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THE WISCONSIN ARCHITECT

THE AMERICAN
INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS
1939 DEC 19 AM 8:54
WASHINGTON, D.C.

DECEMBER
1939
Vol. 7 No. 12

THE WISCONSIN ARCHITECT
Official Publication
The State Association of Wisconsin Architects
•
Wisconsin Chapter, The American Institute of Architects

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Published Monthly
Subscription, $1.00 per year
Address all communications for publication to Editor at 152 W. Wisconsin Ave., Milwaukee

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BY ACTION AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE CHAPTER, THE ONLY NOTICE OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE WISCONSIN CHAPTER A.I.A. WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE WISCONSIN ARCHITECT.

Wisconsin Chapter A.I.A.

NOVEMBER MEETING

The monthly meeting of the Chapter was held at the City club at 12:15 p.m., November 27, 1939.

Two guests and 26 members were present. President Alex Bauer presided.

Leigh Hunt reported on the program of the Memorial Services for the late Irving K. Pond held at Hull House, Chicago, on November 15. The services were under the direction of the Chicago Chapter. The various organizations with which Mr. Pond had been associated during his long and active life were represented by members who spoke on Mr. Pond's activities. Original sketches were exhibited in the hall, which was filled to capacity. Mr. Hunt was impressed by the humor and cheerfulness of the speakers. An article by one of Mr. Pond's partners, appears in the current issue of THE WISCONSIN ARCHITECT.

Mr. Peter Brust, as a member of the City club committee, spoke on the Lake Front Development scheme and urged the Chapter to take an active part in this work. At present, he reported, the Harbor commission is being assisted by the Land Commission, the Realestate Board, the Association of Commerce and others. He stated it is of the greatest importance to Milwaukee that a long range, comprehensive plan be developed.

Mr. Bauer urged all members of the Chapter to work with Mr. Brust.

Mr. A. C. Eschweiler, Jr., read his report on the Construction Industry Congress held in Washington D. C., under the auspices of the United States Chamber of Commerce, recently. It was so interesting and timely that it is being published in this issue of THE WISCONSIN ARCHITECT.

Mr. Hunt stated that City Attorney Walter Mattison attended a conference in Washington, D. C., of municipal officers at which he urged a two-year moritorium on building codes for residences costing less than $6000.00. During this period uniform building codes were to be studied and adopted by all states.

Much discussion followed this announcement.

Meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.

LEIGH HUNT, *Secretary-Treasurer.*

DECEMBER CHAPTER MEETING

The December meeting of the Wisconsin Chapter, A.I.A., will be held at the City club in Milwaukee, at 12:15 p.m., December 27, 1939. All members are urged to attend.

Irving Kane Pond
Architect
1857-1939

Reprinted from the Illinois Society of Architects Monthly Bulletin

When the history of architecture of our period is written, the name and works of Irving Kane Pond must have a promiment place, not only because of his art, which renounced formalism and tradition-bound design, but also because of his influence for better practices and greater professional integrity. He brought to an archaeologic architecture, a new approach and to a superficial and sentimental civilization, some wholesome truths.

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in May, 1857, he entered a world ripe for the philosophy and ideas which he later promulgated. He attended the University of Michigan where he majored in civil engineering, graduating in 1879. That same year he came to Chicago, serving in the offices of Architect W. L. B. Jenney, furniture designer Bates, and Architect S. S. Beman. He formed friendships which he retained through life. After a study tour in Europe, he returned to Chicago to practice architecture, and a short time later entered into partnership with his brother, Allen Bartlett Pond. Thus was born the firm of Pond & Pond, which continued uninterruptedly from 1886 until the name was withdrawn in 1934.

Since this is not a biography, suffice it to say that the young firm was successful and a satisfied and enthusiastic clientele was established. This was not only fortunate but inevitable. Fortunate, because this profession was a medium through which I. K. Pond could express something of what he believed about life, civilization, and art; inevitable for two reasons; first, because he gave to his profession and his clients his most painstaking attention and application; second, because his architecture is as individual and refreshing as his life and character.

To him, architecture—the art of building, in contradistinction to the science of building—was an outgrowth and expression of the life and civilization of which it was a part. It must, therefore, combine in the inanimate mass of the building the essence of its function and spirit of its medium. Despising sham and pretense in his personal life, he discarded everything in design that appeared false. This meant the elimination of meaningless ornament and of the slavish repetition of dead classic motif..

This approach is evident in even his earliest creations, where he departed from accepted forms and groped for a truer expression. He experimented with forms, patterns, and mass, guided by good taste and an innate sense of perspective and composition, improving and discarding, until, in the Union Building at the University of Michigan, he reached a complete expression; complete in the sense that in mass and detail it satisfied his ideal of design. To a great extent, the detail used in this building formed the basis of the illustrations in his book, "The Meaning of Architecture."

