

THE
OCTAGON

A Journal of The American Institute of Architects



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A Recent Aspect of an Old Conflict

BY PAUL PHILIPPE CRET, F. A. I. A.

IN the course of years given to educational work, we are at times compelled to question the value of our methods. They may carry the authority of tradition, the warrant of famous teachers,—even those more tangible proofs, successful students (insofar as we can credit ourselves for their achievements). Still we wonder if results could not have been achieved otherwise, and if prize students, under another rule or left to themselves, might not have found their way ultimately to the top. In other words—are our methods efficient?

Such healthy doubts are never more likely to arise than in the teaching of the Fine Arts. Here the restful certainty of mathematics, for instance, is lacking. Instead of finding a solid basis, unaffected by time or fashions, we must venture on quicksands where the fundamentals have always been, and still are, in a turmoil of conflicting theses, where even the glossary holds different meanings for each of the disputants.

There is no universally accepted principle in the art world, and no demonstration without its weak point. How could the educator escape questioning his own faith, wondering if it has a stronger foundation than personal prejudice? Is it the reflected image of his own temperament, he asks, or merely the dregs of his youthful enthusiasm for contemporary trends uncritically accepted originally and since retained through indolence. This uneasiness of mind, unpleasant as it may be to self-esteem, has its advantages. It helps us to get our bearings, to gauge our beliefs through comparison, to probe

more carefully into what was taken for granted. Theologians condemn doubt, but they rank mental sloth a mortal sin; so ought to be over-confidence in our artistic creeds. Any complacency of the kind we might have once entertained about standards and theories of architecture has been rudely shaken during the last ten years. Not that a sudden revelation was granted to the elect upsetting the established order. What took place was more in the nature of a return swing of the pendulum, bringing to the fore problems and views refreshed through their temporary eclipse. If not fully sharing in the enthusiasm, we had nevertheless to take notice of the chorus lustily hailing the new era. It held the usual proportion of notoriety seekers or professional advanced thinkers; its real strength came from those architects who had constantly disagreed with the doctrines in vogue and felt that a much needed revolution was at last underway.

Schools could not ignore the conflict thus rending the profession. Some sided at once with the novators, deeming it perhaps more flattering to march with a vanguard. That they took time enough to inquire into the consequences of such a change or to find out how prepared they were to substitute a new educational system for that evolved through many years of experiment, might be questioned. Until two or three years ago, all the schools followed the methods of architectural training developed in France in the last century and adopted in this country about fifty years ago. Previously, but for a few exceptions, architectural education

(as we understand the term) was practically nonexistent. The most important element of this education was the development of taste along the standards of Classic and Renaissance architecture. Had this method failed? The simplest way to answer this question is to see how the present generation of architects (a large portion of them former students of the schools) compares with the preceding one; or to find out if the architecture of the United States shows progress or regress over that of the Nineties. Such a survey cannot fail to reveal that during the Twentieth century, American architecture gained a world-wide recognition which it did not have in the second half of the Nineteenth, and this corresponds in time to the spreading influence of the schools. These essential qualities—proportion, ingenuity in planning, adaptation to new needs, refinement in detail—show marked improvement, and what is more, instead of being the prerogatives of a few leaders, they are in evidence all over the country. Credit for such a condition must go, for a large part, to a more efficient training of the profession and to the standardization of teaching methods. That the schools have been doing their work well is further demonstrated by the decreasing number of American students going to Europe in order to secure the proper instruction.

Now it may seem strange suddenly to find under suspicion (when not denounced as nefarious) a system which undoubtedly raised the level of professional ability. Looking more closely into the matter though, we discover that it is not actually educational methods which are under fire. Waged by a minority of architects, supported by those who talk and write about architecture with a superficial knowledge, the battle is essentially against classical tradition and for the triumph of the "modernistic" creed. Educational reform is merely a consequence, although there is probably no more justification for it than for revising the teaching of piano scales when Debussy instead of Mozart is to be played. It is advanced that the change of methods will turn our students into "creative artists"—creative of new forms, of course—which is obviously absurd. Students do not possess the maturity required for originality, which is an attribute of full-fledged artists—and mighty few of them at that! The student cannot be ex-

pected to reach beyond imitating what appeals to him in contemporary production.

