



O C U L U S

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THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
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MARCH MEETING

"Partial versus full services" was the subject of the meeting of March 21, at which the attendance was twenty-eight.

Immediately before the opening of the meeting Henry Saylor was asked to read to the Chapter a press release issued from the Treasury Department, to the effect that the department had decided to establish eleven regional districts in the United States, in connection with holding competitions for the design of public buildings; that working drawings were to be made in the office of the Procurement Division except in the case of buildings requiring highly specialized treatment, in which case the architect might make the drawings in his own office.

Messrs. O'Connor and Bessell gave short addresses upholding the idea that for the good of architecture and the individual architect, the Institute should do all in its power to see that the partial service contract in government work be eliminated. Messrs. Walker and Lescaze took the other side of the question, emphasizing the point that the bureaus are now in the saddle and must be worked with whether we like it or not.

Lorimer Rich then moved that a letter of appreciation be sent to Washington in commendation of the recent move by the Treasury Department as outlined in the press release previously read. After a considerable number of amendments, amendments to amendments and amendments to amendments to amendments, the motion was carried and the following resolution was sent to Mr. Charles Butler, with a letter of appreciation of his unremitting efforts in behalf of the Institute:

RESOLVED: That the New York Chapter commend the policy of the Secretary of the Treasury . . . in setting up a series of regional competitions for Federal buildings, and that it note with sincere approval the Treasury's recommendation to the Smithsonian Gallery of Art Commission that it take the highly constructive step of permitting the winner of the current competition for the new Smithsonian Gallery of Art to prepare the working drawings for that building in private practice. . . .

NEXT MEETING

Time: April 25, 6:30 P.M.

Place: Architectural League

Subject: Amateur Movie Night

Mark this date on your calendar and mail the enclosed card *NOW*. No further notice of this meeting will be sent you.

Don't fail to come and see some swell movies taken by members of the chapter. Subjects generally will be the New York World's Fair, the San Francisco Fair, the New Orleans Convention, and some surprises.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That record be made of the New York Chapter's approbation of the constructive efforts of the Institute Committee on Federal Public Works to work out with the Federal Authorities concerned a practicable program for fostering a constantly better national architecture and for utilizing the talents of the architectural profession in such a way as to provide the greatest impetus to the attainment of this end.

Mr. Holmes, for the Committee on Civic Design, gave a report on the present status of the Moses plan for the proposed Battery-Brooklyn Bridge. The consensus of opinion of the Chapter was that the entire question was being acted on far too quickly; that much more study should be put on it and that it was the duty of the Chapter so to advise governmental officials who in one capacity or another might have to act on the matter.

NEW MEMBERS

The following new members were elected March 10:

Lyle Franklin Boulware
Alexander S. Corrigan
Louis W. Feldman
John M. Gates
Harrie T. Lindeberg
Perry Coke Smith

Dictator Methods

By an energetic process of argument by invective, and persuasion by persecution, the proponents of the Battery-Brooklyn Bridge scheme, led by Robert Moses, have succeeded in blasting a way for the bridge through the Planning Commission, the City Council, and the State Legislature.

Up to date the whole matter has proceeded with a most unseemly rush. No governmental agency before whom it has come as yet has had the courage to say: "Not so fast—let's find out what this is all about before we take a step of such importance to the City of New York."

Typical of the tactics used was the argument at a Council hearing. The representatives of the Regional Plan Association, who have studied major traffic problems of New York for many years, had advanced the argument that a connection of the sort proposed at the Battery was "a violation of sound planning principles and inimical to the business interests of the city . . ." The answer to this was: "Are you going to slap a toll on Brooklyn Bridge? No man in his right mind would do that. No one could live politically in this town and do it." It may be that the people of the city are more interested in a good city plan than in whether or not any given man can live politically.

Walter Binger, Commissioner of Borough Works, showed a comprehensive survey of the effects upon neighboring real estate values of both tunnel and bridge approaches. During twenty years the neighborhood of the Holland Tunnel appreciated in value approximately the same percentage that property around bridge approaches had deteriorated. The answer to this argument was that around the end of the Queensborough Bridge a neighborhood of fine apartments had grown. But no mention was made of the fact that these apartments are considerably to the south of the bridge, and that adjacent to it are only boarded-up tenements, gas tanks and small retail shops.

George McAneny, a man to whom the City of New York owes a tremendous amount for his many years of work

in the public interest, and who has had a broad experience in planning, has several times approached the problem from the æsthetic point of view, always the most difficult to sustain in the face of opposition which gives much weight to expediency and materialism. He and others have pointed out that the city was practically born on the site of Battery Park, that it is actually the gateway to our great continent, and that before any such drastic and permanent change as is contemplated is decided upon, much intelligent study should be given. He was answered by epithets.