With his theory of design supplying the underlying principle of all his work, there is wide variation in character which is not the result of chance but of thoughtful and conscientious effort to express in each building something of the feeling of its use and setting. For example, the masculinity of the Michigan Union, the femininity of the Michigan League, the somewhat smug opulence of the Royal Neighbors building, were the result of careful analysis and uncompromising adherence to his creed.

He was a patron and, in a measure, a student of all the arts; of music, literature, the theater, the dance, painting, sculpture, and acrobatics. Whether this interest in, and love of, the arts influenced his philosophical and ethical convictions, or whether the contemplation of physical and metaphysical phenomena urged the expression of fundamental facts in design, is immaterial. They were intertwined in his thoughts and are inextricably bound up in his buildings and his writings.

To contemporary architects he gave his time without stint, serving long and faithfully in the A.I.A. and other architectural societies and clubs. He stood for the highest possible professional ethics and did much toward the establishment of architecture as a recognized profession and art in this country and the lifting of the architect to a better position in our social structure.

His keen inerest in civic and social problems, as well as artistic matters, led him to support all worthwhile activities leading to better government, the correction of social evils, and the development of a fuller life. This is evidenced by the clubs and societies with which he was identified, including, among others, the American Institute of Architects, the Chicago Architectural Club, National Institute of Arts and Letters, Society of Midland Authors, Chicago City Club, Chicago Literary Club, University Club, Cliff Dwellers, and Circus Fans Association of America. His wide philanthropic interest provided the inspiration for the designs of many of his buildings.

His deep sympathy with the ideals and aspirations of Jane Addams made it possible for him to produce Hull House, in spite of the limited amount of money available for the buildings. In like manner Chicago Commons, Gars Hill, and other settlement houses were designed and built.

The problem of the then unorganized college students in our large universities was commanding attention. Working with his brother and certain liberal elements in the faculty and alumni of the University of Michigan, he launched the college union idea. Years of unselfish research and study, of heartache and disappointment, finally resulted in the production of the Michigan Union Building. Several more years passed before the soundness and value of the idea were recognized sufficiently for others to want to participate in similar ventures. Then followed the union buildings at Purdue University, Michigan State College, University of Kansas, and the Women's League Building at the

(Continued on page 4)

University of Michigan, each designed to meet a specific social as well as aesthetic need.

Many honors came to I. K. Pond during his life in recognition of his outstanding architectural achievements. The University of Michigan twice conferred honorary degrees, an A. M. in 1911, followed by Doctor of Architecture in 1930. He was a Fellow and President of the American Institute of Architects, honorary corresponding member of the Bund Deutscher Architekten, Royal Institute of British Architects, and the Central Society of Austrian Architects. His buildings have been widely publicised in architectural and trade journals in America and abroad. Hih writings lead to a complete understanding of his work.

He wrote extensively for the Inland Architect and the Journal of the A. I. A—contributions and observations pertinent to contemporary problems, and, in many instances, prophetic of future trends. His articles relative to the "set back" in city buildings indicated the need and illustrated the solution of the problem long before building codes forced its use. He wrote many papers which he read at the meetings of the Chicago Literary Club, some of which have been published under the title "A Strange Fellow and Other Club Papers."

The universality of interest and appeal common to all his writings is especially noticeable in "The Meaning of Architecture." Written primarily for architects and with a special message for them, it has, nevertheless, such beautiful and convincing observations on art and life that it is lifted out of the realm of the technical. While this is true all through the book, it is particularly noticeable in the opening chapter called "The Animating Spirit." It is an interesting fact that a leading authority and critic of the modern dance recommends this book, with particular reference to the chapter on "Rhythms," to students of that art.

In "Big Top Rhythms" he has shown us his hobby, his love of the circus and acrobatics. An athlete himself of no mean ability, he understood and appreciated the fine coordination and skill required in acrobatics. He felt, however, that there was more than mere physical skill and daring required in the performer. He saw in the perfectly executed performance, the beauty and rhythm which made it a fine art. More than a hobby, his work in the gymnasium and his association with and friendship for the artists of the circus was a recreation and an inspiration.

The world knew him as the architect and the writer, but those of us who were privileged to work with him in his chosen profession, knew him and loved him as the man. We saw him at his best. His unfailing sense of humor, his kindness and patience with our stupidities, made our tasks lighter. He never attempted to force his philosophy or his ideas on others, but he did demand honest craftsmanship and conscientious effort. In return he gave us his confidence and his friendship and the privilege of absorbing as much of his ideals as our capabilities would permit. With his humanity, his charity, and his unswerving honesty, he enriched the lives of his associates and friends as he enriched the world with his works.

