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THIS ISSUE:

OUR THUNDEROUS SILENCE

COVER:

Photograph by Paul Burch

Quotation from "A Guide to Kansas City for New Residents" used out of context with permission of the Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City.

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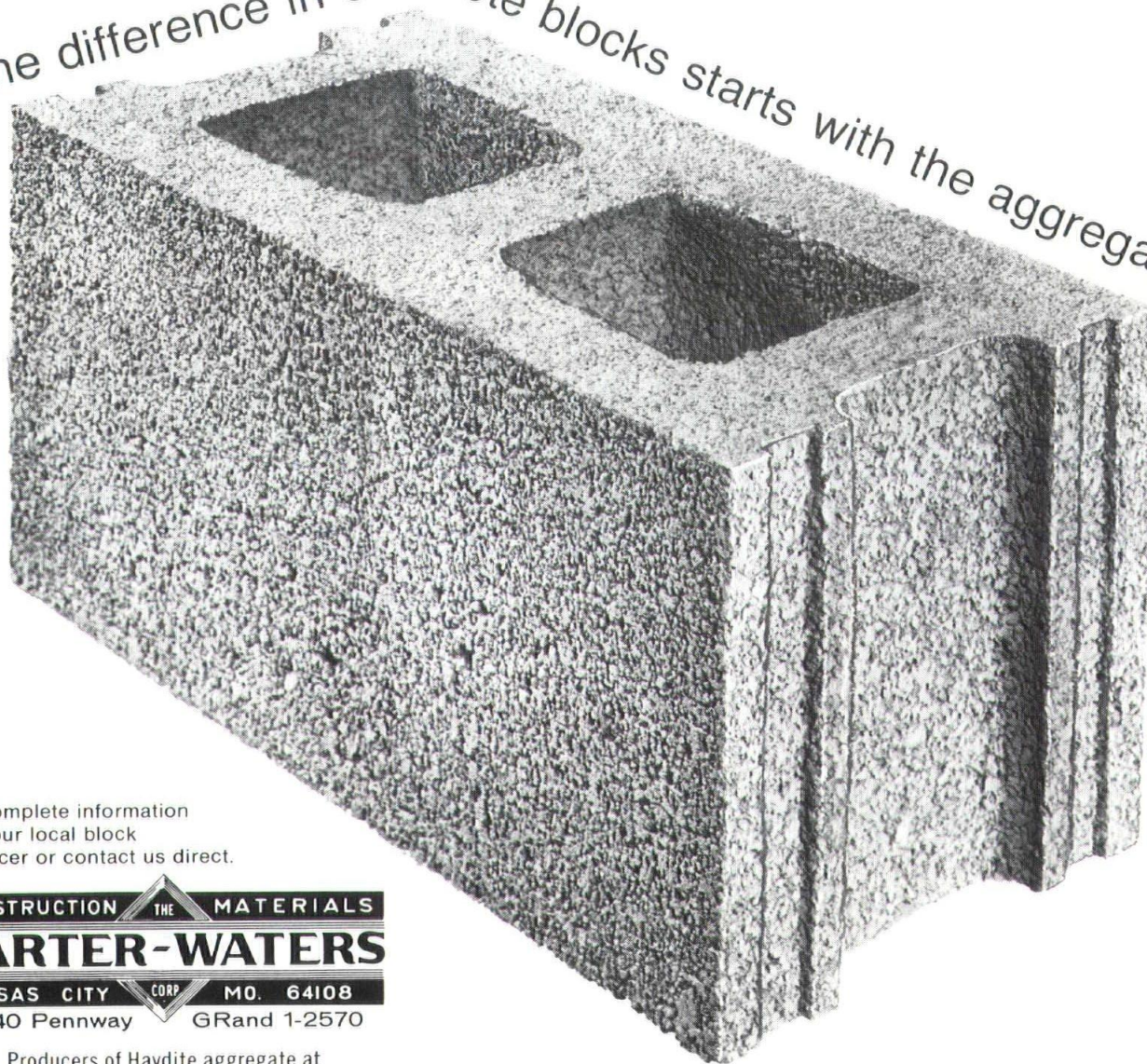
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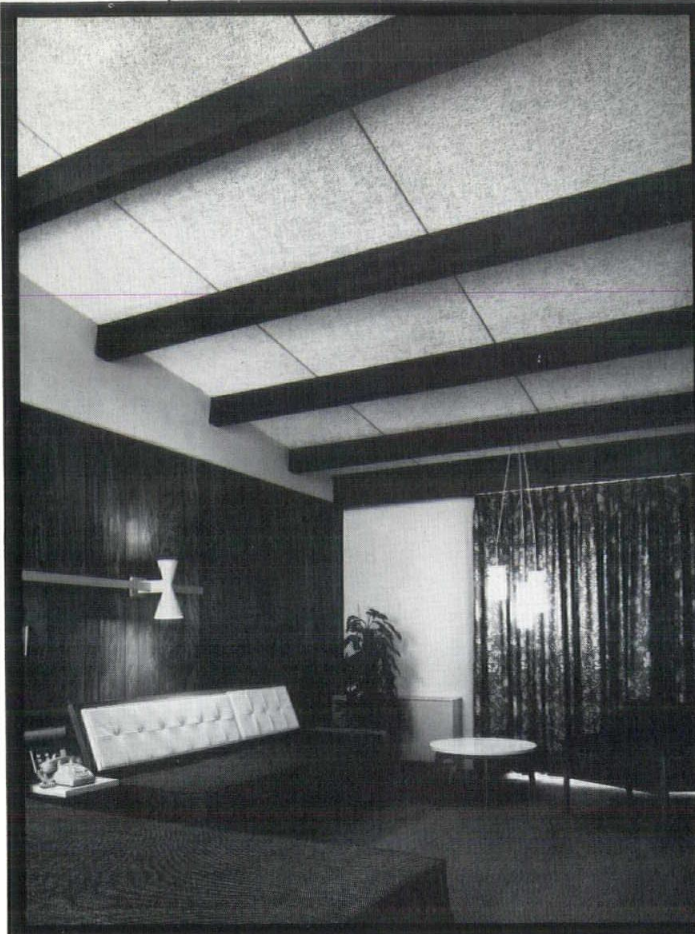
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OUR THUNDEROUS SILENCE

