

# **p** PROGRESSIVE **a** ARCHITECTURE

## newsletter

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- Prices continue to drop, in spotty fashion, in building materials market. Producers' Council says "shortages of building materials and equipment have disappeared," and it is the experience of most architects that specified materials can now be obtained without construction delay. High point of production was in October 1948 (61% above 1939 average) and only fear now is that trend toward "buyers' market" may develop into slump that would affect other parts of economy. Recent sharp drop in metals on commodities exchange has raised this question. However, most sober analysts look at still-great demand for needed buildings and are confident of profitable activity for a decent period ahead.
- Pessimists are largely those who don't realize the picnic is ended. As W. W. Williams, chairman of the Committee for Economic Development, says, "Many businesses still need to learn that the war is over, that their particular sellers' market is gone, and that they must resume the normal practice of pricing and marketing their products aggressively to promote sales."
- Architectural activity has dropped in the larger metropolitan areas, with some firms that have been constantly busy since before the war finding time to look around for new work. In general, especially in the smaller towns and cities, work is holding up and very few practitioners are seriously worried. In very recent weeks the appreciable drop in bid prices has resulted in brand-new activity and the revival of some projects that had been shelved. Also, many farsighted architects are turning to institutional work--particularly schools and hospitals--with the result that "specialists" in these fields are finding competition stiffer than they are used to.
- The movie based on the novel called The Fountainhead, by Ayne Rand, has been shown to several preview audiences. Produced by Warner Brothers, it stars Gary Cooper as the architect-hero who blows up a housing project because someone had inaccurately translated the design he had slipped to an incompetent colleague. The picture, even more clearly than the book, indicates Miss Rand's concern with discounting the professional's social responsibility and applauding the individual who thumbs his nose at other people.
- Perhaps fortunately, the picture is most ineptly directed and poorly acted, the development of the story and the characters is so jerky, and the eye-rolling and jaw-working are so nearly burlesqued, that it is doubtful if the picture will become popular. If it should, it could set architecture back further than the Columbian Exposition did.
- L. Sonneborn Sons introduced a new plastic finish called Phenoplast to the trade recently. It is a liquid finish applied like varnish which forms a tough, rugged, transparent surface on woods, metals, masonry, or composition surfaces.
- Lehigh University announces summer seminar (July 5 - August 13) in product design. Lecturers will include Teague, Birren, Kepes,