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THE OCULUS

NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

115 EAST 40th STREET

DECEMBER, 1942

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EDITOR

NEXT CHAPTER MEETING

Tuesday, December 15, 12:30 p.m.
Subject: Chapter Business.

This will be the first meeting of the Chapter per se this season.

The deep and dark plans of the Brunner Scholarship Committee will be laid bare at this meeting. You will also be asked to pass upon the Chapter's budget for next year.

Please be on time so that we may adjourn promptly at 2. Reservation card is enclosed.

"ACT NOW ON LOCAL PLANNING"

The following is taken from an article by William Stanley Parker, published in the Architectural Record for October, and is called to your attention at the special request of the Chairman of the Institute's Committee on Post War Planning.

Architects, as members of the planning professions, have a contribution they can make in the field of the orderly, planned development of their home cities and towns. This can be done not only through personal service on city plan commissions, housing authorities, and other governmental agencies, but also through group action that will bring pressure upon the local government to recognize the importance of comprehensive planning and to provide the planning commissions with staffs necessary for the efficient performance of their functions.

Too much city planning in the past has been unrelated to the municipality's financial ability. Short-range financial policies and unlimited wishful thinking in the field of planning do not and cannot result in sound, orderly development. What is needed is long-range financial policy involving a long-range capital outlay program properly related to a master plan indicating the still longer-range scheme for municipal growth.

Therein exists a fertile field for action by the architectural profession through the local architectural organization, A.I.A. Chapter or State Association.

Architects can act by themselves, or, if local interprofessional relations are propitious, can bring about cooperative action by architects, engineers, landscape architects, and city

planners and add weight to their attack.

The federal government, through the work of the National Resources Planning Board aided during the past year by the Public Work Reserve—latterly called the Local Public Works Programming Office—has gone far to spread the idea of long-range programming and to teach the techniques involved. The field has been ploughed and harrowed and a lot of good seed planted. Architects should take up the task of watering this ground and nursing the seedlings that have already sprouted in a number of communities in the shape of long-range programs and capital budgets.

Where a completed capital budget program has been developed, let the public officials know that the architects, as citizens, approve the idea and recognize the forward-looking attitude that has brought the program into being. This evidence of public support may be potent in sustaining the idea and securing its adoption as a permanent routine.

We find it easy to criticize government spending but few are in a position to realize clearly the benefits that have accrued or can accrue to our city as a result of federal government research. It is sound procedure for the federal government to develop and make available to all state and local governments improved techniques that can best result from research by a federal agency. The waste in such effort is caused when local government fails to make use of the results of such federal research.

Architects can well serve their communities by bringing their organized pressure to bear on local officials to bring about an understanding of the benefits that will accrue from a long-range program which represents an orderly process of looking ahead.

Long-range planning, based on a realistic capital budget program, will mean more to the community and to its architects and engineers, than wishful thinking. We must not be too little or too late.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

The Annual Christmas Lunch this year will be a joint party of the Chapter, the League and the Landscape Architects. Thursday, December 24, is the date.

STATE ARCHITECTS MEET

The New York State Association of Architects held a two-day conference in New York City on Friday and Saturday, October 30 and 31. This was in lieu of their Annual Convention which was foregone this year due to the war. Over a hundred delegates from upper New York State as well as from the Metropolitan area attended the opening session on Friday evening at the Architectural League.

The constituent organizations of the Association which were represented at the conference were the New York, Brooklyn, and Buffalo Chapters of the A.I.A., and the New York, Brooklyn, Bronx, Westchester, Staten Island, Queens, Long Island, Syracuse, and Western New York Societies of Architects. James W. Kideney of Buffalo, President of the Association, presided. The Program and Arrangements were in charge of Messrs. Rich, Strauss, and Cantor.

Major Irving V. A. Huie, Commissioner of the Department of Public Works, was the principal speaker at the Friday evening meeting. The work of his Department, said Major Huie, is divided into three major categories: bridges, sewage disposal, and new building construction.

The Department's Architectural Bureau, consisting of 600 architects and engineers, he believes is capable of handling this work in all normal times, and only in the case of peak loads has it been the policy of the Department to call upon the services of private architects.

The Architectural Bureau, which includes 160 designers, was already set up at the time Major Huie took office on January 1, 1938, and has not been enlarged since that time. Major Huie stated that since taking office he has consistently maintained the policy of having normal work handled within his Architectural Bureau and seeking outside help only in emergencies. At such times he is limited in his selection to those on the Major's Panel, his Department being the only one in New York City which is so limited, all others being free in selecting private architects to choose whom they will.

The new contracts recently offered by the City for Post War Projects were of particular interest to all present. These contracts, said Major Huie, are offered in the following

stages: 1. Consulting Contracts, 2. Preliminary Contracts, covering initial studies and recommendations on the scope and requirements of each project. 3. Final Contracts, including plans and specifications. 4. A combined Contract for preliminary and final work, which is offered only after the project has been finally passed by the various agencies whose approval is necessary, i.e., The Budget Director, the City Comptroller, the Board of Estimate, and the "client" Department.