A school teaches how to use the tools needed later on by the artist, and no more. With such a definite aim in view, the educator's creed ought to be (in the words of Plato) . . . "This one, O Socrates, shall contemplate eternal Beauty, and disregard the kind of Beauty which is beautiful in this time and not in that other time . . ." What must be avoided above all is the confusion in values which likens novelty to beauty. Yet, adventurous spirits request the schools to teach only "those forms which will become the art of tomorrow." And who knows what the Art of Tomorrow will be, or if Tomorrow will have any art worthy of the name? There are plenty of periods in art history showing total indigence in the Fine Arts. "If," writes Julien Benda, "you were only saying the forms which *might become* the art of tomorrow, you would remind me of that touching poster I saw in an English garden imploring me, in these terms—Give the grass a chance!"

The schools were taken to task anyway, and being sensitive to criticism, they looked for a new orientation. To guide them they had a few committee resolutions and countless magazine articles offering the mildest to the most far-reaching proposals. A large part of these suggestions came from men entirely unfamiliar with teaching, and all of them were, of course, untried. We have all in the past witnessed hasty experiments of this kind. When a few years demonstrated their worthlessness, the only complainant could have been the student who played the guinea pig's role. Striving to give satisfaction to whatever they could make out of these hazy notions, the schools resorted either to a modernization of the faculty or to the introduction of a few new courses.

What is the aim pursued? On the one hand, we are told a more "practical preparation" to professional duties; on the other, the upholding of a new aesthetic creed involving the repudiation of the rules of classic art and the promotion of those forms which have been called (among other names) the International Architecture. As "practical preparation", a few new courses in subjects of burning actuality—sociology, housing, or those concerning the economics of an office—were introduced. These additions to an already overburdened program meant

the pruning of the existing curriculum, and merely increased the number of superficially taught subjects. Were they necessary to the cultural aims of university education? The object of culture, it has been said, is "to learn how to learn". Real education consists in mastering a few subjects thoroughly and not in getting a smattering of many; it is a discipline of the judgment. The oldest writer on architecture, while recognizing the multiplicity of sciences or techniques needed in our profession—(he listed among them—geometry, history, philosophy, music, law, astronomy, etc.), was careful to note that it is not possible for the architect to become an expert in all of these . . . "He cannot be a grammarian like Aristarchus, but must know something of grammar; nor a musician like Aristoxenes, but know something of music; nor a painter like Apelles, but have the skill needed to graphic delineation, etc." If in Vitruvius' time the branches of knowledge required were many, they are still more numerous today. No school can hope to teach them all in a five-year course, and a selection must be made. This selection corresponds to the average opinion as to their relative value at a given time and may be revised; room for the new is to be found by discarding something else. In making changes we must be careful to see that the new is more valuable than the discarded. In an address to the Royal Institute of British Architects, Sir Reginald Blomfield said . . . "Applied science has developed so fast and in so many directions that it is impossible for an architect to keep pace with every branch of it; and besides all this, he has his own art to master. For when all is said and done, the first business of an architect, that which differentiates him from other men, is his power and knowledge of design . . ."

The interpretation of the subject matter taught may also change. If, as in some quarters, it is thought that construction methods are generating the forms without the intervention of aesthetic selection, there will be a tendency to increase the construction courses over those dealing with plastics and history. This is by no means a novelty. Functionalism (as we call it today) was the subject of the course given by Viollet le Duc to his students around 1865, and later summed up in his "Entretiens". In the same way, the return to simple geometric forms and volumes, the elimination of

decoration, are a revival of the theories of Durand around 1803. Even the patronizing tone, when speaking of non-conformist works, is as old as architecture. It would seem somewhat presumptuous, therefore, to think of the recent upheaval as of a brand new viewpoint, and serio-comic statements such as . . . "The moment an architect lines up with the moderns, he becomes a man apart . . ." can only bring a smile. The before-the-war (of the styles) generation was familiar with making a building an efficient organism, able to withstand the elements, and to give pleasure to its occupants. Finding appropriate planning for a new program and using materials intelligently was a matter-of-fact duty. The Classicist was as ready to experiment with new materials as the Modernist, and if these experiments (terra cotta, for instance) did not always fulfill all expectations, some experiments with today's materials are, in the same way, bound to bring disappointments. Of the new courses, highly ornamental in the catalogues, many will probably disappear. As Dr. Schelling wrote . . . "Quantitative education is built upon this extraordinary fallacy that we ought to know something about as many things as possible . . . Quantitative education gives us confident ignorance." The new crop of courses attempts to give satisfaction to those who believe that university training ought to be of the encyclopaedia type. The heads of several of our universities have of late called attention to this error; may the schools of architecture heed the warning.