Robert Berkebile Issue Editor



Metropolitan Kansas City has the forward look. An expanding, diversified economy spanning six counties, it offers an inspiring "in which to live and work," accurately describes the environment pictured above as was intended in the September, 1969 KANSAS CITIAN, but the statement becomes incongruous when related to the young man's environment pictured on the cover. The Kansas City we proudly describe as The City of Fountains, beautiful parks, unique shopping centers and residential areas second to none is not real for a significant number of Kansas Citians. METROPLAN has estimated there are 64,000 substandard dwelling units in urban Kansas City. This substandard housing is "home" for approximately 250,000 people.

Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce has generously permitted us to use statements from the September, 1969 KANSAS CITIAN out of context, in collage with photographs taken this month in our City, to focus on the inconsistency between the "good life" about which we talk, and life as it is for many Kansas Citians. Is it possible that we who are uniquely qualified to deal with environmental issues have become so obsessed with architecture as a business that we have become insensitive to the real needs of our City and our clients? Is it possible that we have contributed to the deterioration of our environment, directly, by designing for the interests of our client even when in conflict with the interests of

the community, or indirectly, by maintaining "prudent silence" on issues of community environment?

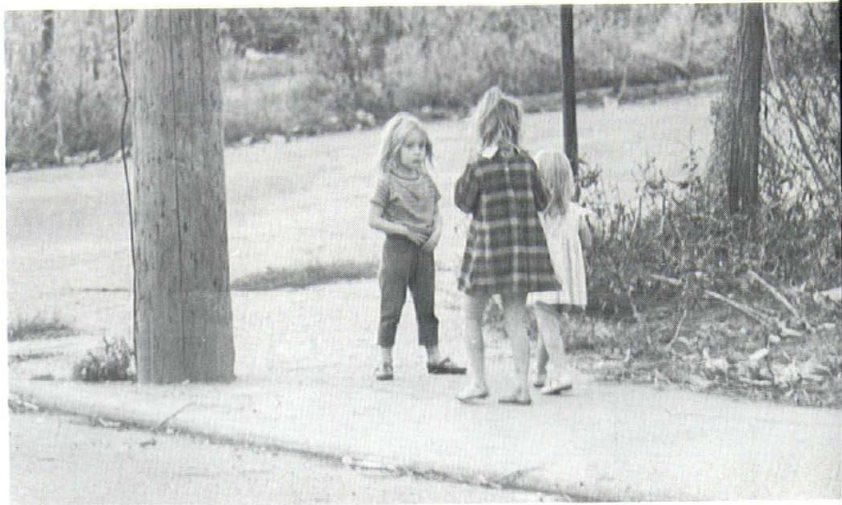
We are challenged on many fronts to be sensitive and relevant:

by WHITNEY YOUNG, JR., Executive Director, National Urban League (Portland, Oregon, 1968 AIA Convention): *"The AIA has distinguished itself by its thunderous silence and complete irrelevance to the social revolution."*

by THE ARCHITECT'S RESISTANCE (Chicago, Illinois, 1969 AIA Convention): *"As expressed in the AIA's Standards of Professional Practice, architectural services should be directed toward 'the ultimate goal of creating an environment of orderliness and beauty.' In a society torn by racism and dominated by institutional violence, in an environment which is demoralizing and inhuman, ultimate goals of Orderliness and Beauty are meaningless. Architecture is not an abstract art existing in a moral void, but part of an economic, political and social process. This process dictates the form and practice of architecture, and in order for architecture to fulfill human needs, the process must be governed by human values, not material ones."*

The article by Charles Kahn (University of Kansas) offers an insight to the pressing environmental problems facing our City, explores options open to the university and the profession in dealing with the problem and challenges us as citizens and as architects to re-evaluate our convictions and priorities.

"Kansas City, traditionally mindful of its residents' leisure activities, maintains 108 parks which embrace 7,030 acres. The base of this system was that planned by the founding fathers—one of the outstanding park layouts in the nation."



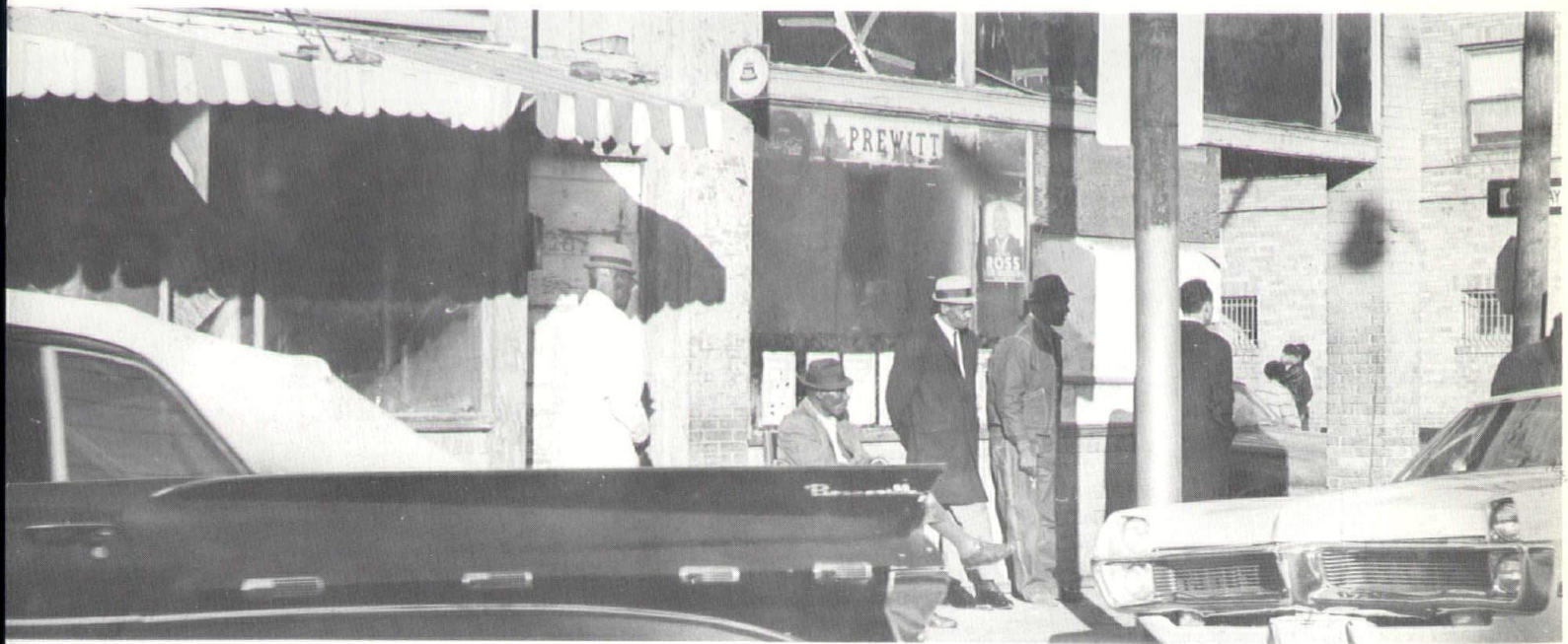
"Although building continues heavy in multi-family units, a broad spectrum of single family dwellings with price-range variety are available in both new and old construction. Good places to live are sprinkled throughout the counties."



