

Successes and Failures of a State Convention

Traditionally our State AIA conventions have been held in border-belt resort hotels where mostly upstate architects bring their wives, socialize, play golf, listen to guest speakers, dance to fox trots, and discuss how to get the statute of limitations passed. Very few New York City architects attend. Their tastes, way of life, and time schedules are different.

This year there was an attempt at compromise. The convention, with a theme of "The City Challenge", was held in Rochester, a city in the agonizing midst of urban renewal. The program was somewhat shorter and part of it was on the weekend.

In some ways, it worked. Stephen May, the mayor of Rochester, a youthful, intelligent, moderate Republican, gave a fine speech. He saw Rochester as a city rising successfully from its urban crises (LeRoy McRae, Executive Director of ARCH said it looked like a big parking lot.). He had read the AIA's National Growth Policy and gave it his support. AIA President Elect Archibald Rogers, a most effective spokesman for the policy, inaugurated the new officers which included Tom Galvin, President and Larry Litchfield, Vice President. Galvin said it was his goal to expand the NYSAA's involvement with legislation into the entire spectrum environmental goals.

Saturday was a workshop day. Seminars were held on "Cities for People", "Preservation",

Assumes all architects are men.

"Community Design Centers", and the "AIA National Policy". They were excellent, of the highest quality for which one could ask.

But with the change comes problems. Attendance was poor. Few New Yorkers. Embarrassingly few from Rochester. There were no women delegates, no black delegates (guests only). There were no students. The business sessions dragged. A number of delegates played golf during the afternoon seminars. The weather was bad. The hotel food was awful. Exhibitions lacked space. Saturday's banquet was a lengthy unsuccessful combination of awards, prizes, inaugurations, and ballroom dancing.

Next year New York is the host Chapter. Richard Roth, Jr. is the Chairman. Because it was planned in advance, it will be held in the Catskills. According to Tom Galvin, the program will be drastically revised and in the following year it will be in a city. Hopefully we will see the day when any architect in the state will look forward to a short, professional convention which he or she can still find socially enjoyable.

KK

Oculus Photograph

Chapter Members Invited to Metropolitan's Breuer Exhibit December 6

A large gathering of the Chapter, the WAA and the Architectural League will happen at the Metropolitan Museum December 6, 5:30-8:00 P.M.

The occasion will be a private viewing of a new, major exhibition, "Marcel Breuer at the Metropolitan," a precedent-shattering event. It is the first time the Museum has shown the work of a living architect. Mr. and Mrs. Breuer will be present.

The exhibition is to be largely composed of photo murals, models and large-scale mock-ups, including one of the monumental columns from the IBM Research Center at La Gaude, Var, France, and one of the tree columns from St. John's Abbey and University, Minnesota. There will be examples of Breuer's furniture and some of his tapestries.

Reservations with checks for \$5.00 per person must be received at the Chapter office no later than Monday, December 4. Cocktails will be available. Your reservation will be acknowledged at the main entrance of the Museum.

Altruism: Suicidal Folly Or Genuine Concern?

More than one eyebrow must have been raised in wonder when the Executive Director of the NYC/AIA registered an "anti-building" position on 2 separate zoning proposals at November's City Planning Commission hearing.

George Lewis, speaking for the official Chapter position supported the establishment of a "Special Parks District" in Tudor City, thereby opposing the building of a huge apartment tower there. Should this proposal succeed, it would mean an 11th hour reprieve for the two precious parks which would have been displaced.

Next, Mr. Lewis dismissed as a "step backward", the "Split-lot Zoning" proposal. This applies to approximately 15 previously assembled city lots which have an R10 section fronting the avenues, but with a portion in a mid-block R8 zone. A "temporary bonus" would permit treating most of the site as if it were R10, thereby increasing its potential building density.

The Chapter chose to reject this proposal. By opposing further incursion of increased bulk within mid-block areas it is hoped that the small-scale quality of such areas may be retained.

As **Oculus** goes to press, the final outcome of both of these cases remains unclear.

At the Tudor City Site, a "Special Parks District" was created by the CPC, with the developer, Harry Helmsley scheduled to be compensated by a bonus of "extra building space" on other Manhattan properties. If the Board of Estimate also approves the "Special Park District", many believe that Mr. Helmsley will go to court in his desire to build on his Tudor City site.

When asked by **Oculus** to discuss this possibility, Mr. Helmsley replied that although he liked the "unique solution of the Special Parks District", he was not happy with the restrictions incorporated in the "extra building space" exchange. He felt that since this would not amount to equal compensation, he could not predict his course of action pending the Board of Estimate's decision.

Meanwhile, the CPC has yet to declare its decision on the "Split-lot Zoning" proposal. Some Real Estate people predict dire results if the increased density is not permitted. And this includes threatening to allow all the parking lots to remain (!?).