Coming to the changes in the teaching personnel, they show an effort to enroll to teach design—the keystone of architectural education—men unsullied by the classic disciplines, or having at least rejected them. The teaching of design is the direct continuation of the age-old process of training, anterior to schools and theories—the apprenticeship system. It was through this ancient method that the architects of Greece, Reims, Florence, or of the Eighteenth Century were educated, for all that is really fundamental varies but little. What changes most is the gadget. The apprenticeship, however good its results, is no longer available, as pointed out by a judicious critic, Egerton Swartwout:

"We have always had a strong predilection ourselves for the old system of apprenticeship, the master and the pupil idea. It apparently worked well

enough in the old days; in fact, it was the only way; but under modern conditions it is questionable if it would, or does, work at all. It could never be universal. It is conceivable that an earnest young man entering a small office which turned out really good work might learn more there in four years than he would learn in any school; that is, he would learn more that would be of direct use to him in his future work, but he would only learn it if the head of the office were able and willing to teach him. If he became a mere draftsman he might learn a little, but it would be slow work, and he would have to pick it up himself. . . . In a large office the thing is absolutely impossible; that is, any definite system of instruction."

This system of master and pupil working together on the same problem is still the best method we know and was in use in all our schools. Composition is not a matter of codified rules or magic formulae. All the instructor can do is take the sketch prepared by the student and say . . . "Were I in your place, I would try to eliminate these faults and to improve what seems to me promising in these features." It is a sort of collaboration which takes place; by trial and error the project little by little takes its final shape. Only freshmen or dilettanti believe that recipes can do away with this laborious process.

The instructor must first of all be a designer and be able to have some insight into the various types of students. He must be careful to guide them without imposing too rigidly his own preferences and mannerisms. All minds ought not to be cast from the same mould. Which amounts to selecting for this teaching, a good architect not too pedantic, and able to see someone else's point of view. If we discard the claptrap, what then is new

in this revolution in teaching methods? Is it to place greater emphasis on the construction features of the school projects? As noted by Dean Edgell of Harvard, all the instructors worth their salt, long ago made this the foundation of their teaching, and if the writer may be permitted to quote from an old paper published in the *Towne Scientific School Journal*, here is the advice he gave twenty years ago to architectural students of this University:

"Your time is then to be divided among three main groups of studies, keeping in mind that they are closely dependent each upon the others; you will never be a good designer unless your studies in descriptive geometry and perspective have trained you to see in the space what you wish to represent in a geometrical drawing. Design requires a training of the eye and of the hand that is to be acquired only through long practice in freehand drawing. *A design which has not been studied with regard to constructive requirements is a bad design. . . .*"

The abandonment of classical disciplines is neither new nor without its price. Regardless of the use made later on of the forms they proposed as examples, these disciplines had an unquestionable educational value. What is to be substituted for their proved efficacy in training the eye to proportion, to rhythm, to composition, is not as yet divulged, and those who condemn them as stifling to originality forget that an originality so easily stifled must not be very robust. Of the men doing original work in this country at the present time, by far the greater number have been classically trained by our schools. Would they be better or worse off without this training? This is a question that the schools can well ponder before harkening to the sirens.

*By courtesy of the quarterly of
The University of Pennsylvania.*

Notice of Meeting of The Board of Directors

THE semi-annual meeting of The Board of Directors of The Institute will be held at The Octagon, in Washington, D. C., on November 14, 15, 16 and 17.

Members and Chapters having matters which they wish to bring to the attention of The Board

should address communications thereon to The Secretary of The Institute, at The Octagon, for delivery there not later than November 10, as the agenda will be closed as of that date.

