LOW COST HOUSING BILL FOR MICHIGAN

BY G. FRANK CORDNER

G. Frank Cordner, of the Detroit Chapter of the A. I. A. has been reappointed to membership on the Institute's Committee on Site Planning and Housing. The new chairman of this Committee is Eugene H. Klaber A. I. A. of Chicago.

This bill has now been printed and copies may be obtained by addressing the Clerk of the House, Mr. Myles F. Gray. It has had first and second reading and has been referred to the Committee on State Affairs of which Mr. Tracy Southworth is the Chairman. Address letters to him at Lansing.

State Representatives Wm. M. Donnelly, Joseph Murphy and Carl Bischoff, all of Wayne County, introduced in the House of Representatives at Lansing, Monday evening, May 1, the "LOW COST HOUSING BILL" which had been drafted and carefully gone over by a committee composed of representatives of the Detroit Chapter, American Institute of Architects; the Michigan Society of Architects; the Michigan Housing Association; the Associated Technical Societies and the Michigan Committee for Trade Recovery.

The immediate purpose of the bill is relief of unemployed in the building industry therefore, provisions have been made in it for the necessary legal machinery for making Michigan eligible for R. F. C. loans for this purpose. The eventual purpose of the bill, which is called House Bill No. 548, File 555, is to encourage the construction of low cost housing in cities and smaller communities and the rehabilitation of blighted. It might be summarized thusly:

Architects' Luncheon
32nd Floor, Union Guardian Building
Private Dining Room,
South Vista
Tuesday, May 16th, 12:30 p. m.

A. STATE HOUSING COMMISSION
1. Created
2. Organization and personnel
3. Powers and duties

B LIMITED DIVIDEND HOUSING CORPORATIONS
1. Authorization
2. Financial programs
3. Control of corporations by the Commission
4. Powers and limitations

C. APPROPRIATION AND FEES
1. Initial appropriation for establishing the Commission and getting it under way
2. Fees to be paid by L. D. H. Corporations to sustain the Commission and make it self supporting.

The Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932, states that corporations applying for loans shall be "regulated by State or Municipal law." In our Michigan bill a State Housing Commission consisting of seven men appointed by the Governor and serving without salary constitutes the regulating body. One of these men shall be a registered architect and another shall be a registered engineer with building experience. This Commission will elect its own chairman and other officers and appoint a Director who is familiar with Housing and City Planning. It may also hire temporary outside consultants and shall report to the Legislature once a year.

The Commission will exercise control over the incorporation of housing corporations; it will supervise and control rents, charges, capital structure, rate of return and the affairs generally of these corporations. It will study housing needs; plan for the correction of slum areas; collect and distribute information on housing; study means of lowering costs and in general do all it can to encourage low cost housing.

(Continued on page 4)
WHEN IS ARCHITECTURE A BUILDING—AGAIN?

ASKS WILLIAM H. REID, JR.

Editor’s Note:—Bill Reid, who last year deserted the ranks of The M. S. A. and Detroit Chapter, has turned up in Billings, Montana. He herein presents a phantom picture of an architect going after a jag—in his stalking feet.

In the spring a young man’s pants must be fancy or was it something? Anywho with the starting of the tourist trek you can appreciate just how fancy, out here where the Bostonian family tree is just another clump of sage brush. Between pants, I have thought recollections of the Jackson and Detroit campaigns of you and the Michigan tribe frequently but not in the same light, nor the same pants, and I’m begging your pardon in the same pant.

We have just successfully concluded our modernizing campaign the staging of which brought back recollections of the Jackson and Detroit campaigns of last year. I am enclosing some of our literature which may or may not be of inspiration as it is along the same general trend. However, I think we were somewhat original in combining the modern home with the Building Show idea, as you will notice in the sketch prepared cooperatively with Mr. C. C. Cohagen of McIlver & Cohagen also local Architects. The central portion of the show was devoted to a modern home layout incorporating not only everything new in home equipment and modernizing but the actual construction in the typical home. It was necessary, consequently to double up on the baths and kitchens in order to cover the field but a nice feature in this type of show as the modernizing of one home would not permit the expansion. The booths down the sides and across the ends were sold to individual displays of the various crafts and trades and material interests, including of course an architectural exhibit; another point very much in favor of this type of show from the standpoint of the Architect.