—A. L. LLOYD

Copper and its Uses

by

BURT CADDLE

Secretary of Copper and Brass Research Association

(Continued from November Issue)

Engineers long ago found that proper insulation makes a home far more comfortable than one that has no such protection. Properly insulated a home can be kept snug and warm in winter with a minimum amount of heat, and cool in summer though the mercury may be flirting with the 100 degree mark outside.

It is difficult and expensive to insulate a house already built, but to properly insulate one under construction costs only a small part of the building dollar. And like rust-proof metals used for roofings and water lines, copper for insulation soon pays for itself after a few years in fuel bills. The cost of heating a well insulated house is much less than a similar house in the same locality not insulated. If the house is well insulated the temperature in winter can be kept at 75 degrees while the mercury is below zero outside. In summer a well insulated house is from 13 to 18 degrees cooler. This insulation is the protective barrier against infiltration of cold or warm air through the joints and pores of building materials.

Thin sheet copper is well adapted for both weather-proofing and damp-proofing. Most cellars are damp and musty. The cold damp atmosphere tends to percolate upward through the ordinary floor construction into the living space of the house. Copper applied to the walls and floor of the cellar by means of asphalt or pitch, offers an inexpensive method of damp-proofing.

Because of the savings in fuel bills and the added comforts, more and more better built homes today are being properly insulated. Your architect will recommend this and during freezing or hot weather you will be glad that you have this added feature.

Window, door and porch screens have but one purpose. They are put up to keep insects out. They are effective barriers only as long as the insect screen cloth used in their construction remains without breaks. A single break in the mesh renders an entire screen useless. Flies and mosquitoes will find the break and swarm into the house.

Rust is the cause of most of the breaks in ordinary screens. Rust weakens the metal and holes appear. Unless each hole is patched the screen at once loses its protective value. If you will observe insects buzzing around a screen you will note how alert they are in finding a break.

Patching holes in rustable metal screens is an endless task and it is most unsatisfactory. Soon the screen becomes a mass of patches which also rust.

The way to be sure that screen give proper protection is to use rust-proof, corrosion resistant bronze insect screen cloth.

There are 256 meshes in a single square inch of 16 mesh screen cloth. That is generally considered standard. Thus when a window 3 feet wide and 6 feet high is entirely screened, the insect cloth will contain

(Continued on page 9)

Construction Industry Conference Report

by

A. C. ESCHWEILER, JR.

The Construction Industry Conference was called by the United States Chamber of Commerce to meet in Washington on November 16th and 17th of this year. The general purpose of the Conference was to determine what factors might be retarding construction and to obtain the views of representatives of the various elements which go to make up the industry.

On Thursday morning, November 16th, the delegates and others who attended the Conference registered at the beautiful United States Chamber of Commerce Building, and the Conference was convened about 10:30 that morning in the large meeting room in this building. The morning session was devoted to "Construction and American Progress". Mr. John W. O'Leary, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Chamber, gave the welcoming address. He gave his views on the opportunities which awaited this country to restore the advance in our standard of living, which has apparently flattened out during the past decade for the first time in many years. He stressed the opportunities for developing new industries and for advancing the old. He mentioned the start which has been made in the re-building of the railroad system and stressed the possibilities in air transport and air industry, which has been coming along so rapidly that they are now building ships which they are confident will provide cheaper transportation than now exists in any form.

He stressed the fact that the greatest opportunity for the entire nation lies in the field of private housing and urged the Conference to consider ways and means of reducing the cost of housing to make it available to people who really need it. He felt that this could be accomplished in four ways: 1, through the design and by including new materials and new methods of construction; 2, through lower real estate taxes; 3, by lower material prices; and 4, by lower labor costs.

Mr. E. P. Palmer, Secretary and Treasurer of Senior and Palmer, New York, who followed him contradicted the gloomy prophets of stagnation and of the end of private enterprise by quoting the prophesies of a Mr. Carroll Wright in 1886. Mr. Wright was the first United States Commissioner of Labor, and after surveying the whole modern world of that day, found that we had come to a stopping place in history where we could look forward only to the maintenance of existing physical plant and equipment, and hope for no further advance by new developments and no marked extension of the industry of the country.

He quoted some of the modern people who are undoubtedly no better qualified than was Mr. Wright to predict our doom, but who have been prophesying the end of opportunity. He stressed the fact that the spirit of enterprise which is so typically American, is still working in the minds of men in many walks of life. He stated that the scientist in his search for nature's secrets, the engineer in his anxiety to apply each new discovery to the building of a better material world, and the sociologist in his quest for a basis of human understanding and sympathy, are no less pioneers than their forefathers who hewed a path through the forest. These men in their advance upon the interior frontiers of modern industry will make this century's contribution to better living standards.