Committee chairman will submit progress reports.
CHARLES T. INGHAM, *Secretary.*

Traveling Exhibit of American Architecture

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

THE "National Exhibition of Representative Post-War Architecture" is the first exhibition of its kind in over twenty years, and had its initial showing in Washington in September. During the coming year, it may be seen in more than a score of cities all over the country.

The exhibition had its genesis in the desire to present to the public, to the architects themselves, and to schools, a general, well-rounded survey, in excellent photographs and plans, of buildings which architects consider "fine" in design, and "representative" of the best work executed in the United States since the Great War.

Selection Comprehensive, Impartial.

For practically two years, the Special Exhibits Committee and the Committee on Education of The American Institute of Architects have been busy selecting and assembling material, and The American Federation of Arts with preparation and plans for circulation.

This opportunity is utilized to record appreciation of the work of William J. Smith, F. A. I. A., of Chicago, a member of the Committee on Education of The Institute, under whose able direction this difficult project was brought to successful completion.

To assure a comprehensive range of buildings, one thousand five hundred letters were mailed by the Committee on Education, A. I. A., to directors and officials of The A. I. A., to chapters, to staffs of architectural schools, and to practicing architects throughout the country.

These groups submitted more than one thousand buildings as being worthy of consideration. With photographs of each building available, the Committee assumed the task of elimination. From these one thousand, a pre-selection of two hundred fifty was made; final selection brought the exhibition down to its limit of one hundred fifty buildings. The selection was as impartial as possible, the intent being to choose "representative" buildings, irrespective of school, style or individual.

Two Collections on Circuit.

Owing to the size of the exhibition, it was deemed advisable to divide it into two sections, the choice of section being left to the exhibiting agency. However, both sections may be combined where facilities are available.

The first section, of seventy mounts—of which all but ten are 30 x 48 inches—with as many as six photographs to a mount, shows residences and housing projects, town planning, hotels, apartments, educational and recreational buildings and hospitals.

The second section, comprising 80 mounts, with all but twenty of the large size, is devoted to government, municipal and commercial industrial structures, libraries, museums and churches.

It is possible that a duplicate of the entire collection, originally prepared for circulation in Europe, may travel in America for a year first.

Scope and Itinerary.

The exhibition is national in character. Buildings in twenty nine States and the District of Columbia—from seventy two cities and towns show the variety of architectural styles in the United States.

Aside from its public interest, one of the primary purposes of the exhibition is educational, and many universities and schools are on the circuit. All places have not been definitely allocated, but the following are scheduled:

National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D. C.; Harvard University; Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Baltimore Museum of Art; New York City; Yale University; Princeton University; University of Pennsylvania; Addison Gallery, Andover; Montclair; Chicago; Memphis; Detroit; Beloit College; Kansas State, and the University of Minnesota. Western cities are to be announced later.

Organizations or communities interested in presenting the exhibition should communicate with The American Federation of Arts, Barr Building, Washington, D. C.

Synopsis of Conferences for Architects

CONDUCTED BY EUGENE H. KLABER, A. I. A.,

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, RENTAL HOUSING DIVISION, FEDERAL HOUSING ADMINISTRATION

First Conference.

Governmental agencies dealing with housing—Special function of each of these—Functions of the Federal Housing Administration—In the field of home ownership—In the field of rental housing—Sections 207 and 210 of the National Housing Act—Comparative requirements of each of these.

Problems of equity in promotional housing—Position of the architect in this picture—Determination of satisfactory sponsorship—What the architect should know concerning the land—The sponsors and the equity they are furnishing.

Background of American housing practice—The American attitude toward real estate investment—Contrast with European practice—Frequent impermanent character of development—Growth and urban pattern—The problem of blight—Necessity of controls.

The complex factors which condition housing construction—Financial—Taxation—Regulation—Land—Construction costs—Public demand—Motivation of housing enterprise.

The opportunity before architects.

Second Conference.

The Financial set-up of projects—The principal divisions of the set-up—Balance of resources and requirements—Operating statement of estimated receipts and expenditures—Resources composed of equity and mortgage money—Explanation of equity—What is acceptable as equity—How statement should be made—Requirements comprise land im-

provements, cost of physical structures, carrying charges and working capital.