I am also enclosing a pamphlet distributed at the show by the Billings Builders’ Exchange which carries a rather potent little message to the layman perhaps in his own style. Please note that no man is forgotten: it’s a new deal and a break for the “hired man.”

I enjoy the weekly issue of the Bulletin very much, Tal. It brings back somewhat of a stir to the pulse to read about you all and brings memories of the days before 3.2. What is it they say? It’s much, Tal. It brings back somewhat of a stir to reading Architecture and securing such complete cooperation from all angles. Here’s an angle that I think might appeal to some, “When is Architecture a building—again?” Perhaps not quite so seriously as the previous remark comes the idea that in the true sense of the art it is in itself quite the complete definition of Architecture. I would much rather say that a certain building has architectural distinction when it satisfies the eye as well as the pocketbook; The eye belonging to the connoisseur and the pocketbook to the man who owns one. Such a defition, to my mind, is flexible enough to permit inoculation among the greater herd brood or school differences. In other hi-de-hi we might cautiously whisper it at the classification or functionalist such as Wenzell, Sukert or Crosby or blatantly shout it into Bill Reid or Rod Allen and Will Rogers with about the same recognition: “pooh, pooh, such prattle!” High-ho, lack-a-day! What have we got to lose?” or “Hello, dark and Handsome. Why don’t cha consum—time?”

Ever since the issue on the birthdays I have been listenin’ for my ole pal Frank Wright on the radio. Pardon the pronunciation—the ounce is in prevention also as I heard a man from good old California—my old home town!—call a rodeo; a rodey the other day and knowing what Al Smith does to radio you can hardly blame just an architect for coming prepared. Can one? or two if you want to! It’s all canned to the polecatariat: he was so use to listening to the same box when they called it a ‘victrole.’ Stop, look and listen before you cross the street. This is Uncle Frank looking for a bedtime story—just a silver voice from the golden tower of the Fisher Building. Tell Frank I’m just a little put out because he didn’t include me on his list—manufactory’s catalogs and samples would be appreciated.

As for yourself Tal how are you gettin’ along wid yer wurk? Pardon de stub, I’m tryin’ to make a little go along ways these days. You know there

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was a time when they used to come back marked ‘no funds’ now they come back marked ‘no bank’ and therein is the whole of a difference; the few cents made. As the wise old dog said, “No thanks, I just had one on the house.” Best regards to one and all and drop me a line some time.

MICHIGAN ENGINEERING COUNCIL

Mr. Charles M. Ziegler, president of Michigan Engineering Society, and chairman of the Michigan Engineering Council, has directed that a meeting of the Council shall be called for Saturday, May 20, 1933, at 11:00 A. M. in the Hotel Olds, Lansing, Michigan.

Officers and members of all technical groups in Michigan are cordially invited to be present.

Technical men not affiliated with any organization are welcome to attend.

There will be reports and discussions on the following topics: drainage; engineering education; engineering research; legislation; metropolitan district legislation; oil and gas legislation and regulation; state registration; transportation; and, under water supply and sewage disposal, Mr. Milton F. Adams will present some interesting data prepared for the U. S. Public Health Service which seems to indicate that the Federal Administration is about to inaugurate a National public works program of a magnitude which we hope will include the necessary but delayed projects in Michigan.

WOMENS ARCHITECTURAL CLUB

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION

INFORMATION


DEADLINE for exhibition material — May 20.