After the CPC hearing, George Lewis was questioned about the apparent "anti-building" stand taken by an organization of architects. He voiced the sentiments of the majority of the members when he pointed out that the concerns of the AIA included genuine regard for the overall quality of life in New York City. This includes striving to keep the city a pleasant place in which to live and work.

LY

Chapter to Support Appeal of BSA Variance

The Executive Committee, with President Galvin abstaining, has resolved to continue the Chapter's opposition to a variance permitting the construction of a 34 story apartment house on an R8 and C1-9 zoning lot located between 70th and 71st Streets, and between 2nd and 3rd Avenues.

In hearings before the Board of Standards and Appeals early this year the owners and their architects requested approval of plans for a structure exceeding the permitted floor area ratio, providing less than the required (1) open space ratio and (2) lot area per room, and penetrating the sky exposure plane. In supporting the opposition of Community Board #8, the Chapter contended, with then Chapter President Frost, 1st V.P. Polshak, and Bronson Binger among those in attendance, that the zoning lot in question did not differ significantly from others in the neighborhood, and that exceptions were therefore not justified. Also heard in opposition was the Municipal Art Society. The variance was, however, unanimously granted by the Board with favorable findings as required on each of the items listed in Section 72-21 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Court proceedings against the variance were subsequently initiated, but the action of the Board was upheld by the State Supreme Court. The court decision has now been appealed, and both the Chapter and the Municipal Art Society are prepared to appear as amici curiae and restate their opinions before the Appellate Division.

Construction work at the site has not been started.

WBN

Hospitals and Health Committee Continues To Grow and Evolve

The Hospitals and Health Committee, chaired by David Ginsberg for the second year, shows a healthy vitality in the development and continuation of its ambitious programs.

The most noticeable change, Mr. Ginsberg points out, is in the composition of the committee. In four years, the membership has tripled to 60—with a waiting list. There are many "young" members, with a large proportion of non-principals. One third of the architects are non-practicing, but are rather with regulatory agencies or with hospitals. Thirty different offices are represented, many of which are small, new firms.

Next year's chairmen will be elected instead of appointed, to better reflect the needs and wishes of the expanding committee.

The annual conference—which last year drew 125 people to a full day's activity—will change this year. A workshop is contemplated, a forum presenting research papers in health facilities planning.

There will be, in addition, new emphasis on liaison activities and service to the entire Chapter. Work has begun on a Standard Form of Questionnaire for the Selection of Architects for Health Facilities, parallel to AIA Document B431 for educational work. The Committee will further define the role of the hospital consultant, working with the American Association of Hospital Consultants.

Also, talk has begun with the New York Public Library to develop a medical health facilities collection. The Hospital Review and Planning Council has already begun this collection, but it needs financing for acquisitions and for a librarian or research associate.



Top: Hospitals and Health Committee lunch/work meeting last November 15.

Below: Committee Chairman David Ginsberg, left, and guest speaker Edward M. Richards, center.

Oculus photograph by Steven Gottesman

Continuing activities of the Hospitals and Health Committee include their field trips to health facilities in and within a reasonable distance of New York and a variety of open meetings and seminars. The education program also continues, this year on an advanced level. The "Facilities Cost Guide", begun last year, is forthcoming, and the "Public Information Receivers Directory" is in the process of being updated. Last year's "Health Facilities Directory" is still available from the Chapter.

Rumors in the wind include a field trip to China, a design competition for a health facilities project, and a health facilities bibliography.

DPH

Chapter to Seek Revisions In City Charter

New York City has formed a Charter Revision Commission. After twenty years of frustrating nibbling progress towards achieving a contractual and procedural relationship with city construction agencies beneficial to both citizens and architects of New York, the Chapter has decided to propose dramatic changes to the charter to achieve results. Tom Galvin has appointed an ad-hoc committee which consists primarily of Robert Gatje's Public Agencies Committee with a few additional members.

At its first meeting on Nov. 15th, the committee decided to formulate policies for testimony in five areas: 1) consideration of a single city construction agency; 2) limiting the powers of the Comptroller, particularly in regard to post construction audits; 3) making provisions for arbitration; 4) civil service and efficiency in processing and 5) broader issues such as providing means for more community involvement in the decision-making process.

Hearings may begin in December. Senator Roy Goodman has promised that the Chapter will be heard and will personally meet with the Political Affairs Committee. Engineering societies are working with the ad-hoc committee and Frank Karelsen is giving legal guidance.

KK

Big Changes at Board of Education

Adaptation and renovation are the keys to the Board of Education's new and flexible approach to educational facilities, according to Dr. August Gold, Director of School Planning and Research of the N.Y.C. Board of Education.