Criteria of mortgage determination—Percentage of appraised valuation—Cost of physical improvements—Capitalization of income.

Discussion of details of set-up—Land value—Cost of construction—Cubic foot cost—Construction Bond—Fees—Interest during construction—Financial expense—Organization expense—working capital and reserves—Rental per room—Per family—Vacancies—Operating expenses—Taxes—Fixed charges—Dividend and Surplus.

Third Conference.

Project Planning (Illustrated with slides)—The need for rental housing—Types of housing that may be insured by the F. H. A.—Large scale rental housing a comparatively new problem—A new type of urban living—Added possibilities in planning—A new planning technique necessary.

Elements of room planning—Relation of rooms in the dwelling unit—Privacy and ventilation—The building unit—Juxtaposition of units—Site planning—Garages and other accessory uses—Landscape development.

Proposed Itinerary.

San Francisco	Sept. 7- 8
Seattle	Sept. 14-15
Pittsburgh	Oct. 5- 6
Dallas	Oct. 18-19
Detroit	Nov. 1- 2
Philadelphia	Nov. 15-16

Comment on Post Office Competitions

BY RICHARD J. NEUTRA, A. I. A.

WITHOUT in general weighing the pros and cons of architectural competitions and the exact conditions of their programs, it seemed, I believe, a prevailing sentiment among practicing architects that the decision of the Procurement Division to call for design ideas, was a progressive step.

In reviewing, as a juror, the hundreds of entries I gathered the impression that the best and sub-

stantial forces within the profession had not responded to this call with that concentration which the cause merited. The significance of small post offices in small communities, where they represent the only example of governmental building attitude, and where otherwise instructive specimens of architecture are rare, can hardly be overestimated.

Asking myself why the response and results of

this competition did not appear encouraging, I arrive at the conclusion that the majority of entries probably did not originate from the two sources from which such a competition may draw its most stimulating contribution:

- (1) Young men with a fresh approach, but possibly lacking in sound experience and,
- (2) thoroughly trained practitioners, who for a change, like to taste the refreshing atmosphere of a broad submission of ideas.

The first category, the very young, unburdened students were of course not represented, as in other competitions, because an architects' license—increasingly difficult to obtain in many states—was a condition *sine qua non*.

The second group, the truly trained, but not exhausted practitioners, who could furnish experienced progressiveness and sensible cooperation to the Treasury's supervising architect, did not show up in large numbers, because such men are busy with the obligations of a continuously running office.

For this category the time allowed by the program was decidedly short—too short, not for the design of a small structure—but too short in order to insert this work into the schedule of manifold other activities, to which the architect had previously obligated himself by concrete agreements.

While a student might always have the time to sit down to work as soon as a call for a competition becomes known to him—the main problem confronting the steady and successful practitioner is how to fit such extra hours into his work schedule without undue neglect of his other clients, however small or unprofitable their jobs may be.

If the time element is considered, good entries could be expected from well qualified architects, who are responsibly directing their own offices. Such men always schedule the use of their time in advance over more than four or five weeks. Consideration must be given to this sound fact, when the running period for the preparation of architectural contests is calculated.

That Pittsburgh-Cleveland Party

A Joint Meeting of the Pittsburgh and Cleveland Chapters at Pittsburgh

AS REPORTED BY PITTSBURGH

SEPTEMBER 16. Came the dawn, and a blast furnace sigh of relief went up from the throats of members of the Pittsburgh Chapter, A. I. A., as our own eccentric sun relented after a week of unremitting pleuing and promised a bright day.

Local members reported to their stenographers—secretaries east of the Alleghenies—and received permission to take the day off. Desk drawers were banged shut on million dollar projects and clients were told to go jum—(no, no, not that; pardon our exuberance). Draftsmen settled down comfortably for a rubber of bridge while their bosses packed a favorite midiron and headed for the Shanopin Country Club.

At high noon came the Cleveland contingent, a-bustling merrily to port. Having been on and off the road since the very unprofessional hour of 7:00 A. M., central time, they dismounted with alacrity, rushed down the receiving line which terminated in the back room and after rinsing the dust from their throats moved as one to the dining

room. Here they were joined by our extra special guests, President Charles D. Maginnis and Regional Director Edmund R. Purves.