Send all material to the Architects Club 1801 Prairie Ave., Chicago, Ill. plainly marked with exhibitor’s name and Women’s Architectural Club Exhibit. All charges prepaid. Each place of material to be labeled on the back with exhibitor’s name, title of picture, as it is to appear in the catalog, and return address. Send a complete list of materials entered to the chairman, Mrs. Margaret Jones, 332 N. Taylor Ave., Oak Park, Ill.

It is possible to be listed in the catalog and posted in the exhibition room at a charge of $10.00 to be sent to Miss Catherine Furlong, 1637 Pratt Ave., Chicago, Ill. with name of patron as it is to appear in the catalog — not later than May 25.

Material to be hung in the Century of Progress room will be selected by a jury of three men architects and material not selected by them will be exhibited in a suitable place not on the Fair Grounds.

OUR CHANGING CONCEPTIONS

By E. B. Phillips

The recent discussion in the Bulletin on the question “What is Architecture?” is quite interesting.

To give a categorical reply to this question, is to my mind, not possible.

Ask a lawyer “What is Law?” and he will reply instantly, “Law is a rule of action.” And he will further state that law is of two kinds or divisions, viz. Lex Scripta and Lex non-Scripta.

The definition of Architecture is not so simple. Thru the ages there have been many buildings erected upon which we may look and safely say “This represents the thought and needs of the times in which it was built and, for that time at least, was Architecture”; especially if the structure was pleasing to the average eye, yet none of these would be considered Architecture if erected in this day and country.

The Architecture of yesterday is not that of today and that of today will not be the Architecture of tomorrow.

As an illustration of what I wish to make clear will say that there is in a large southern city a building designed by Stanford White more than forty years since.

In that day it was a fine example of Architectural design, but today you would not build it on any site in America, for under modern conditions it would be very poor architecture indeed.

There are forms and lines of grace and beauty which will forever be pleasing to the human eye, and it is the function of the architect to so combine his materials as to emphasize these and cause them to express the best thought of the times in which the structure is built, as to beauty and utility.

A great scientist once said “Science is the most we know at any given time”, therefore I would say that “Architecture is the most we know of the art of so combining materials in a building as best to express the beauty and usefulness of the structure.”

Architecture will never change, but our conceptions of Architectural forms and their applicability to our times and needs will change with the changing years.

ANNOUNCEMENT!

Architects — B & T Golf

Wed., May 17, 1933 — Glen Oaks Golf Club

Northwestern Highway to 13mi rd., then three quarters of a mile west.

Golf, dinner and prizes $1.75

PUNCH and JUDY THEATRE

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Announcement!

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At the weekly luncheon. If not you miss a lot of good information, and a lot of
good fun too. You should see the kind of cards Branson Gamber is passing out, and
from Clair Ditchy you would learn that one should never allow relations with the archi-

tect to become strained. Many jokes and other unclaimed freight.

And in this issue, E. B. Phillips comments on the question raised by Bill Palmer, that was
concerned with the M.S.A. His letter is a real 'eye-opener.' Bill brought with him Mr. Paul
R. Marshall, secretary of the Producers' Club of Michigan and Paul promises to have his members
meet with us once a month. And maybe the city planners will join in this meeting too.

Bill Reid's letter when read aloud sounds worse than ever. Where the Ell is Billings, any way, and
what right has he to suggest the character of our monthly mail? I'll bet when he comes back he will
be just another one of those phony cow boys who walk up and down Woodward Avenue.

We were also treated to a vivid description of an architect doing a turn in jail, for something he
knew nothing about. It finally came out that he

passed a counterfeit five dollar bill. Better look
out for them. There are about 2500 of them passed
every day in Detroit, bills of various denominations.

A visit from E. Gordon Pecell, first president
of the A.T.S., made up of the presidents or chair-
men of all technical groups in Detroit and vicinity,
judged the design problem of the last State Board
Exam. The problem was a bus terminal and hotel
for a small town. The program was written by
Wirt Rowland.