Questions from the audience were invited and a lively discussion ensued covering nearly all phases of public work by private architects. This inevitably led to the question of competitions, in which Major Huie could offer no help since his Department when engaging outside architects is limited to the Mayor's Panel. Nevertheless the delegates, by resolution, authorized their Board of Directors to promote competitions in all public works wherever possible.

The open meeting of the Board of Directors on Saturday morning was presided over by Mr. Kidney.

The Board considered first the recommendations made by the Public Information Committee of the A.I.A. in its recent Report which that Committee has submitted to all Chapters and State Association members for their consideration.

The recommendations of the Report broadly are that a national weekly, published and owned by the Institute, edited professionally and supported by advertising, would not only materially increase the national membership but would be self-supporting (the Octagon is now a major item of expense), and in time might become a source of considerable revenue, to be used for such activities as national radio publicity, etc.

The Report further warned that if the Institute does not take this step, "more and more State Associations will start their own publications, with advertising, which will tend to create disunity." The By-Laws of the Institute, while frowning upon advertising in its own publications or those of its Chapters, does not restrict State Association members with respect to advertisements in their own publications.

It was the consensus of the New York State Board that the above recommendations were realistic in the light of present day conditions and a vote of approval of the Report was forwarded to Mr. Del Gaudio for submission by him to the A.I.A.

The moot question of competitions was also discussed, this time with regard to Post War Planning Projects in New York State. Mindful of the mandate of the delegates at the Friday night session, a resolution was passed that "the New York State Association of Architects urge upon all public authorities within the State, who have power to select private architects, that greater use be made of the competition method."

Legislation with regard to State Post War Work was not overlooked and Messrs. Del Gaudio, Kidney, and Goldberg were appointed a Committee to follow closely all bills in the New York State Legislature, particularly those affecting appropriations for Post War Work, and to act when necessary.

PHOTOGRAPH EXHIBITION

Your attention is called to the exhibition of photographs of "Sweden Prepares for Defense, 1942," and "Swedish Architecture," at the League Club House. The exhibition is a joint activity of the Chapter, the League and the American Society of Landscape Architects, N. Y. Chapter.

The photographs of "Sweden Prepares" have been lent by the American-Swedish News Exchange; those of Swedish Architecture are by G. E. Kidder Smith.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Second Joint Meeting of the Chapter and League proved conclusively that a success can be repeated. Over seventy members and their wives and guests attended the dinner on Thursday evening, November 12, at the League, at which Mr. Arthur Garfield Hays was the guest of honor and principal speaker. The dinner was presided over jointly by the "team of Williams & Williams," Mr. Edgar Williams as President of the Chapter and Mr. J. Scott Williams as acting President of the League.

Among the guests were: Mrs. Hays, Mrs. Woodbridge, wife of the League's President who is now on active duty with the United States Navy; Mrs. Stevenson, wife of the Chapter's former President, now a Major in the United States Army, over seas; Mr. Henry H. Gutterson, A.I.A. of Berkeley, California, and two visiting architects from Mexico, Sr. Silvio Margain and Sr. Carlos Lazo, the latter the holder of the Delano & Aldrich Scholarship. Two newly elected members of the A.I.A. were also introduced, Messrs. John A. Frank and Hugh N. Romney.

Mr. Hays, author and well-known attorney, called his talk a "City Lawyer Looks at the Future."

Our immediate future, Mr. Hays believes, need not be "viewed with alarm," for an intensive period of new development is inevitable after the war. We are apt to forget that fully 50% of the facilities which we unquestionably accept today as necessary to our daily existence, were unheard of fifty years ago. Every generation brings with it new inventions, new materials, new discoveries, new ideas. Architects, as the builders and planners for human living, should play a major role in any period of expansion.

The countries with the highest living standards we find to be democracies, and it is our good fortune to be living in one of these. Mr. Hays exploded the myth of efficiency in totalitarian governments. Allegiance to a party, he said, brings with it coercive measures and suspicion which destroy individual efficiency and thought. As proof of this the democracies have in one year equalled the nine year's effort of the Axis powers.

Our basic liberties, however, are gradually being taken away from us, not by force but because of our apathy, Mr. Hays stated. We are tending towards a system of Government which is daily exerting more control over us, which is taking more and more money from the people, a Government which believes that it can make the poor rich by making the rich poor.

Mr. Hays urged us not to be ashamed or afraid of our rights. They are part of our American heritage. We have fought for them for hundreds of years and must of necessity always defend them.

MEMBERSHIP

CANDIDATES:

The following names have been submitted for Institute membership:

1. Charles W. Beeston
Sponsors:
Seth Talcott
C. Dale Badgeley
2. William McKnight Bowman
Sponsors:
Wm. Lawrence Bottomley
Matthew Del Gaudio
3. Thomas Edmund Greacen II
Sponsors:
Henry S. Waterbury
James Stewardson
4. Robert Ingle Hoyt
Sponsors:
C. Dale Badgeley
Kenneth Reid