



OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER, AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, 115 EAST 40 STREET, NEW YORK 16, NEW YORK
WALTER H. KILHAM, JR., PRESIDENT; BEN JOHN SMALL, VICE-PRESIDENT; WILLIAM POTTER, TREASURER;
M. MILTON GLASS, SECRETARY; DOROTHEA WATERS, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY; EDWARD EVERETT POST, EDITOR.

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ANNUAL MEETING — ELECTIONS

Notice of the Annual Meeting on June 7 has been sent to all Chapter members. The Nominating Committee has presented a slate which includes Harry M. Prince, for President; Geoffry N. Lawford, for Vice President; Alonzo W. Clark, for Secretary; Ralph Pomerance, for Treasurer; and Francis Keally and Perry Coke Smith for membership on the Executive Committee.

Any independent nomination must be by ten or more members and must be submitted before May 24. For procedural details and for the complete slate see your ballot or call the Chapter Office.

Every member should come to the meeting to hear how the Chapter has been run during the past year, to hear its plans for the future, and to vote for officers and elective committees for the coming year.

RESIGNATION

With deep regret the Executive Committee has accepted the resignation of our Executive Secretary, Miss Dorothea Waters. For thirteen years she has guided the growing Chapter to its present organization of over 800 members, keeping track of the manifold activities of its numberless committees and accepting the responsibility for the ever-increasing outside correspondence. With her abiding interest and tireless devotion to our affairs, the name of Miss Waters and the New York Chapter had come to be synonymous.

Miss Waters will be greatly missed and the Chapter is deeply indebted to her for her long service in its behalf. She will take with her not only every wish for success, but the affection of the entire membership.

SPECIAL ZONING FOR PARK AREAS

Walter H. Kilham, Jr., Chapter President, on April 25, issued a statement urging the people of New York to support proposed amendments to the city's Zoning Resolution which would limit the height of structures bordering on public parks. This question had arisen in connection with the contemplated demolition of the old houses on the western half of the block known as Washington Square North and their replacement by modern apartments.

Mr. Kilham pointed out that much more is at stake than the historical and cultural aspects of Washington Square, since the law, as it stands, permits the erection of tall buildings entirely enclosing the few open spaces remaining in this city and depriving the public of the aesthetic and sanitary advantages of an occasional area where light and air are still unrestricted.

The proposed amendment would limit the height of buildings fronting on public parks and squares to a certain specified maximum. In the case of the Washington Square site this would be approximately that of the present houses, but the new buildings could be made economically justifiable by rising to full volume at the north, or rear, side of the lot.

CITY PLANNING

This Chapter, represented by the Civic Design Committee, in a statement presented at the City Planning Commission hearing April 26, urged support by all civic and business organizations of the Commission's proposed intention to amend the city's master plan and to add a Redevelopment and Replanning Section for the East Midtown Manhattan area.

It was pointed out that this region, extending from 34th to 59th Streets and from Lexington Avenue to the East River, is the only natural field for expansion of the business, shopping, and hotel activities now spreading north and east from the Grand Central region. The establishment of the United Nations Headquarters within this area makes it the heart of world government, a new factor added to New York's already recognized role as the centre of world fashion and trade.

New zoning must be enacted to protect the area now largely unrestricted between First and Third Avenues. It is imperative that definite action be taken to prevent indiscriminate private building which might lead to the terrible overcrowding, confusion, and ugliness seen, for instance, in the garment centre on the west side.

There is great need for improved approaches to the Queensboro Bridge and the Queens Midtown Tunnel and for an east-west artery to connect the United Nations Headquarters with the Grand Central Terminal. The City's decision to proceed with the construction of the Second Avenue subway, the widening of that street, and the removal of the Third Avenue elevated, together with the foregoing considerations, results in an unprecedented opportunity for inspired and creative civic planning.