LOW COST HOUSING BILL FOR
MICHIGAN

(Concluded from page 1)

No construction shall be undertaken by any limited
dividend housing corporation, without the ap-
proval of the Commission as to its financing plans,
building plans and specifications, and general
worthiness. If there be a City Plan Commission,
it approval must also be had.

The Commission will fix the maximum rentals
or payments to be made for the accommodation.
No definite prices have been set because of the
fluctuating business conditions of our day. Where
in other states they have been fixed definitely in
the law, the tendency has been to produce housing
rent at those figures, forgetting the lower in-
come groups.

In addition to acquiring its land by purchase, a
limited dividend housing corporation after getting
the approval of the Commission, may exercise the
right of eminent domain or condemnation, subject
to the State laws on that subject. In the past, the
principal difficulty confronting those attempting
the improvement of large tracts of land was the
skyrocketing of prices as soon as it was learned
that some interest wanted it. While New York
State's housing law also provides eminent domain,
it has never been used in court because the more
presence on the statute books has been enough to
keep prices normal. Another provision makes it
possible for a city or other political subdivision to
sell unneeded land for housing. Delinquent-tax
land returned to them would come under this head-

A considerable portion of the bill is devoted to
the processes of organizing and operating limited
dividend housing corporations and to their control
by the Commission. Any three persons may organ-
ize such a corporation whose aim is to serve a

public purpose. Returns on the investment are
limited to not over 6% in any one year and divi-
dends are made cumulative. Unless approved by
the Commission no such corporation may incor-
porate, acquire lands, issue stock or debentures,
mortgage the property, sell or assign property,
enter into construction contracts, dissolve, or make
any guaranty.

The bill also makes mortgages and mortgage
bonds of these corporations legal investments for
savings banks, life insurance companies, etc., be-
cause of the safety of State control. Speculation in
the stock is prohibited. Upon dissolution of such
a corporation any surplus reverts to the State.

City or other local housing boards are encouraged.
The State Housing Commission in such cases would
not interfere but would seek to help and supple-
ment their efforts.

Once projects are begun, the Commission seeks
to make them self-sustaining by charging fees to housing
Corporations. For the general preliminary examina-
tions, the scrutiny of the financing program and
operating budgets, etc., examination of building
plans and specifications and supervision, a fee of
not over one percent of the cost of the project is
asked. A yearly supervision fee of not over one
tenth of one percent of the cost will be charged.
To get the Commission and its work under way
and to permit studies to be made, an initial ap-
propriation of $20,000 is asked. No tax exemptions
on projects is requested.

An unusual feature of this bill is the inclusion
of housing for sale. Heretofore, with the exception
of California's assistance to its veterans in acquir-
ing single dwellings, no state has attempted to
cover anything more than rental quarters, because
of the difficulty in controlling properties after they
have been sold. It is difficult also to keep out speculators. A man's constitutional right to do as
he pleases with anything he owns has been the
stumbling block. In the proposed Michigan Act no
particular methods have been set up for controlling
them but the way has been left open for the de-
velopment of satisfactory methods. The sale feature
is expected to be of particular value in the smaller
communities where concentrated housing is not
needed or desired.

Under this Act, the State does not enter the
housing business nor does it invest any money in
it. All the capital comes from private sources or
the Federal Government. The State merely lends
encouragement and exercises control.

A. T. S.

A meeting of the entire Organization Committee
of the A.T.S., made up of the presidents or chair-
men of all technical groups in Detroit and vicinity,
will be held Friday, May 19, 1933, beginning with
luncheon at 6:30 P. M. at the Hotel Fort Shelby.
Dinner $5c.

In addressing the officers of member organiza-
tions Mr. E. L. Brandon, Secretary says, "You have
had time since the meeting of April 7th to study
the Master and Transition Plans which have been
provided to you and it is hoped that you and other
interested members of your group will attend the
meeting on May 19th prepared to express your
personal views, and those of your organization if
the plans have been given consideration."