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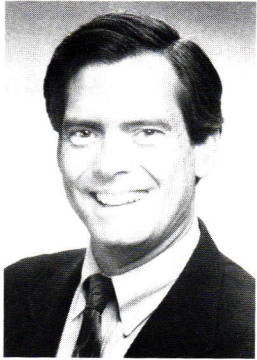
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# A Couple of Issues

by Roger Kingsland, AIA, President



*I have always felt that the best way to balance a budget was to make more money, not spend less.*

## Our last Board meeting (July 11), was very

interesting because two issues I think are important to AIA Pittsburgh were discussed.

The first was lack of attendance at AIA programs. Kevin Silson (Program and Exhibits Chair) and Carl Freedman (Continuing Education and IDP Chair) attended and asked for suggestions from the Board, regarding: how we might improve attendance. The Professional Development Committee has developed several excellent seminars in response to direct input from members. Carl's committee has done a fine job of organizing these events and has published a master calendar; call AIA if you need one. Kevin has developed a full schedule of monthly programs.

The Hornbostel and Richard Gluckman lectures have been the most popular so far. Attendance at some others has been disappointing, particularly Terry McDermott's lecture. As Executive Director of AIA National, Terry does an excellent job of explaining the value of AIA National. Thinking that a family oriented social event would be popular, we had scheduled a family picnic at the zoo for July, but had to cancel due to lack of interest.

Poor attendance is not a new problem. We are all busy and must be selective in the use of our time. I personally feel that we at the AIA should spend at least as much time encouraging attendance at a program as we do organizing it; even if we must cut the number of programs in half. It was mentioned that many of the professional development programs were scheduled for summer months when members are busy with other, non-professional activities (I think Jim Slomer at our office spends 83 percent of his waking weekend hours watching adolescent soccer when it is in season). The discussion expanded into the possibility of discontinuing AIA programs during the summer period. Summer is a fairly busy time for staff. We fill a lot of document orders, which is staff intensive, and do most of the planning for design awards. However, it seems feasible that we could discontinue committee meetings and membership programs and concentrate on these activities during the other three seasons of the year.

The second issue stems from discussion regarding the budget. Although it is difficult to accurately determine, we estimated by two methods of calculation, that we are approximately \$8,000 behind our revenue goal for 1995. I have always felt that the best way to balance a budget was to make more money, not spend less. After all, if we spend our money well, the more we spend, the better we serve our members. We have achieved substantial increases in sponsorship of our events, as well as doubled the number of professional affiliate members from 33 to 68 (we have a total of 578 members). I suggested that one way to make up the budget shortfall was to further increase the number of professional affiliates. We have a much lower percentage of affiliate members than other organizations, and many organizations, BOMA for example, receive substantial volunteer and financial support from their affiliates. Some Board members were, however, concerned that an increase in professional affiliates would inhibit opportunities for AIA members to socialize and interact and, even, perhaps, reduce program attendance by architects.

To me, this discussion is part and parcel to a central issue that we should discuss. The best way I can describe it is by a question: Are we a club or are we an organization (or where do we fall between these two extremes)? As a club, we would emphasize social interaction and the benefits members would receive through the exchange of ideas and knowledge among local architects. As an organization, our mission would be more directed toward accomplishing objectives that benefit our membership. I don't feel that AIA Pittsburgh should be at either extreme, nor do I have strong feelings as to which way we should lean. However, I do feel it is important that we have a clear conceptual understanding of what the nature of AIA Pittsburgh should be. Such an understanding would allow our leadership to plan programs appropriate to our underlying mission.

This is an excellent topic for November's long-range planning session and the Board would appreciate your input. For those of you too apathetic to give it, it's okay; we'll keep trying to get you involved and, even if you don't we can use the money. Thanks! 🏠

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**On the cover:** This month *Columns* takes a close look at the little things in architecture, such as this detail of MacLachlan Cornelius & Filoni's cupola at Duquesne University's Rangos School of Health Science. Photo: Dennis Marsico

AIA Pittsburgh serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and the Pennsylvania Society of Architects. The objective of AIA Pittsburgh is to improve, for society, the quality of the built environment by further raising the standards of architectural education, training and practice; fostering design excellence; and promoting the value of architectural services to the public. AIA membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields.

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## Regular or Decaf

Anne Swager, Executive Director

### I only drink decaffeinated coffee.

The real stuff makes me hyperventilate, sick to my stomach and gives me a headache. It's somewhat akin to a hangover without the fun that led to it. We only have one

good coffeepot in the office and everyone else likes the leaded kind. You might think that we argue about how much of what we make and when we make it every morning, but we don't. We all drink decaf. Why? Because I am the boss and so, I win. There are lots of other issues that come up in the office from time to time with often, but not always, similar results. While I'm given to statements like *I don't mind negotiating as long as I get my own way*, mostly they are said in jest. Being the boss is the best position when the issue is what kind of coffee we make, where we are having our Xmas lunch, and what color we are painting the storage room. You can even be grumpy and out of sorts and people will just steer clear of you. Some-

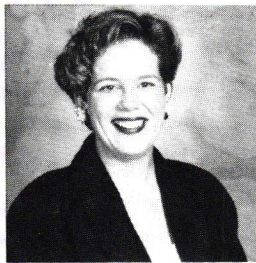
times, you can even impress people who have no idea who you are or what you do, by saying you are the boss of a whole office. "I run the company" sounds like mighty big stuff to the uninitiated.

After working for many different bosses for a number of years, I knew I wanted to be the boss someday. I was sure I could do it really well. I knew I would be totally democratic, always diplomatic, witty and insightful and of course, reap accolades from everyone in my office, unlike one fellow I worked for in the financial world of pinstriped suits and starched white shirts. He wore his rubbers over his shoes everyday to work for three solid weeks. He always asked everyone's opinion before he made a decision and then always did exactly what he thought in the first place. To me, he was Forrest Gump without the blind luck and certainly without any of the charm. I saw him several months ago and he was still in the financial world, apparently successful, wearing his rubbers and taking a con-

tainer of mashed potatoes and peas back to the office for his lunch. Did I mention his deplorable taste in cuisine? I critiqued his bad management techniques constantly. I took every criticism he made to anyone in the office totally to heart. I knew, given the chance, I could do it right. I could inspire everyone to do an outstanding job and succeed far beyond my wildest dreams.

I hear similar refrains everyday. There is no shortage of architects who someday want their own office. I am hardly one to criticize. I can no longer imagine working as a cog in the wheel of a large organization. But, I must add a note of caution. Being the boss only looks easy. When you are in charge, you can't be afraid to make decisions and go for broke. But now the rules have changed. It's not just your mouth you feed but everyone else in the office and their spouses and their kids and their pets and probably an elderly parent or two. Of course this won't be a problem because just like me you will know just the right thing to do to make a large profit. You are really sure of your idea, but just in case, you ask everyone in the office what they think, and a couple of your friends too. Naturally everybody's best guess is almost always different than yours and then, what should you do? Of course because you get to take lots of extended vacations and you can leave whenever you want, you'll have plenty of time to think over your brilliant ideas and make great decisions. As long as you don't mind phone calls when you are supposed to be away or errant thoughts of things you've forgotten jumping in front of your eyes while you are pulling tomato plants you'll be OK.

Of course, there's good and bad in everything we do, boss or not. If you are the one who signs everyone's paycheck, you can probably pick the coffee, even the flavored kind if you like. But, in the end, you also have to make all the final decisions, right or wrong, and live with the consequences. So, before you insist on choosing regular or decaf, remember you have to pay for it. ☹



*After working for many different bosses for a number of years, I knew someday I wanted to be boss.*

