



Vol. IV, No. 8

THE OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

115 EAST 40th STREET

APRIL, 1942

ALBERT G. CLAY, EDITOR

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, May 5 at 12:30 p.m. at the Architectural League.
Subject: Post War Planning.

WASHINGTON SITUATION

Members are urged to read the OCTAGON, especially the reports by Edmund R. Purves on the Washington Situation. Our office receives from time to time additional bulletins from Mr. Purves. All are on file at the Chapter office, and may be seen by any member interested. Bulletins are fairly voluminous and we have not the facilities to send copies to each member, nor to reproduce them in full.

Stop Building Order: The text of this order issued by the W.P.B. on April 9 is attached to Mr. Purves' Bulletin No. 11. In comment he says:

"We point out that the War Production Board gives no assurance that a project not essential to the war effort will not be stopped if the critical material used in that project can be put to more effective use in the war program. It is not anticipated that this procedure will be vigorously applied except in cases of flagrant necessity. In general, we recommend that where a legitimate need for a project can be demonstrated, application be made for permit to begin construction."

Post War Planning: Mr. Purves writes in this same bulletin:

"This office is continually watching the situation with regard to Post War Planning and will report any developments and suggest any action that might be taken by members of the profession. At the moment, the Post War Planning situation is uncertain other than it is generally conceded there will be a program and that preparations will be made for it.

As of March 30, Public Works Reserve, which was operated as a W.P.A. project, was abolished and a local Public Works Programming office has been set up under the joint authority of the F.W.A. and N.R.P.B."

BRUNNER SCHOLARSHIP

Our Committee on Education announces the 1942 Brunner Award. Applications are available at the Chapter Office, and must be filed before May 15, 1942.

NOMINATIONS

The annual meeting this year will be on Wednesday, June 3, at which we will elect the Officers and Elective Standing Committees. See pages 3 and 4 of the Chapter (little grey) book.

This year's Nominating Committee consists of Frederick G. Frost, Chairman, William H. Gompert and Geoffrey Platt, who will meet shortly to make up the ballot. Members are privileged to make suggestions.

WAR TIME HOUSING:

An exhibit of War-Time Housing has just opened at the Museum of Modern Art, to continue through July 19, and will then become a traveling exhibit throughout the nation.

At the preview held last Tuesday, John B. Blandford, Jr., first Administrator of the newly created National Housing Agency spoke over a national hook-up.

This show is sponsored by the National Committee on the Housing Emergency, whose purpose is to encourage the broader aspects of planning, to study the relation of the housing group to the community, and to instill aesthetics into this field.

A. I. A. CONVENTION

The annual meeting of the A.I.A. will be held in Detroit June 23-25. The program committee hopes to create a real business meeting instead of the usual convention with Bally-hoo.

Convention theme is to be the profession today and its place in life after the war. The program will include discussions on our part in the war effort, Unification, the A.I.A. and younger men, post war planning and its program.

The entire convention is being compressed into three days, and the annual dinner, with Albert Kahn as speaker, will be on the middle evening.

We are the largest chapter and should be well represented. To this end the Executive Committee urges those planning to attend to hand in their names now. Remember that one of the purposes of the meeting is the election of officers. Nominations may be made in advance by written petition—signed by at least 5 members in good standing, and filed in Washington before May 13.

SPECIAL MEETING

A special meeting of the Chapter was held on March 26 for the purpose of discussing the panel of names for defense housing in this territory. The completed list has now been forwarded to Washington.

Eighty-three attended, and after dinner the business meeting was called to order by President Stevenson. He began by remarking that many of our members have gone into the service, and no doubt many more will.

"The few of us who are left in private practice must stand together and discuss openly and freely what our policies shall be. There is grave danger that the war may wipe out the few activities that remain, so that it behooves us to work together for our own best interests, and for the preservation of our profession."

The Chapter was then asked to approve the idea of supplying selected lists for housing or any other category, openly arrived at, to government agencies as requested. After a lengthy discussion, a motion to this effect was made and carried.

Further discussion resulted in the approval of a Committee of Selection. This is composed of Arthur C. Holden, Gerald A. Holmes, Robert B. O'Connor and Otto Teegen (Chairman).

This Committee has acted on the housing matter. Their final list sent to Washington is posted in the Chapter office, and is accompanied by a report to the members from which we quote in part:

"Members of the Chapter were notified that all those wishing to be considered for employment by the F.W.A. in connection with possible future Defense Housing should send in their qualifications, including a brief description of organization and performance, and furthermore, that only those making such reply would be considered for the panel of names to be sent to Washington.

"The F.W.A. had requested that a list of names of firms, associations, or individuals be classified as follows:

(A) Those now organized to render complete immediate architectural service on a war housing project.

(B) Those with present potential capacity to render complete architec-

tural service by the addition of engineering and related elements.

(C) Those qualified to render planning, administrative and supervisory services but not having organizations as indicated under (A) and (B).