AWARDS

The Esso Building in Rockefeller Center, designed by Carson and Lundin, was recently cited by the Fifth Avenue Association as the best large new building to be erected in the Fifth Avenue section between January 1, 1946, and December 31, 1949. Certificates of award were presented both to the builders and to the architects. The Parke-Bernet Galleries at 974 Madison Avenue, by Walker and Poor, was chosen as the best new building of less than six stories to appear in the same area and period.

Six other awards concerned major and minor alterations to business properties, including the five-story building at 16 East 56 Street for the Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corporation by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Bonnier's, 605 Madison Avenue, by Warner-Leeds; the KLM Royal Dutch Airlines office, 572 Fifth Avenue, by James E. Casale; the Andrew Geller shop, 18 West 57 Street, by Henry Z. Harrison; the Florsheim Shoe Salon, 516 Fifth Avenue, by Ketchum, Gina & Sharp; and the shop of Olga Tritt, 18 East 57 Street, by Tommi Parzinger.

These awards, suspended during World War II when civilian construction came to an almost complete standstill, have been resumed on a biennial basis.

STANDARD DOCUMENTS

On Thursday evening, April 20, the Professional Forum Committee conducted a well attended meeting on contractual relations between Architect and Client. The responses to the Chapter's recent questionnaire on this subject, which were unusually numerous, were summarized in chart form and also presented in a dramatic if somewhat confusing way by means of a narrator, a commentator and by voices which quoted specific answers to the questionnaire.

In general a considerable majority of the responses indicated satisfaction with the use of the A.I.A. standard documents with slight modifications to fit the individual conditions of each job, although it was agreed that for certain types of work they are not readily applicable.

Charles C. Platt stated the case of those who do not use the standard documents, preferring less formal verbal understandings with their clients, supplemented by simple letters of confirmation.

Bernard Thompson, attorney, also recommended a short form of agreement which would incorporate by reference a standard document setting forth a more complete exposition of the services and obligations of the contracting parties than is at present included in the A.I.A. standard forms. He objected to these as needing much improvement and as requiring too much modification, and suggested that better forms could be developed on a local basis that would thus require less modification than the national documents.

Nathan Walker, legal counsel for the New York Chapter, agreed that no nationwide forms can be used universally without modifications, but pointed out that the national documents, despite criticism, have won wide recognition in the courts, and that it is better to maintain them and if possible improve them for nationwide use, even with modifications, than to develop a great variety of local forms.

William Stanley Parker, who has for many years been Chairman of the A.I.A. Committee on Contract Documents, stressed that the standard documents can and should be revised when the majority of the national membership thinks changes advisable. There have been many such changes since the first edition of the Standard Documents in 1918. Individuals and local chapters can of course develop their own forms, but changes in the national documents must be nationally desired, even though this may mean more amendments to suit each local and individual case. The goal is to make the documents serve as many cases as possible with as few modifications as possible, but no standard document, whether national or local, can suit all cases, even within the practice of any one architect.

One difficulty is to find out what changes are desired nationally. Answers to questionnaires are generally few in number and more frequently than not express general satisfaction with the standard forms. This, Mr. Parker said, seems to him to be borne out by the recent New York Chapter questionnaire.

From a legal point of view Mr. Parker noted that few cases where standard A.I.A. documents are used go to court, and that in such cases the standard forms, even with modifications, carry more weight than forms prepared by individuals. Even if individual's forms are virtually copies of the standard documents, the fact that

the printed forms are not used results in a considerable loss of value in the eyes of the courts.

At the conclusion of the meeting it was suggested by Mr. Vogel, Chairman of the Professional Forum Committee, that a resolution be submitted at the A.I.A. Convention to the effect that the Committee on Contract Documents review anew the standard forms and report to the membership at the succeeding Convention their recommendation for altering, replacing or supplementing these forms.

