the Chapter.

The support the delegates gave President Shreve's skillful guidance through the intricacies of amending the by-laws and the schedule of charges was evidence of their desire to get the judgment of the meeting on the substance of these matters without consuming hours of time in discussing their form. The expeditious disposal of these and other matters of business indicated a determination on the part of the delegates to get to the consideration of subjects of greater import without unnecessary delay.

The large attendance and concentrated interest of the delegates at the two sessions devoted to the problems of the present and the outlook for the future justified the assumption of the Convention Committee that these were subjects of prime concern to the profession. If direct answers were not forthcoming to questions in the minds of those present there is no doubt that the addresses and discussions pointed the way to analytical thinking which the profession must apply to the consideration of its specific problems. In furtherance of the objectives of these conferences the Executive Committee of The Board was directed to consider the creation of a Council of Planners. The Annual Meeting also recorded its approval of the continuous cooperation of The Institute with other national groups in the study of post war reconstruction problems. Hence we note a trend toward a more ex-

tensive consideration of the architects' interest in the broader aspects of their professional practice.

The experiment of maintaining an Institute representative in Washington to bring to the attention of government officials and departments the capacity of architects to serve in the present emergency and to keep the architects informed of events in Washington affecting the profession received the unanimous approval of the Annual Meeting. On recommendation of the State Association representatives the Annual Meeting expressed its desire to have this Washington representation continued. The Board of Directors is in full sympathy with this desire but is faced with the problem of finding the necessary funds at a time when Institute revenues are greatly reduced by reason of the war. The measure of the architects' interest in this activity may shortly be tested by their response to an appeal for contributions to carry on the work.

Indicative of a changed point of view regarding unification of the profession was the action of the meeting in rejecting a proposal to establish Institute

Associateship and the adoption of a resolution favoring the expansion of the corporate membership of The Institute. To this end the meeting established lower dues for the first three years of membership. The success of several Chapters in greatly increasing their Institute membership by special efforts to interest non-members gave support and encouragement to those who feel that only through the expansion of its corporate membership can The Institute become truly representative of the profession.

The session at Cranbrook provided a welcome relief after two and a half days of concentration on the architects' problems in a world at war. In this environment of beauty faith was renewed that some day we would again experience the joys of private practice, strengthened, we hope, by the stern realities of our present situation. That the architect can and will in the meantime conform to conditions necessitated by the war may reasonably be inferred from the proceedings of the Seventy-fourth Annual Meeting of The Institute.

CHARLES T. INGHAM.

The Young Architect Cries for Leadership

IN this, our first year of World War II, The American Institute of Architects met for solemn deliberation from June 23rd through June 25th, 1942, in Detroit. This year's "Annual Meeting," as it was called, was serious, continuous and realistic. The necessary mechanics of such a meeting, as they relate to the year's affairs of The Institute, were cut to a minimum. Before the members there hovered the gruesome spectre of the war's depredations upon the profession, but no note of complaint was sounded throughout the proceedings and, to The Institute's credit, no idle resolutions of patriotic statements for publicity came forth. The Institute took stock of the architect's position in the American world of today.

Preceding the meeting, the representatives of the Collegiate Schools of Architecture discussed their mutual problems relating to education and, separate still from these deliberations, The Institute Committee on Education met for its discussion of the subject. A period of the Annual Meeting time had been set aside for general discussion of educa-

tion by the representatives of the profession from all over our land. However, because of the other features of that afternoon's program the discussion never got under way. The remarks which were planned to start the proceedings were contained in a scholarly statement of the views generally accepted as those of one side—the traditionalist side—of the time-honored discussion about what constitutes architecture. It is to be remarked that the very negative attitude of the assembled architects toward the highest purposes of their profession is commentary enough upon their present frame of mind. It is conjecture, of course, to assume that were the pressing burdens and anxieties of the times removed from the architects' minds, a spirited discussion would have ensued. I venture to state that such a discussion would have resulted in a more widely accepted belief that structural facts should play a more important part in architectural education than heretofore.