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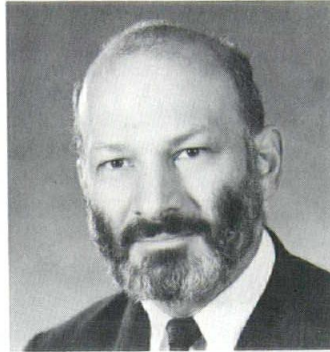


"Metropolitan Kansas City abounds in excellent shopping centers strategically located in the six-county area. There are more than 100 of them of various kinds—neighborhood, community and regional."



THE UNIVERSITY AND THE OFFICE: ACTION INVOLVEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL RELEVANCE

By Charles Howard Kahn
Dean, School of Architecture
and Urban Design
University of Kansas



One of the major problems in the contemporary world is that the pace of our life is so hectic that we rarely have the time or inclination to re-evaluate our standards or re-order our priorities. This is especially true for professionals, and, seemingly, doubly so for architects. For those of us in private practice the press of our daily responsibilities convinces us that we have little time for activities other than those involved with meeting the requirements and deadlines imposed on us by the clients for whom we work. Even for those of us in the universities, the combined pressures of teaching and, hopefully, practice tie us to traditional procedures and priorities which may have little relevance to the real problems of society. Urban life may deteriorate for those of us for whom it has traditionally been exciting and rewarding without that deterioration becoming discomforting, much less overwhelmingly unbearable. The affluence of our society allows a trade-off which we have as yet, as a nation, found to be entirely acceptable. For those of us for whom urban life has never been more than at a bare survival level even the trade-off alternative does not exist. The resulting anomaly of our age is that those whose professional expertise is in the area of environment are less sensitive to the depredations caused by our man-made artifacts than are the people whose every-day lives are affected by the impact of these artifacts. Instead of becoming more sensitive to these problems, we professionals have tended to become less sensitive. We are in the unenviable position of having to be challenged to become relevant, of being "thunderous in our silence", and of simultaneously having the professional base of our activities eroded away. What has been lacking in all of us has been the ability to step back from our professional activities long enough to allow a reconsideration of what urban life has become, what we as architects have done to contribute to the present condition, what we have failed to do to prevent it, and what options are open to us to arrest and, hopefully, reverse the existing situation.

None of this is intended to intimate that there are not pressing environmental problems outside of the urban centers of the country. It is merely to emphasize at this time the primacy of the Urban problem. This primacy, characterized by the convergence of the race crisis and the urban crisis, forces certain rational decisions on architects. It is unfortunate that, at a time when environmental problems are so paramount in our lives, our profession has neither great numerical, political nor economic power. We are barely one-third the size of the medical or legal professions. In addition, we must in all honesty admit that the stature of our profession is not as secure as that of the doctor or the lawyer. We are, therefore, forced by the logic of the situation to muster our meager forces and concentrate the great bulk of them on the one issue which we feel to be critical. It is this problem of the ordering of our priorities and a decision to avoid putting ineffectual minor resources in many different, albeit important, areas that must become our major preoccupation today.