"At the special meeting of the Chapter, such general dissatisfaction was expressed with the description of these three groups that the Committee appointed to examine the data submitted and make up the list has taken the liberty of disregarding those definitions and has made but two classes, Group "A" and "B," and Group "C" for the following reasons:

"The Committee has not attempted to rate the relative competence of the names listed for any particular type of work, since it is understood that any government agency using this list will carry on a further investigation regarding the merits of each individual or firm, and make the final selection. The Committee has, however, placed an asterisk (*) before each firm whom it knows has made a special study of housing or engaged in the design and superintendence of one or more housing developments in this vicinity.

"The Committee is prepared to exhibit its complete files of information regarding the organization, experience and achievements as given in all letters and records received."

Edmund R. Purves, A.I.A. Representative in Washington, spoke about the origin of this housing panel, and the activities of his office.

At first when a housing project was in prospect the F.W.A. generally less than a week before the public announcement, would notify the A.I.A., inviting them to submit a list of Architects available for housing in the area of that specific project. The A.I.A., using the 1940 questionnaire, would select a list of housing men from the locality in question and refer the list to the local Chapter President for review. However, the information on file at the OCTAGON was so obsolete that in most cases the list returned by the Chapter President bore little resemblance to the one submitted for review. This procedure being not only cumbersome but unsatisfactory, the F.W.A. suggested that each Chapter President be invited to submit his own list to be used if, as, and when.

The A.I.A. feared that such requests, prior to any announcements of specific housing projects, might raise false hopes. Nevertheless, this is the system which has been used and Mr. Purves emphasized that the calling for a panel from each area was no in-

dication whatsoever that there would be a housing project in that area.

Before Mr. Stevenson threw the meeting open for discussion, A.I.A. President Shreve spoke of the Washington situation and the work being carried on for our benefit by Mr. Purves.

Mr. Shreve said that the Board of Directors of the Institute began to realize some time last summer the need for having a representative who could give his full time to the interests of the profession, and particularly one who could present the Architect as a skilled man to the Government. This representative was to be definitely not a lobbyist but a source of information both to the Government and to the profession.

The A.I.A. was fortunate in persuading Mr. Purves to do this work. Mr. Purves' Army service record in the last war has proven of definite help in his contacts with Government Agencies. Also he has the approach of one who is not looking for work for himself. He has gained for the Institute the reputation of a body of professional men and not a body of lobbyists, prepared to work for the profession and not for themselves.

MEMBERSHIP

The following names have been submitted

For Institute membership:

1. Charles Bertram French

Sponsors:

William Wilson
Theodore Irving Coe

For Associate membership:

1. Karl L. Quirin

Sponsors:

Harold R. Sleeper
G. E. Kidder Smith

2. Thorne Sherwood

Sponsors:

Lester D. Tichy
Walter B. Sanders

NEW MEMBERS

Elected to Institute Membership:

1. James Jennings Bevan
2. Thomas Dunn
3. Ferdinand Eiseman
4. Serge Peter Petroff
5. Irvin Leslie Scott
6. Karl F. J. Seifert
7. Saul Edelbaum
8. John Alexander Frank
9. Sylvester W. A. Murphy
10. Paul Schulz
11. Daniel Schwartzman

ASSOCIATES

1. Donald Rowell
2. Sylvia Shimberg

CAMOUFLAGE:

The Civilian Camouflage Council of New York City, which was formed last year at the suggestion of Col. St. Gaudens of the Engineer Corps, U. S. Army, meets each week at the Beaux Arts Institute of Design for lectures and discussions on the various phases of Camouflage.

The newly appointed Chairman of this Council, Francis Keally, will be glad to invite Chapter members, interested in the subject of camouflage, to become members of the Council, if they will drop him a line at his office, 101 Park Avenue,

Due to lack of interest on the part of the Government, the course proposed to be given at Columbia University has been abandoned.

ONLY GOD CAN MAKE A TREE

This is an old proverb associated with the fine traditions of all times. But if you believe it, you are an old fogey, and not keeping abreast with the times.

Cast tradition and classicism aside and let the modernist take a hand at the making of the tree instead of the Creator.

The first operation brings into play the steam shovel. The roots would be formed by perforated earthen-ware pipe up to the grade level. Then would be erected the trunk with an eight-inch diameter galvanized iron pipe. By means of reducing fittings, and diminishing pipe sizes, the tree would be erected to the required height so that at the top it would measure about one inch in diameter.

In the various sections of the trunk, limbs would spread by means of T and Y fittings, and the various branches and sub-branches would be connected by means of unions, couplings, right and left nipples tapering to copper tubing sizes at the other ends.

The leaves would be formed of tin-foil from Dennison's in clusters, which would finish off the modern and functional tree. The vitality and vigor in the form of Pernod would be provided through the orifices of the pipes, fittings, and tubing by means of a stirrup pump.

So that this new form would not be misunderstood by the uninitiated in functional modern ideas, a sign should be erected at the base, reading in the best modern type of raised block letters, "CREATED BY A SAP."

The same creation could be constructed with bamboo. Who said, "Only God can make a tree?"

—W. H. G. or William H. Gompert