No generation of architects ever forgot they were builders. There were times not so long ago when architectural education became lop-sided, stimulating

the imaginative faculties and veering toward the conception of monumental forms and the continuation of a classic heredity almost to the complete exclusion of the fundamental needs of a *builder's* training. In those purple and gold times the lust of proud youth to seek his own architectural destiny was too often suppressed by olympian condescension but firm guidance in the good and tried old formulas. One had to be strong to survive the impact of such imponderables. But lest some of our smarties both young and old seek to pour ridicule upon the architecture of those times, let them stand on Fifth Avenue and 36th Street in New York and contemplate the old and the new buildings about them. The old are at least harmonious and elegant. In the new, one senses a vain effort to be clever. One senses that the death knell is ringing over this part of one of the finest streets in the world.

"What is wrong and what must we do?" asks the young man. "Give us leadership!" says he. He wants an answer. We can take him aside and whisper in his ear, "The day of the centre line is over. It produces static compositions. Mark you this: always strive for balance, never symmetry. There is the secret." This at least is clear. It abolishes the old credo once and for all. Time is saved for the student. It is the law.

We can tell the young man that all his work should have social consciousness. His conceptions should strive to integrate the technological aspects of our civilization and the human aspirations of our life today. This, of course, is not as clear as the preceding formula. Such statements lead to, in fact are, abstractions which, though they have widely recognized implications, have little meaning for those who strive for the realities of putting one stone upon another, or to be more modern, putting one lally column where it works twenty-four hours a day.

Some teachers who have espoused revolutionary attitudes and some practicing architects who have seen a new light are inclined to look upon other contemporaries as remaining in the status quo of their own youth. They fail to see that in a changing world others besides themselves change. In the normal movement of a people each individual sees a slightly different view. It is by looking back that one sees if forward progress has been made. In architecture the test of progress is in the uniformity

of expression which develops in a given area, be it a whole country or a part thereof. The uniformity need not be in detail, but on broad lines. What many of us think of as a new California architecture is an identifiable aspect of newer houses there that, with a certain uniformity, expresses the spirit of a buoyant people and their locality. It is a definite attribute, not an abstract "international" one.

Can this aim be taught? Perhaps—indirectly; not specifically.

A survey made some six years ago by R. L. Duffus (*The Architectural Record*, September, 1936; Reprinting, *THE OCTAGON*, Vol. 8, number 9) shows divergent views on architectural education. No one stresses the fact that the expression of the spirit of a people is a timeless attribute of good architecture. The comments do not reflect great credit upon the profession. A broad understanding of basic values seems to be lacking in most of the comments. I wish, for example, that someone had stressed the point that too often and too long we in America have followed the teachings of other nationals. Can we not take our own steps? Have we not courage and faith of our own? The plasm from which a new American architecture can grow is to be found in the intangible but real faith in our own way of life. We should accept our responsibility to work for a slowly moulding and confident culture and architectural purpose of our own, rather than grasp at each easy and too often imported formula that asserts its own invulnerability.

Does the young man want to be taught a kind of architecture so that he may have a ready-made vocabulary of detail? It seems to me rather that he should be made aware of his responsibilities in this rapidly changing world. The best a school can do for a student is to indicate the way, provide an orderly means of study, give encouragement, stimulate an awareness of the life he lives, help him to use the tools of his profession, and guide him toward the search for a beauty in the world of today.

It is trite to say that the aim of education is to make people think, but it is nevertheless basic. There are subjects in which teaching strives to impart factual data. In other subjects training strives to develop qualities rather than to impart facts. The architect's training should be of the latter sort. He must have factual training too, of

course, but basically his training to conceive three-dimensional space, to acquire flexibility of mind as well as to use the tools of his profession, is paramount. School training can hardly do more than that.

There is need for improvement in our schools. How to find a better balance between broad basic aims and the equipment that fits a young man for an immediate job is always a real problem. It is especially so today when vast building problems of national scope are paraded before us. A flood of statistics, for example on housing, becomes so absorbing that the scale of the human family with its desires and affections is lost in the maze. Statisticians who have never had the responsibility for one job formulate standards. Men who have not faced the problems inherent in the democratic process of dealing with fellow men find formulas for other peoples' behavior, even to how they should apportion their incomes, for example. Town planning becomes a slide rule and statistical affair instead of an understanding that it is natural democratic growth based upon cooperative action of the citizens, the government, the bankers, the architects, the engineers, the poets of a community. Rules and patterns become abstractions. When such teaching is the case, the school needs improvement.