PRE-CONVENTION LUNCH

President Walter Kilham opened the Chapter's pre-convention meeting on April 25 by reading the first of the proposed amendments to the Institute By-Laws which were up for vote at the convention in Washington. Under this proposed amendment the First Vice President would automatically become the President the following year and would be ineligible to succeed himself as President for two years following his incumbency. It was brought out that the reason behind this amendment was the fact that a newly elected President has to assume a tremendous burden — frequently without previous experience in Institute affairs. Considerable opinion favored retention of the present system, however, on the theory that the First Vice President might not prove qualified for the Presidency and that, if he did, he could always be elected anyway. A motion was passed that the Chapter's delegates go to the convention uninstructed on this amendment.

Considerable discussion developed also over the second proposed amendment which would require United States citizenship as a future qualification for corporate membership — some members feeling that foreign architects should be permitted to join the Institute should they be in this country during periods of war or persecution. It was pointed out, on the other hand, that many similar organizations both here and abroad require citizenship and that our Chapter has required it for a number of years, foreign architects being permitted to become Associates of the Chapter. Our delegates were uninstructed on this amendment as well, but the citizenship qualification was recommended to them pending further discussion on the floor of the convention.

The proposed amendment reducing the tenure of Regional Directors from three years to two was not recommended to our delegates after Arthur Holden's explanation that they did not really become familiar with their job until after the first year due to the fact that the the Institute Board of Directors met so infrequently. The delegates were likewise uninstructed on the candidates for the various offices except that the re-election of President Walker was endorsed.

An amendment to the Chapter By-Laws was then introduced and passed which would establish graded Chapter dues for newly elected corporate members assigned to this Chapter—\$15.00 for the first year; \$22.50 for the second and the regular Chapter dues of \$30.00 thereafter—in order to attract new members and ease the transition from associate to corporate membership. A resolution was also passed urging the A.I.A. Committee on Contract Documents to review the Owner-Architect Agreements in view of the results brought out by the Chapter's recent questionnaire.

TOWN PLANNING—HUMAN SCALE AND IDEAS

Sir Patrick Abercrombie, M.A., Fellow R.I.B.A. speaking at Columbia University, Friday evening, April 28 on Human Scale and Ideas in Urban Planning stressed the need of coordinating short and long range planning for urban land development. "Planning ideals and realities must be harmonized to accomplish this. The planner is apt to be carried away by doctrinaire ideas but he must keep both feet on the ground."

Sir Patrick emphasized the real part that surveys, social, economic, and historic, as well as physical, play in formulating town plans, but he warned that such surveys can be carried to excess as at Oxford where twenty-five years was spent in collecting data and as he said "they reached the late bronze age." The planning group must have at its disposal all the facts but there is such a thing as being overburdened with them. Too much surveying usually means no real work ever gets done.

He discussed the realities of short and long term planning quoting many examples of each and how the best results are achieved when there is simultaneous development in several phases. With today's housing shortage in Great Britain, often it is necessary to set broad principles of a particular regional plan designating residential areas in general so that these particular portions can be handled as short term projects within the desirable framework. Sir Patrick also stressed the need for periodic reviews of plans in light of constantly changing mores. "Perhaps every five years results in plans being too fluid." And how long is long range? Some authorities feel that twenty years should be a limit—but in most cases, Sir Patrick thinks this period too short to accomplish a really adequate integration of industrial, residential, business areas, or to resettle the million and a quarter people who are being moved out of London.

In reference to the London plans, Sir Patrick told of their being confronted with many suggestions. One group of engineers developed a master plan the theme of which was roads which certainly provided for perpetual motion. Another put forward by Mars, a collaborative group of architects, was a lineal plan. The R.I.B.A. came up with a plan based on many community centers. Then the Royal Academy presented the monumental scheme, all pompous symmetry. And an eminent American architect when asked his opinion said "If London were in Arizona, I would give each family four acres of ground." Since the population of London at this rate would spread over all England and Wales it would mean the total disappearance of London.