Following luncheon the aggressive Committee on Arrangements went into action and separated the sheep from the golfers. The latter uncultured group proceeded gleefully to don wacky costumes, pared up as foresomes, and, burdened with tremendous wagers, teed off.

The remaining group was herded into automobiles for a condensed sight-seeing tour. Those of the visitors who were familiar with Pittsburgh landmarks elected to visit the old settlement of Economy, now in process of restoration made possible by a grant of funds by the State.

The Plebes were taken into the metropolis for a quick looksee at points of interest. First, a stop atop Mount Washington for a panoramic view, a sight impressive even to the natives. Cameras clicked and the cavalcade motored on to Chatham Village, that eminently successful rental housing

project built by private capital. Thence to the Schenley Park district with passing glances and short visits to the University of Pittsburgh, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Mellon Institute of Industrial Research and the better known churches. On the return trip the new Allegheny General Hospital and the Buhl Planetarium inspired attention.

Back at the club house there was evident disappointment that the announced mushball game between the A. I. A. Indians and Pirates had to be canceled because of the tardy return of the rubberneckers and the exhaustion of the No. 3 iron men. But the devotees of the diamond would not be denied. With chairs for bases an impromptu game was started on the front lawn and while the fielders leisurely retrieved the batted balls the runners were resuscitated at each base.

Came the dusk, and the scene shifted again to the back room where restoratives were administered in preparation for dinner. During the dinner courses one could sense the trend of earnest conversations by such overheard expressions as "The A. I. A. ought to do something about—", "What's goin' to happen when P. W. A.—", "Have you heard the one about—", "So I says to this client—" and so on until President Wolfe of the local Chapter, tapping knife on goblet, sounded the musical note that was the signal for chairs to be pushed

back and legs stretched forth for the finale of all such occasions. With brief but earnest ceremony the certificate of Institute membership was presented to a new member of the Pittsburgh Chapter, after which President Maginnis, Secretary Ingham, Director Purves and Cleveland Chapter President Weinberg responded with a brevity befitting the occasion to the introductions by President Wolfe of the Pittsburgh Chapter.

And then, as all good fellows are wont to do, we gathered around the piano for a round of songs, climaxed by the indescribable Cleveland version of "Star of the Evening".

Lest it be inferred from the foregoing that the meeting was only an architectural junket, let it be known that the intimate contact of the members of neighboring Chapters and Officers of The Institute afforded the opportunity for interchange of ideas, discussion of problems of mutual professional interest and frank expressions of opinion on Institute policies free from the restraint that prevails in more formal gatherings.

The Pittsburgh Chapter was happy to be host to the visiting officers and members of The Institute and feels that the success of its first meeting augurs well for the work of the Chapter during the coming winter season.

THOMAS C. PRATT.

AS REPORTED BY CLEVELAND

A NEW frontier has been opened, a new land discovered and, we hope, a new tradition established in architectural annals.

In the cold grey dawn of September 16, 1938, an intrepid little group of Architects left the purview (frankly that's about all the "Forum" has left us) of Cleveland and bravely faced the perils of the open road to join, for a day, with our brothers of the Pittsburgh Chapter.*

Our party, the hardy survivors of a much larger

*FOOTNOTES:

1. It was their own idea and they have no one to blame but themselves.

2. At the risk of disappointing those who stayed at home to grab the prospect we should have seen Friday I wish to state that we got home safely and signed the contract Saturday.

group (cold feet, deflatus walletum, impending paternity, impending commissions of huge magnitude and sundry other afflictions levied a heavy toll upon our numbers) consisted of President Weinberg, three officers of a lesser rank, ten ordinary or voting members, the bus driver (of whom more later) two bottles of spirits (in case of snake bite only) and other impedimenta too numerous to mention.

Mid-morning found us at the bus station of that allegedly thriving suburb, Youngstown, where we were glad, I might even say relieved, to pause. It was at this point that, each of us having been photographed in a most ingenious device closely resembling a Chick Sale with modern lighting, it was discovered that the writer had been scalped some time ago and left for dead, and that our golfing member, Mr. Ciresi, had had his throat cut from ear to ear.

