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Newsletter

→ Birth-rate figures give some clue to work ahead for architects. Normal prewar rate of 18 per 1000 had jumped in 1947 to 26.2. This means that the 18½ million children now in elementary school will reach a peak of 26.6 million by 1957; the 6½ million high-school children will climb to about 8 million in 1960; colleges, after a drop, will again be crowded by 1960, and will reach a high point about 1965.

Arguments for school planning now to meet these statistical loads are completely valid. Home planning will likewise be affected as today's newborn citizens marry. In the 1960's we can look for another housing "emergency," unless there is better planning than now seems probable.

→ Administration's new housing bill would provide 1,050,000 public-housing units in seven years; increase interest on housing authority bonds to 2½% but eliminate tax exemption; boost allowable construction cost per room to \$2500.

President Truman's threat of government-built steel plants overshadowed his request for additional allocation controls for all scarce materials. U. S. Steel says industry can produce 68 million tons in '49 - enough to meet all but "extraordinary" demands. Size and duration of the extraordinary demand is point that will have to be settled.

→ There are some indications of slight drop in building costs. In the east several recent big jobs have been bid at lower than estimated costs. In the Midwest similar buildings dropped about 15 cents a sq. ft. in successive bids a month apart. Estimates for construction in midyear are lower than for work to be done at once.

This is good news for designers, but raises the question whether to advise clients to wait. Best present guess is that buildings planned now will get advantage of price slump during year; waiting would be likely to run construction into new rise later.

→ First prestressed concrete structure of importance in the U. S. is new bridge in Philadelphia. Recent international conference in Belgium highlighted European interest in this subject. Increasing interest in this country presages more such designs.

Yale's Howland Memorial prize goes this year to Sven Markelius, Swedish architect. N.Y. A.I.A. Chapter's Medal of Honor goes to Louis Skidmore. Douglas Orr has been made an honorary member of the R.I.B.A.

→ Experiments are being made with a stainless steel paint. It is not yet in production, but preliminary tests indicate that, suspended in various vehicles, it may have many applications, can be used on wood, metal, some types of masonry.

Survey by The Housing Institute indicates that mortgage interest rates have increased (average now 5%), ratio of mortgage to sales price is dropping (to about 51.2%) and average maturity period has shortened.