While the move I made to Kansas just last year certainly gives me no long-standing familiarity with the region to justify being an expert, it did afford to me just such an opportunity to re-evaluate my professional activities and reorder my sense of priorities concerning the environment. This is not to say that I did not feel the absolute necessity of an urban commitment for the contemporary professional school of architecture long before I made the decision to come to the University of Kansas. I am sure that there were many of us to whom this was apparent long before Whitney Young, Jr., made his address at Portland and galvanized the profession into a very modest national commitment for the first time. However, my move did allow me to consider the importance of an urban setting and orientation to architectural education and the implications of this for the non-urban University. The prominence of "Urban Design" in the name of the new School and the heavy orientation of the School toward the urban centers with which the University has political, geographic or traditional connections is a result of this process of re-evaluation. The fact that urban studies are fashionable at this time does not diminish their critical importance. Our orientation is not a product of fashion but of commitment and need.

I am sure that most professionals are aware of the fact that university-origin action programs are not unique to nor original with Kansas. The architecture students of the country have been intimately involved with the present student activist movement from its inception. It is interesting to note that the entire initial confrontation at Columbia hinged on an environmental issue: the extension of the University into the Harlem ghetto adjacent to it without consideration of the ghetto residents themselves; a major issue in Berkeley was the "People's Park"; and one of the issues which triggered the action at San Francisco State was the rejection by the Regents of the design for the new student union building by Moshe Safdie. These have been only some examples of student involvement in environmental issues.

But the entire concept of advocacy represents an involvement and commitment to the needs of inner-city poor more representative than the specific issues briefly listed above. Advocacy involves a willingness to respond to the felt and stated needs of the community as an advocate for the community's position, be it vis-a-vis the city administration, the federal government, or local vested interests, when the actions of these groups are felt to be not in the best interests of the community. As such, it involves action on a controversial level. But the fact that it is controversial is no longer germane. The reality is that imposed programs and solutions to specific inner-city problems which originate out of the community without community participation are no longer reasonable or possible ways in which to proceed. It was with this basic concept in mind that the School of Architecture and Urban Design made its commitment to advocacy participation.

The establishment of such a program in the late summer of 1969 when I arrived at the University, suffered from two initial serious deficiencies. First was the almost total lack of credibility by the community in both the intentions and ability to produce of the University. Secondly was the undefined and minimal resource potential which architecture itself felt it could make available to produce the services it was offering. It was obvious that the generation of credibility in answer to the first of these was heavily dependent on the solution to the second. Nevertheless, several of the faculty regularly attended the initial meetings of the Model City area groups in Kansas City to make known the availability of consultative services. It was the initial conception of the program that these services would be made available on a volunteer basis by both faculty and students at the University. Operating un-



ese constraints, an extreme sense of frustration was soon felt
 those of us who were involved with the program. We were com-
 mitted to the premise that forcing either services or programs on
 the community would not work and yet realizing that community
 initiative would not generate contact until the community had
 me confidence in the university. Concurrent with this came the
 realization that architecture alone had neither the resources nor
 the expertise necessary to consider the complex, inter-related
 problems of urban life. Still, several embryo connections were es-
 tablished and programs were commenced with the Ballard Center
 Lawrence, the Model Cities and Black Economic Union in Kansas
 ty, Missouri and the City administration in Kansas City, Kansas.
 that time, Kansas City, Kansas, had not as yet received its
 odel Cities designation. It was soon clear that volunteer personnel
 ould not handle the job that needed to be done and an architect
 as hired by the School as assistant professor with the specific
 sponsibility of establishing a community design center and com-
 munications with existing community organizations. Simultaneously,
 group of people representing almost all of the various schools in
 e University coalesced around a small nucleus of people, one of
 hom represented the School of Architecture, which, in effect,
 anged the whole thrust of University involvement. From a rather
 stricted view point involving only architecture, the University
 ouncil for Urban Action initiated a commitment of the multi-
 disciplinary resources of the University to the problems of the
 inorities and the poor. Composed of the Deans of all of the
 hools, with representation from other administrative areas and
 udents, the Council had both immediate access to personnel
 nd the administrative power to make commitments of resources
 thin the various disciplines. The function of the Council was to
 e to initiate University response to problems from the community.
 eeping with the change in character of the effort, the Commu-