In his luncheon talk to the November open meeting of Rachelle R. Bennett's School and College Architecture Committee, Dr. Gold exorcised a long list of educational ghosts.

The Board of Ed. is not projecting a lot of building. The City has new priorities for capital investment, such as pollution and energy. Also, under the present building program, overcrowding in the city schools will be met by 1976/7. There is also a new awareness that in New York—an area of static population—space needs will be created mainly by population shifts and aging of existing facilities.

Flexibility emerges as the dominant theme: in educational approach, in size of facilities, in schedules, in equipment. The relationship between programs and buildings also is flexible, but it is the building that must now adapt.

The new philosophy of the Board of Ed. is that a school is part of a community. Educational parks are out; in the future, networks of smaller schools will blanket a population area (this is planned for Welfare Island).

If new schools are needed in an older neighborhood, found space will be the resource; in a new development, schools will be located primarily in the apartment structures. The City would now rather rent space and project for 20 years than build space and project for 75. Column bays of 25 foot square provide adequate flexibility; if there is a population shift, the space can be turned back for residential or commercial use.

School population sizes have been cut in half. Primary and intermediate schools will be planned for 500-600 students, and high schools will hold 2,000 at most. The school planning module has been reduced to 100-125 students, using team teaching of four to five teachers and open planning. The traditional 6-3-3 versus 4-4-4 argument is no longer relevant. The one-room little red school house seems to be coming back into vogue.

Given this educational approach, large facilities are not necessary. If you have water or electricity, you can plug in any teaching aid or equipment. Closed circuit television expands special teaching opportunities within the system. Individual physical education, as opposed to group games, is being emphasized, eliminating the need for large gym-and-spectator facilities. Special facilities, such as swimming pools, will be built and shared; the city's museums and libraries will provide the larger resources.

School buildings will receive more intensive use, around the year and around the day. One third of a sampling of students indicated a desire to attend high school from 4:00 in the afternoon to 10:00 at night, so they could work while receiving their education. Based on this, an evening high school will be started.

The Board of Education requirements are loosening up; old rules that do not reflect building code requirements are being reexamined. There has been experimenting with "fast track" planning and construction, which has been highly successful, and systems design, which has not yet been evaluated.

Cheer up. There are still 950 schools that will not be phased out, many of which will undergo modernizations. And there will still be work for the City's architectural firms—if they are willing to concentrate on the

"internal environment": color, space, flexible furnishing, partitioning, HVAC and electrical systems.

Whether in found space or existing school buildings, the new emphasis will be on ingenuity of adaptation. *DPH*

Affirmative Action

The School of Architecture and Environmental Studies at the City College of the City University of New York is pursuing a program to increase staff representation of qualified Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Asians and women from architectural and related professions.

The School, located at 133rd St. & Broadway, has about 800 students and 65 staff members. 15 staff members (c. 23%) are of groups previously unrepresented or under-represented in the profession and in schools.

In keeping with two longstanding City College traditions—quality education and the opening of new opportunities for NYC groups who have not had equal access to the professions or higher education, the School wishes to encourage application for employment by members of these groups.

Applications in the form of a letter and biography may be made to Dean Bernard P. Spring, (School of Architecture, Convent Avenue & 138th St., N.Y., N.Y. 10031). Budget restrictions prevent any further hiring for the current academic year. However, openings are expected for the academic year beginning Sept. 1973. Most applicants are interviewed in March and April and all applications are held on active status until withdrawn. *AMT*

Students Witness Lack of Communications Between Professions

Saturday Oct. 28th. FIT auditorium. About 300 NYC design students, mostly interior designers. Seven panelists of designers and behavioral scientists tackling a heavy symposium title "Simulated Environments: Exploring the Psychological Effects of Designed Space on Man" sponsored by the N.Y. Chapters of the AIA (Student Affairs), AIID, and NSID. The last speaker Dr. Aristede Esser, a psychiatrist has just made his 20-minute presentation and everyone is ready to break for lunch. Architect Richard Dattner says "I don't know about the rest of you out there, but I didn't understand a word Dr. Esser said." Dattner calls it a "word salad." Raised hands show 50 percent agree. Minor bedlam. After lunch students vote 100 percent to break format and remain in auditorium to ask questions of all panelists. Dr. Esser says patronizingly "you must read my book." Nice guy Dan Toan politely eludes question of whether social scientists contribute to design. Moderator Ada Esser (wife, composer and scientists) loses all touch with sense of questions. Dattner accuses Essers of playing Mommy and Daddy roles. Afternoon slowly deteriorates. The students? If they learned anything it's that everyone was saying the same thing differently or some one was wrong. My sympathies were with the designers.

KK

Brunner Scholarship Committee To Request Proposals on Three Topics

The Brunner Scholarship Committee for 1972-73 has decided upon 3 possible topics for this year's award. Chairman Lowell Brody reports that the areas of concern have been approved by the Executive Committee and the application forms will be available shortly.