The London plans as finally accepted incorporated many suggestions and ideas from these various proposals. Sir Patrick paid respect to Sir Raymond Unwin's great plan for London which proved to be still valid. The present plan calls for resettling a million and a quarter Londoners in new towns with their own industries. This is being enthusiastically received by industry and by the people with promises of new housing.

In general, London will have a central core surrounded by an area of static suburbs which in turn will be surrounded by a three or four mile wide circle of open land. Outside of this greenbelt will be the "reception areas" for industry.

With a warning that planners tend to become "pattern minded," Sir Patrick reminded the audience that topography was after all the basis for all planning and its variations, with local historical associations, permit the delightful irregularities which seem natural and provide the human approach.

On the platform with Sir Patrick were Professor Talbot Hamlin who opened the meeting and Ralph Walker, President of the A.I.A., who introduced the speaker. Sir Patrick will be awarded the Gold Medal of the A.I.A. this month in Washington. This is the 150th Anniversary year of the L'Enfant plan of Washington and it is most fitting that Sir Patrick Abercrombie, internationally known Architect and Town Planner should be singled out for this highest honor at this time.

The meeting was sponsored by the five Metropolitan Chapters of the A.I.A., the Architectural League, the New School for Social Research, the Schools of Architecture of Columbia University and Pratt Institute and the American Institute of Planners.

AESTHETICS OF THE SMALL HOUSE

On April 11 the Committee on Aesthetic with Daniel Schwartzman as moderator conducted the post luncheon discussion on the Aesthetics of the Small House.

William Breger ably presented the case for architecture in the small home, illustrating his talk with slides of his recent prize winning house of contemporary design in Hewlett, L. I. and of other small houses executed by Breger and Salzman.

Mr. Breger's plea was for a consideration of the aesthetic values of the small home as well as for the efficient planning of its mechanical functions. He feels that Americans are so interested in efficiency and "fashionable building materials—the Holy Trinity of flagstone, redwood and glass that they have lost sight of the home as a form of art, reflecting personal tastes, and an artistic portrait of the family living in it." The house must mean more than enclosing a bit of space. People must be aware that it is an expression of living and must feel that "here is a framework of domesticity, of hominess, of good relation to the rest of the community."

Following Mr. Breger's talk, discussion was decidedly pro and con on the contemporary expression in small house design. To one complaint from the floor, that the architect who foisted a flat roofed contemporary house of glass and stone upon his client was doing a disservice to a community where traditional houses abounded, Mr. Breger replied that in most of these communities there was no continuity of design anyway so that the modern house was only one more design taking its place among the Colonial, the pseudo Norman chateaux and the half timbered English manor houses.

As usual all discussion of Aesthetics in Architecture comes back to the question "What is Architecture?"

OUTSTANDING ARCHITECTURE

What buildings in New York City would you recommend to sightseeing visiting architects? See the attached list, cross out the buildings you don't like and add others you do, and send your list in with your comments. Don't pull your punches. Here's one field where we can all disagree on even terms.

STATE CODE

Following a lunch meeting of the New York Building Congress on May 2, Colonel Edward J. McGrew, Jr., Chairman of the New York State Building Code Commission, assisted by his fellow members of the Commission, explained the code to a gathering of architects and other interested persons.

The code applies to all places which now have building codes unless specific exception is filed within thirty days after the code is published.

The code is a minimum performance code for health and safety. It is an "alternate" code to state and municipal building codes and, as far as construction is concerned, to the State Industrial Code, the Multiple Dwelling Law, etc. A builder or architect will be able to elect whether to file plans for a building under the local code or under the new alternate code.

The State code will be administered by the local building departments, but the State will conduct or direct tests and will issue bulletins for guidance, and will maintain a Board of Review which can grant variances and substitutions. The code will be issued in several parts, the first part being applicable to one and two family dwellings.