With the arrival of the Urban Coordinator on the campus came the opportunity to evaluate the few successes and real failures of the first year of the action program. The failures were many, discouraging but not, in retrospect, unexpected. We never were able to establish any working organization with the Model Cities program in Kansas City, Missouri. The reasons for this, I would imagine, are a combination of lack of confidence in the University's commitment to produce, an inefficient and ineffective communications procedure between community and University, and a lack of understanding by the community in grasping the significance and potential of the University resource. In addition, the few new programs which were generated with University support ran afoul of the shrinking funding available from federal sources. At the present time, none of the grant requests prepared during the first year have received funding. It is obvious from a study of the activities of the first year that we were spread far too thin. In shot-gunning the numerous problems which existed in an attempt to quickly initiate a program which was very late in getting started we fell victim to the same lack of establishment of priorities about which we were so aware and critical when it applied to others. We in architecture also failed to encourage strongly enough major participation in the Urban Center by the professionals in the city.

But among the failures were some very real successes. The establishment of the University Council for Urban Action and the Community Consultation Center itself are indicative of the movement of the University into the area of direct social-action programs. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. With the Special Assistant to the Chancellor assisting in ordering our goals and setting our priorities, the base which we have built over the past year is, alone, sufficient justification of the work of the past year. We have, in addition, managed to establish some measure of credibility in the communities and our communications with the communities is on a much firmer basis than was ever the case during our first year. Perhaps the most significant move has been in the direction of scholarships for disadvantaged minority-group young men and women. The School of Architecture and Urban Design received \$5800 out of the total of \$10,000 allocated by the Institute as a result of Whitney Young's address at Portland. While this represents no more than a token commitment to the absolute necessity of encouraging more minority young men and women into the profession, it has generated a broader program of scholarships on the campus.

Our evaluation of the past year has led to several very definite decisions. The first is that, for maximum effectiveness, we should concentrate our efforts in one area. The area we have chosen, for a number of reasons, is Kansas City. This does not minimize the importance of programs elsewhere but merely reflects our experience with the diversity of the past year. In addition, it appears logical that we would be much better advised to deal with a few programs done very well than with a larger number done less well. We have learned by experience not to be afraid to admit that we are committed to the limit of our ability to produce. We in architecture feel that our first emphasis should be in the area of education, through Title I for example, and through professional activities secondarily. Finally, we are convinced that for the delivery of professional services, the professionals in Kansas City are essential to a valid program.

There are many people, especially the young black professionals, who claim that advocacy is dead. I do not believe that, for this particular area, it is. Our relative insularity may, for once, have given us that modest amount of leeway to make the concept function well here where it has failed elsewhere. We are at least in a position to benefit from the errors of other areas where advocacy may no longer be a viable intervention procedure. It cannot be denied, however, that advocacy will face a growing militant resistance on the part of the poor to outside involvement, regardless of the altruism behind that involvement. Imagined evils are as real to the perceiver as if they were real. In this area we do still have, I believe, that small "window" of possible action which will make a cooperative effort possible. What we can no longer afford is any foot dragging or wasted opportunity. We now have no leeway for error or further vacillation. We must hold paramount the recognition of community primacy in the generation and direction of programs aimed at inner-city problems, and we must be able to deliver an acceptable quantity and level of expertise the services require. This involves the absolute necessity of professional input on a major scale in those areas and directions articulated by the community. We must accept the principle of community control as we accept client control in our other activities. We also must, as a profession, make every effort to support on a growing scale and continuing basis the scholarship program for minority students. In the long run, the only acceptable process of change will be that generated by professionals whose roots and identification are with the community. All of this will require that architecture, both school and profession, make a total commitment to environmental improvement