It is my contention that today many schools—not all—are turning out men who are better trained to practice their infinitely more complicated professions than heretofore. They are aware in attacking their problems that there is a North, East, South, and West, that there is sunlight, earth, wind, and rain. They know that buildings are complicated mechanisms of concrete, stone, steel, glass, wires, pipes, transformers, and many other items. I have seen young men with no apparent ability to think or draw, with no especial qualities of versatility at the start, develop in four years to the point where they could turn out very creditable architectural works.

Some have gone out obviously bemoaning the lack of having acquired an easy formula for success, but aware of the responsibilities they must assume. If they fail of courage it is woeful but it is good to know it soon—for there is no easy road to creative excellence except through energy, pride, and faith. In my opinion too many people have assumed that the architect, to fit into our world today, should be

an engineer, a site planner, a furniture designer, a promoter, and a business man all in one—a sort of super jack-of-all-trades. That our woes at this very hour are real is, of course, true. In a war of survival the basic attributes of an architect's abilities have comparatively little use. Architecture suffers in time of war. Is it any wonder that the young architect faces the world with insecure feelings?

We must realize that we are but part of a cooperative world. This is especially true in our American way of life. The architect is but one of a group of statesman, engineer, economist, promoter, etc., who will plan what we hope will be a better world after World War II.

It is quite possible that our contribution toward a richer life in which architects must and will play a significant part may, for the moment, have to be in dreams only. In total war a nation girded for harsh action may have to by-pass all other functions of the architect except that part which only a few can contribute toward winning a victory of arms. Until that time comes, and it will not be of our choosing but will be the result of military decision, I see no reason why the schools should commit the sort of scholastic hara-kiri suggested by one member of our profession who proposed that all architectural schools voluntarily shut down. There is no reason why the young men and women now studying should not continue their training for a better day except the possible dictates of a total war effort.

The young man wants leadership! I do not recall having heard that such as Christopher Wren, Louis Sullivan, Charles McKim, Paul Cret, Ragnar Osberg, nor any of the other really creative men asked for it. It is to be hoped that the leadership the young man of today will appreciate is the inculcation of an idea that the new world as well as its architecture is his responsibility, and that to find the spirit of his own people and to translate it into a living reality by means of his own inventive genius is his hard but stimulating task. And I am one who believes that if he wills to survive the discouragements that beset the whole profession today he will accomplish his task nobly.

EDGAR I. WILLIAMS.

Mr. Williams is President of the New York Chapter of The Institute.

The Department of Technical Services—Notes

BY THEODORE IRVING COE, TECHNICAL SECRETARY

The Automobile and Housing.

The need for housing to keep pace with our expanding emergency industrial effort calls for ever increasing speed in the planning and production of homes for those now engaged, and to be engaged, in our defense program.

It is, therefore, not surprising that we hear more and more of the advantages of pre-fabrication and the adoption of assembly line technics for the creation of what were once called "homes", but which are now likely to be referred to as "units", or as just plain "shelter".

To the advocates of the assembly line methods of production there is a close relationship between the successful mass production of the standardized automobile and the production of standardized housing for the masses.

Before we plunge too actively into the mass production of housing, to meet post-war needs, it would be well to follow the analogy between the automobile and housing beyond the mere solving of the technical and mechanical problems of assembly line production.

The early automobile became the "horseless buggy", with none of the craftsmanship or grace of the horse-drawn coach, victoria or landau, but it has taken comparatively few years of development to reach the present state of acceptable appearance and the efficient performance which permits the most humble auto to bear a strong family likeness to the more stately and exclusive limousine.

During this period of transition and development the earlier examples of crude experimentation all but disappeared within a decade of their creation, a consummation devoutly to be wished, but not to be expected, with respect to housing of a "Model T" variety, no matter how inadequately constructed.