Discounting these trifling annoyances, we boarded our peripatetic pantechicon and resumed our journey; and it is at this point that I feel constrained to mention our charioteer. For the first time it is now revealed why all overland bus drivers must be young and strong. It is not, as we once supposed, that he must possess that manly virility so necessary to sailors and other travelers from city to city, that also may be his for all we know, but only the resilient, nerveless strength of youth could wheel that bounding behemoth over the perilous point-to-point course from Youngstown to Pittsburgh. More than one over-strained nerve ganglion shattered with a sharp, sickening ping; more than one dry throat was hastily lubricated ere we reached the safe haven of the Shannopin Country Club.

There, our journey done, our perils safely past, we were warmly welcomed by President Wolfe and the reception committee, who, observantly noting our exhausted condition, promptly administered restoratives and an excellent lunch.

Refreshed and strengthened we were offered three alternatives: 1. Golf—and some day I would like to know how such beautiful turf can be held on vertical surfaces (maybe the weeds fall out, maybe). 2. A trip through Chatham Village, the Mellon Institute and other outstanding architectural features. 3. A visit to Economy (the town, not the habit) a settlement of 1823 on the banks of the Ohio River now being restored by Charles Stotz, Jr. Having made our choice, and I wish to state publicly that there was no coercion, no W. P. Alms, or other subversive influence brought to bear, we went our several ways.

I, and President Charles D. Maginnis, (he was there all the time only I couldn't bring him in sooner) Philadelphia Ed Purves, and the more serious minded members of the group elected to follow Mr. Stotz to Economy—to our great edification and enjoyment. These people, we were told, married and then took vows of celibacy, thus sublimating their energies to the greater glory of God and the building of cities. After observing the excellence of their work it occurred to us that some modern architects—Oh well—it just wouldn't work today.

The arguments as to which party had the most enjoyable time will probably never end, but on one point we are all agreed, (a rare thing indeed among

architects) Pittsburgh produces perfect hosts, and Ray Marlier did a grand job as program chairman.

The scheduled baseball game brought out only one fact; as an athlete the average architect is a swell designer.

It was with great difficulty that the crowd was finally pushed, driven and cajoled from the cozy little room with the white coated attendant to the dining room; many, feeling no doubt that they might lose their way, even brought glasses with them. There, after a good dinner, with smokes going well, we settled back to listen to the speakers who were (mirabile dictu) as advertised, brief and to the point. There was, to be sure, one little incident, Charlie Ingham, speaking as a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter and not as Secretary of The Institute, was just a wee trace, a slight modicum—shall we say—provincial, in his reference to Cleveland as the lake shore suburb of Pittsburgh. However, he was set right by Joe Weinberg so that I am sure he knows better now.

President Maginnis spoke in his own inimitable, chatty, informal way and Secretary Ingham and Regional Director Purves each performed the almost impossible by speaking on the same program with Mr. Maginnis and still holding the interest of the audience.

The meeting then adjourned once more to the aforementioned little room and the careless tossing about of a little more tankage. If the jobs—pardon us—commissions we heard discussed Friday, were laid end to end they would wrap the golden age of Architecture into a tight package and deliver it to a breathlessly waiting world on a golden platter. This was all the more remarkable since only Pittsburgh, Boston, Philadelphia, Washington and Cleveland were represented. Had there been representation from the southern purge areas imagination balks at the magnitude of the tales there might have been.

One outcome of this history-making occasion was the enthusiastic agreement that such a salutary communion of souls, such sparkling exchanges of wit, such unplumbed depths of reason, should not be lost to posterity. Though we cannot hope to surpass or ever to equal the practically perfect hospitality of which we were the beneficiaries, Cleveland will, next year, offer at least a token payment on our debt to the Pittsburgh Chapter.

WALTER HARRISON SMITH.

The first part of the paper discusses the importance of the user's needs in the design of information systems. It argues that a user-centred approach is essential for the success of such systems. The second part of the paper describes the design process, from the initial requirements gathering to the final implementation. It emphasizes the need for continuous communication and collaboration between the designers and the users. The third part of the paper discusses the evaluation of the system, both in terms of its usability and its effectiveness. It suggests that a range of evaluation methods should be used, including both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The final part of the paper concludes by summarizing the key points and offering some suggestions for further research.

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