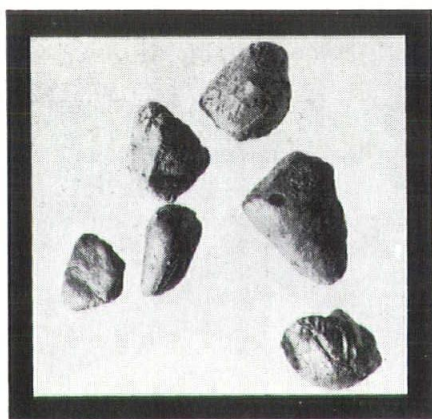
with all that is intimated by that statement. It is no longer possible for any of us to accept the dichotomy between the promise of the country and the actuality of our every-day lives, especially for those who by reason of color, place of origin, or religion are denied equality of opportunity. I do not delude myself that many of the problems which we must face are exclusively those of the poor. Many of the problems are common to all of us and becoming more so. We must, however, attack the major, critical problems now or the solution to the others will become irrelevant. □



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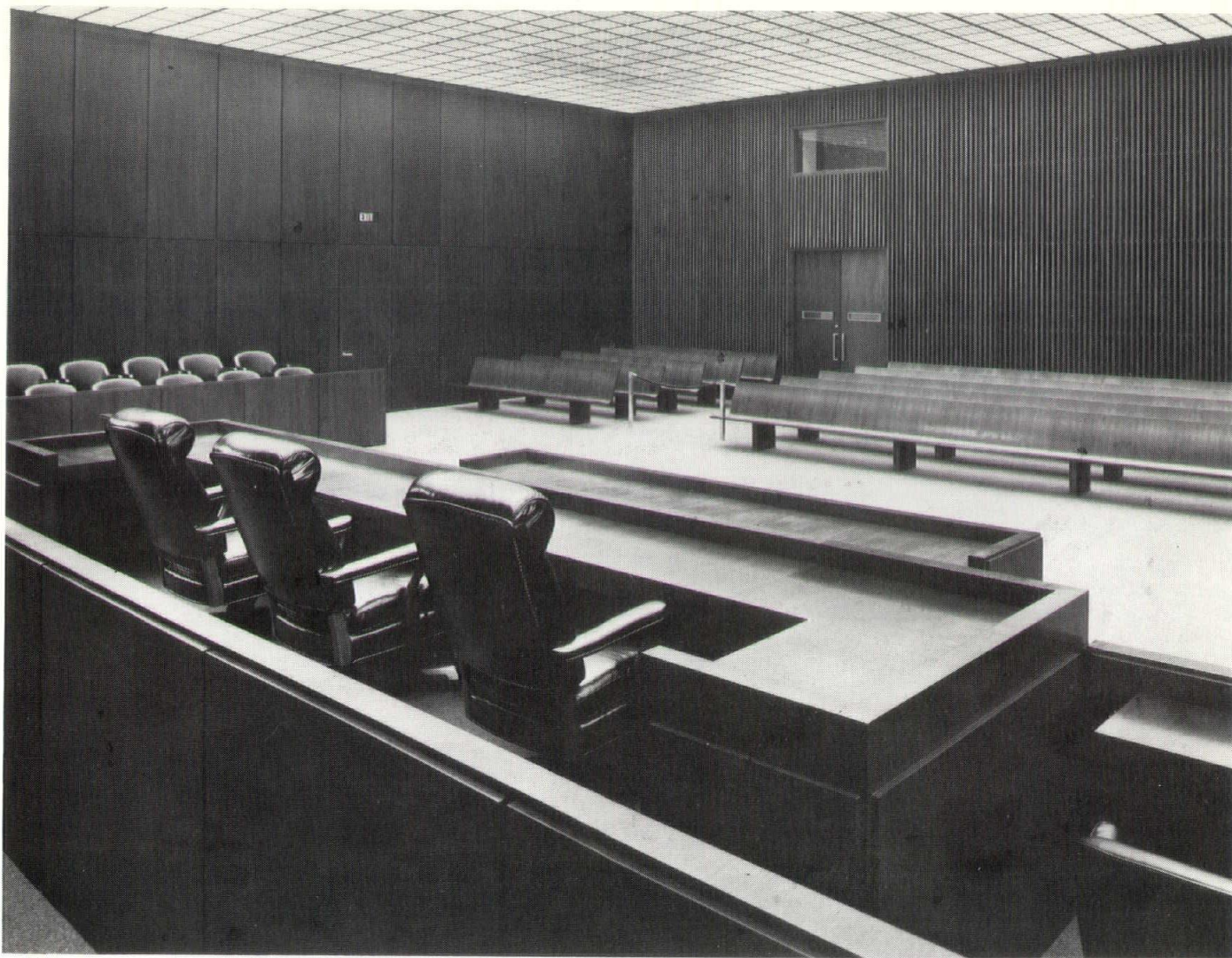
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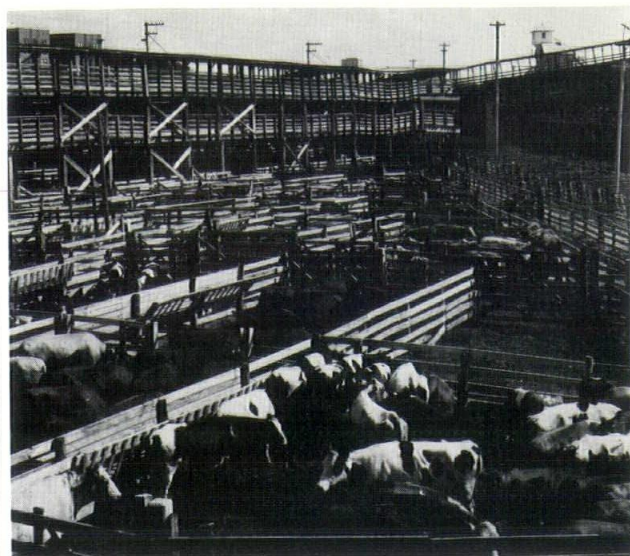
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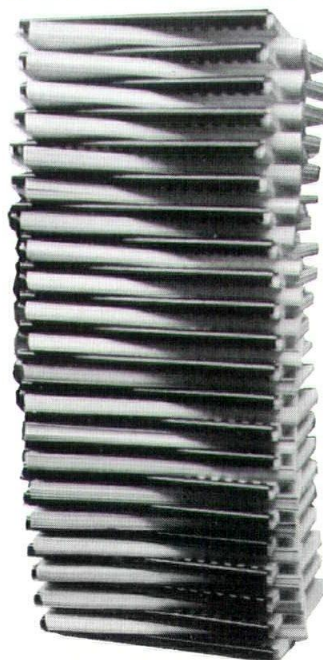