The possible subjects are: the purposes of Architectural Education, Access to the Profession, and Environmental Concern.

The last date of application will be December 31, while the last date for receipt of the papers will be January 31, 1973.

LY

Davis Brody & Associates Recommended for Institutes Architectural Firm Award

Inadvertently left out of the previous issue, were the Awards Committee, chaired by Jonathan Barnett, recommendations for the following Institute awards, subsequently approved by the Executive Committee:

Architectural Firm Award:
Davis Brody & Associates

Allied Professions Medal:
Paul Grotz

Industrial Arts Medal:
Lela & Massimo Vigneli

Collaborative Achievement in Architecture Award.
1970 U.S. Pavilion at Osaka

Architectural Critic's Citation:
Alan Dunn

Are Architects Really Necessary?

The High School students thronged in, about 75 of them in total. The exhibit of student work from three schools of architecture in the City was on display; three slide projectors were flashing shots of student work and scenes from the various schools; stacks of architectural magazines and AIA literature were available for the taking; architecture students were scurrying about conversing with the High School students; refreshments were delicious. The Open House for High School students at Chapter Headquarters on November 16 sounds like a great success—unless you noticed the one missing ingredient: professional architects (members of the New York Chapter of AIA). A grand total of three showed up (four, if we include George Lewis, who spent a great part of the afternoon circulating among the students to make up for the lack of his colleagues). My special thanks to Larry Gordon and Lou Giacalone for coming and caring (I was the third professional present).

The Open House was billed as an opportunity for High School students interested in architecture to meet and talk informally with members of the profession. It didn't quite work out that way but the High School students seemed to enjoy themselves anyway. Perhaps this was just one more example of how well the world can get along without the existing brand of professionals architect.

*Nathan J. Maltz,
Chairman
Student Affairs Committee*

Executive Committee Actions

November 8, 1972

- Approved the Brunner Committee's Proposal for subject matter to be recommended to this year's applicants.
- Appointed a Resolutions Committee to receive suggestions and formulate resolutions for submission to the 1973 AIA Convention: Ms. Edelman, Messrs. Prentice, Brody, Giacalone.
- Resolved that the Chapter meet at the Metropolitan Museum on December 6 on the occasion of the Breuer Exhibit (see article this issue).
- Heard representatives of the City's Urban Design Council recommend the establishment of a City Architects' Office.
- Appointed a committee to formulate recommendations for revisions in the City Charter (see article this issue).
- Resolved to join the Municipal Art Society in submitting an amicus curiae brief related to a suit to reverse the Board of Standards and Appeals decision granting a variance to Rudin Management for a site between East 70 and 71 Streets.
- Resolved to support proposed revisions to the Landmarks Preservation Law.
- Heard a report that an agreement has been reached with a contractor for a limited renovation of the 3rd floor of Chapter Headquarters.
- Heard that George Lewis was that day appearing at a Planning Commission hearing, following an ad hoc meeting of appointed members of the Executive Committee, to oppose the proposed Split Lot Zoning Amendment and to support the proposed Special Park District (which could preserve the Tudor City parks).

Candidates for Membership

Information received by the Secretary of NYC/AIA regarding the qualifications of candidates for membership will be considered confidential.

Professional Associate

Bryant L. Conant

Associate

Helen V. Armstrong
James Marston Fitch
Suzana I. Stere
John George Trotta
Thaddeus G. Whitley (AIA)

Welcome to New Members

The NYC/AIA welcomes the following members:

Corporate

Paul Cooper (readmission)
Mark Joel Fassy
Peter Claman
Paula Treder
Leslie Cortesi
Judy Graf Klein
Theordre Sherman (readmission)

Associate

Satya P. Gupta

National Park Service Selecting Private Firms for Design and Development

The following letter, dated November 10th, was received by Executive Director George S. Lewis from the National Park Service. We publish it here for those who may find it of interest.

Gentlemen:

The National Park Service is selecting private firms for design and development of entire parks and groups of parks. You could help us in this task in two ways:

first, by sending copies of this letter to your members, and *second*, by giving us the names and addresses of all your members who have won special awards, in particular design awards, during the last several years.

We stress our interest in both *design quality*, in the sense that national design awards committees would use that phrase, and in design, production, and construction *management*.

The work will include site planning, building design, special and innovative programming, landscape architecture, sanitary engineering, highway engineering, and perhaps regional planning. Ability to manage interdisciplinary teams, either in a single firm or a group of firms, is a major requirement for this work.

We will very much appreciate any help you can give us. Respondents should address their submissions to my office.

Sincerely yours,

Ernest A. Connally
Associate Director, Professional Services

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