The whole structure of the automobile industry has been erected upon the basis of rapid change, obsolescence and replacement, while the homes men build or buy face a half century, or more, of amortization, with or without the protection of the loving care of adequate maintenance.

Before the mills begin to grind out the one for all and all for one type of pre-fit shelter, if the

assembly line principles of pre-fabrication and the standardized pattern of "ready-to-wear" housing are to be adopted, it is to be hoped the "Model T's", in housing, will be avoided through the collaboration of those mechanically minded and those who appreciate and value the factors of reasonable individuality and architectural effect which insure the continuation of favorable opinion and long-range stabilization of real estate and community values.

In the development of housing enjoying the economies of mass production by assembly line methods, comparable to the production of the automobile, it might be well not to place too much reliance on the willingness of the potential home owner to accept standardized and factory built homes because of his apparent resignation to the selection of his favorite means of transportation from a limited number of standard models.

The public accepts the automobile as a creation of transitory character, based not only on the age and service limitations of materials and equipment, but on the social exigencies of "Keeping up with the Joneses".

The same is not yet true of home ownership, and it may never be true, which suggests a period of creeping before the attempt is made to run full tilt into mass production of standardized home structures.

So far as the construction of war emergency housing is concerned the urgent need for expeditious results will no doubt preclude a careful study of fundamentals essential to the full development of the architectural and construction qualities which will merit continuing satisfaction, pride of ownership and the safeguarding of investment and community standards, but this period of construction activity affords a laboratory and workshop for study and experimentation not otherwise possible.

Undoubtedly much of the emergency housing will represent an architectural development comparable to the "Model T" automobile and, if so, there is presented to the architect the challenge of creating a more lasting and generally acceptable architectural result.

The technicians, primarily interested in the me-

chanics of mass production, need, and should have, the active collaboration of the architect, and it is up to the profession, in justice to the public, to see that they have such collaboration in full measure.

The Welding of Structural Steel for Buildings.

The American Institute of Steel Construction announces the publication of a tentative "Specification for the Design, Fabrication and Erection of Structural Steel for Buildings by Arc and Gas Welding", prepared with the assistance of its Committee on Welding, to provide a complete specification in its field.

Copies may be obtained at 25¢ each from the Executive Offices of The A.I.S.C., 101 Park Ave., New York.

The Building Exits Code.

The seventh (1942) edition of The Building Exits Code, prepared by the *Committee on Safety to Life* of the National Fire Protection Association, has recently been published. The Code's 109 pages are divided into 27 sections covering engineering standards and occupancy egress requirements for buildings of various types of occupancy for both new and existing construction.

Copies, \$1.00 each, may be obtained from the National Fire Protection Association, 60 Battery-march St., Boston, Mass.

Simplified Practice Recommendations and Commercial Standards.

The following recently formulated or revised Simplified Practice Recommendations and Commercial Standards, as issued by the U. S. Department of

Commerce, through the National Bureau of Standards, are available from the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C.

R179-42 (Supersedes R179-41—Structural Insulating Board (Vegetable Fiber).....	5¢
R190-42—Stove Pipe and Accessories.....	5¢
CS75-42—Automatic Mechanical Draft Oil Burners Designed for Domestic Installations. (Second Edition)	5¢
CS99-42—Gas Floor Furnaces—Gravity Circulating Type	5¢
CS100-42—Multiple — Coated Porcelain — Enamelled Steel Utensils.....	5¢
CS101-42—Flue-Connected Oil Burning Space Heaters Equipped with Vaporizing Pot Type Burners	10¢

AIA File Numbers on Producers' Catalogs.

The following letter from a member of The Institute is of interest to architects who use the AIA Standard Filing System for the filing of information on building materials, appliances and equipment:

"Many trade catalogs are coming through without the convenient AIA reference file number and classification being printed on same. Cannot something be done to rectify this situation?"

We believe this situation would be quickly corrected if every architect who receives a worth-while catalog which is not pre-marked with the appropriate AIA File Number would write the producer asking "How come" and call attention to the fact such pre-marking would facilitate filing and encourage preservation for future reference.

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