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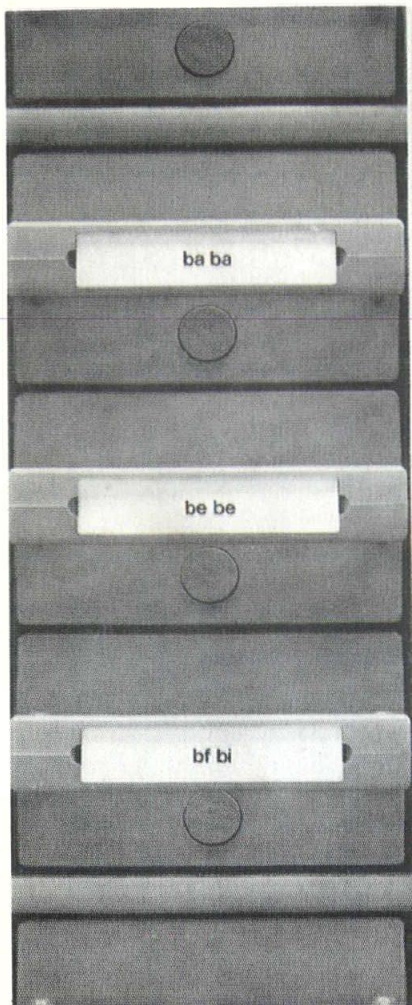
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