There has been a great amount of interest in the whole project expressed in the press during the past month and a half, practically all of it indicating a general desire for the city to proceed slowly with any action, and a feeling that the bridge scheme is open to severe criticism. That this feeling is widespread is indicated by the roster of persons and organizations who have taken a hand. Among them are:

New York Chapter A. I. A.
Architectural League
Broadway Association
Brooklyn Chapter A. I. A.
Citizens' Budget Commission
Citizen's Union
City Club
City Hall Park Association
Community Councils of the City of New York
Fine Arts Federation
Merchants Association
New York Board of Trade
New York Society of Architects
New York Chapter American Society of Landscape Architects
Real Estate Board of New York
Regional Plan Association
Sixth Avenue Association
Washington Square Association
West of Central Park Association
West Side Chamber of Commerce

It is unbelievable that in a democratic government any one man, no matter how able or how well-intentioned, can, by sheer audacity and intimidation, impose his ideas upon a city of the size of New York without a proper check upon them being made by responsible and capable judges. Before the bridge can be started there are a number of further steps which must be taken. The War Department must approve. Its hearing will be on April 25. The Municipal Art Commission must give its approval. Financing must be secured through PWA, RFC or private bankers. Affirmative action must be taken by the Board of Estimate. Opposition at each of these steps may expect to be held up to public ridicule, but every conscientious architect in New York City will do his utmost to protest against the high-handed and arbitrary procedure followed thus far.

CANDIDATES

The names of the following men have been presented for membership:

FOR INSTITUTE MEMBERSHIP

Carl Feiss

Sponsors:

Leopold Arnaud
Edgar I. Williams

FOR CHAPTER ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

1. John H. Christiana, Jr.

Sponsors:

Harvey Wiley Corbett
Serge P. Petroff

2. Nicol Bissell

Sponsors:

Arthur L. Harmon
R. H. Shreve

Pursuant to Section 6, Paragraph 3, of the Chapter By-Laws, members are requested to submit within ten days for the information and guidance of the Committee on Admissions, privileged communications relative to the eligibility of the above-mentioned candidates.

NOMINATIONS

Each year the members of the New York Chapter elect a nominating committee whose important duty it is to prepare the slate of officers for the coming year. This year's nominating committee consists of:

Hobart B. Upjohn, Chairman
Lewis G. Adams
J. Andre Fouilhoux

The Annual Chapter Meeting this year will take place on Wednesday, June 7, and the officers to be elected are: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Recorder, Treasurer, two members of the Executive Committee, three members of the Professional Practice Committee, two members of the Committee on Fellows, four members of the Jury for the Medal of Honor. According to the By-Laws, a letter ballot prepared by the Nominating Committee will be sent to each member of the Chapter 21 days in advance of the Annual Meeting.

Separate lists of nominations may be submitted to the Secretary of the Chapter by any ten or more members not less than ten days before the Annual Meeting. Such letter ballot containing the independent nominations must then be sent to the members five days in advance of the Annual Meeting.

Chapter members are privileged to make suggestions to the Committee on Nominations which will very shortly convene.

STATE PUBLIC WORKS

To fill the vacancy caused by the death of Colonel Frederick Stuart Greene, on March 26th, Governor Lehman has appointed as his successor Captain Arthur W. Brandt.

The new superintendent of public works has a long record of service in State departments, reaching back to 1912, the year of his graduation from Tufts.

The Institute has already offered to Captain Brandt through the various chapters its good wishes and desire for the most complete cooperation.

QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

With our last issue was sent a questionnaire on the subject of public works. Its object was to find out what experience the members of the Chapter had had with both full and partial services for the Federal, State and Municipal governments. Answers were received from thirty-seven members, representing young and old, large and small firms. Probably the experiences of only thirty-seven firms is not very conclusive one way or another, but there seems to be fair unanimity on certain points. For instance, ninety per cent of all answers indicated that the various government bureaus were cooperative with the architects, although this was usually qualified with the remark that this was true but "red tape" practically nullified the good effects.

In Federal work seventy-five per cent found full services profitable, but only seventy per cent made a profit on partial services. Eighty-eight per cent found satisfactory administration and execution under full services as against fifty-five per cent under partial services.

In State work full services were profitable for eighty-four per cent as against seventy per cent for partial services. No one complained of poor administration or execution under full services, but under partial services only sixty per cent found them satisfactory.

In Municipal work both full and partial services were profitable for only sixty-six per cent. Administration and execution were much more satisfactory under full services; eighty-six per cent as against sixty-six.

The following remarks are chosen as being the most representative of the general feeling about work with government bureaus:

"Red tape expensive."

"Not paid for supervision, but had to supply it daily."

"PWA system is fundamentally bad as regards results."

"Bureaus have their place in public architecture, but it is that of coordinating and supervising the client's part of the relationship, and not that of doing the architect's part provided a competent architect be employed."

Oculus was very much encouraged at the number of questionnaires returned fully filled out, and will save them to flourish in the faces of those who continually tell us that architects can neither read nor write.