At the conclusion of the meeting a discussion of whether the code should be concerned with raising the standards of human comfort or be limited strictly to minimum standards of safety and health, evoked an overwhelming expression of opinion that any attempt to go beyond the minimum would be inconsistent with the avowed purpose of the code, and would be virtually impossible to administer equitably, as standards of human comfort are not susceptible of accurate generalization.

LEBRUN FOR 1950

The winner of the 1950 LeBrun Scholarship Competition is Ralph E. Myers, of the architectural firm of Kivett & Myers, Kansas City, Missouri. Honorable Mention was awarded to David George Brooks of Houston, Texas.

Mr. Myers received his professional education at the University of Illinois and Kansas City University. He was credited with receiving the highest number of Beaux Arts points ever made in a four year scholastic period, and he placed first in several competitions. His early training was received in the offices of Clarence Shepard and Clarence Kivett of Kansas City. During the war he was in charge of plant layout for the North American Aviation Company of Kansas. He is a registered architect and an active member of the Kansas City Chapter of the A.I.A.

Mr. Brooks is a graduate of the University of Houston, and also studied at A & M College of Texas.

The problem for this year was a "Railroad Station for a Suburban Residential Town". The jury, altogether too familiar with the rather stereotyped and badly planned railroad stations usually found in suburban towns, determined upon a program arranged to bring together for solution many of the vexing problems inherent in a project of this kind. Thus, in addition to the station, facilities such as parking and traffic, trucking platform and provision for community recreation were also included.

The winning solution developed most successfully

the potentialities of the plot. The basic elements of station, parking, approach and ground arrangements were all well integrated, and the spanning of the tracks with part car-parking space and part station was ingenious. Also well handled was the grouping of the cafeteria, waiting room, terrace, lawn and sequence for recreation and civic functions. Although the facilities within the station were functional and well arranged, one major fault of the plan was lack of adequate stairways and the rather casual placing of escalators. In a railroad station the stairways should be strategically placed and easily seen if a free flow of traffic is to result. The modern exterior, shown by photographs of a model, effectively reflected the interior plan arrangement and character of rooms. Its design was attractive and inviting from all points of view of station approach.

Mr. Brooks' submission was somewhat more pleasing in elevation and general character than the winning design. However it had more serious faults of circulation in its primary function as a railroad station.

Thirty-one designs were submitted and participants represented all sections of the country. In number and diversity of solutions the competition was very successful. In summing up the results the jury felt that, as a whole, a bolder approach to the foot and vehicular traffic was desirable. Many entries fell just short of good workable plans by rambling approaches to station and trains, cul-de-sacs in parking areas, unnecessary obstacles in passenger travel routes, and inadequate or poorly placed stairways or escalators.

The jury felt the general level of the designs was unusually high, and was well pleased with the nationwide response to this architectural competition.

ROBERT I. CARSON, *Chairman*
J. BRUNO BASIL
HARMON GOLDSTONE
WILLIAM POTTER
THORNE SHERWOOD

CANDIDATES

According to the By-Laws of the Chapter, names of candidates for membership shall be submitted to all members before consideration by the Committee on Admissions. Information received regarding the qualifications of the following candidates will be considered confidential:

Corporate Membership

William Crook

Sponsors: Frank Burkhard & George F. de Zeller
Helen Graham Park

Sponsors: J. Gordon Carr & Frederick C. Genz
Vincent Wachter SeeBach

Sponsors: John T. Briggs & Joseph B. Gunnison

Associate Membership

Jeffrey Ellis Aronin

Sponsors: Alton L. Craft & Charles C. Platt
Antulio Conesa

Sponsors: Santiago Iglesias, Jr. & Henry Klumb
Clinton M. Hepburn

Sponsors: Leopold Arnaud & Olindo Grossi
Calvin Jay Tobin

Sponsors: Samuel S. Arlen & Martin Lowenfish
Norma Joan Westra

Sponsors: J. Gordon Carr & Frederick C. Genz