Mr. Palmer quoted the population growth during the past and present. He stated that in the decade ending in 1930, there had been a population increase of approximately fifteen million, whereas the present decade which will end next year, will probably show an increase of only nine and a half million, and that the succeeding decade will probably show approximately nine and one-half million increase also. This does not necessarily mean, however, that our private economic activity will be forced to slow down. If the increase in our population lessens, the number of families is apt to increase, because this indicates smaller families. Whereas there were about five and a half million households added to the population during the booming twenties, there will probably be five and three-quarter million households added in the coming decade. Furthermore, there is no reason to assume that there is any direct and inevitable relation between population growth and capital formation. As long as the people who are living now are dissatisfied with the things they have, and as long as they want better houses and better equipment, we will have vigorous activity whether the population is expanding rapidly or slowly. In the last analysis, all the statistical forecasts of the population growth could be knocked into a cocked hat by young married people changing their minds about the size of their families.

The potential demand for new dwellings each year reaches the staggering total of 600,000. 150,000 of these will be required to take care of one-half of the present units which each year reach the age of fifty, and 450,000 for the net annual increase in the number of families.

The recent depression is, in his opinion, now only a state of mind, and he feels that the most important requisite for overcoming this is the preservation of the spirit of individual freedom and individual enterprise, which have characterized the country to date. The doctrine which is now being preached by some among us that governments can do for the people that which they cannot do for themselves should be roundly condemned by all intelligent and thinking people of the country. It is only under a free system that we can expect the development of such geniuses as Thomas Edison, George Eastman, and others, whose ingenuity and inventive minds did so much for the advancement in the standard of living and for the entire internal economy of the country.

To my mind the talk which we then heard by Mr. I. N. Tate, Vice-President of the Weyerhaeuser Sales Company of St. Paul, was perhaps the most valuable contribution to the entire Conference. The topic which Mr. Tate chose was "Better Living Standards", and he developed this idea in connection with the small individual residence built by private capital and private initia-

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tive. At the very outset, Mr. Tate stressed the fact that these houses could probably not be made available to the very lowest income group. He pointed out, however, that these people do not drive new automobiles, if they drive at all, and that they do not wear new clothes always, although they may be more warmly clothed than they would be with the new clothes they could afford. His primary suggestion was that possibly the building industry can provide new homes for the next higher income group, and that the vacancies thus made available would largely solve the problem for the very lowest income group.

Mr. Tate discussed in detail the possibilities of standardization and prefabrication. He quoted competent authorities who predicted possible savings up to 50% where complete standardization was practiced on a sufficiently large scale. This, he felt, however, was somewhat contrary to the American way of life, but pointed cut that a completely standardized interior might yield itself with very little added cost to a variety of exterior treatments, in order to avoid monotony and to satisfy the purchaser with a certain amount of individuality. As far as prefabrication is concerned, he felt that many of the ideals of prefabrication can be realized, if houses are planned to utilize the exact lengths to which precision cut floor joists, studding and rafters are now manufactured; when the door and window frames are prefabricated with doors and sash hung, and glass installed at the factory so that the entire unit may be merely put into place; when the sheathing and insulation is installed in large units, and when the heating and plumbing appliances are moved into place and connected up with a minimum of waste.

He pointed out that some of these savings are now being blocked by labor rules, but stressed the possibility of educating the labor leaders to the short-sightedness of such a policy. He believed that in the end the prefabrication of an increasing number of parts may make prefabrication of the entire house unnecessary.

Mr. Tate discussed in detail the costs of material and labor in the present market. Taking 1926 as 100%, it appears that the average price of building material in 1938 was 90.3%, and the past twenty-year average 95.9%. This indicates that building material is not high compared to prices during the past years, although I do not feel that it necessarily means that prices cannot be reduced.

As to wages, he quoted again the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, which bases the scale of wages on 1929 rates as 100%. According to their figures, the wages of all building trades in 1938 were 106.7% and approximately 12% above those in 1926. The union wages for all building trades in 1938 were 20% above the twenty-year average.

In computing the actual cost of building, however, the savings which have been derived by digging the basement with a steam shovel, mixing concrete and mortar by machine, using power saws, precision cut framing, pre-assembled frames as mentioned above, electric sanders, and to some extent pre-assembled heating and plumbing units, have apparently more than offset this increase in wages.

He quoted the case of one carefully estimated house which in 1926 cost $7,725 and which during the early part of this year, could be built for $6,215. The twenty-year average cost was $6,693.85. This indicates a 20% lower total cost this year than in 1926, and is to my mind a very encouraging statement. I don't believe that any of us, however, will allow this to influence us in our striving for lower costs and greater efficiencies. The higher hourly wage of labor has certainly not resulted in any advantage to the building mechanic who is now working fewer hours per year than he did in 1929. As long as American ingenuity, which Mr. Palmer mentioned, is still working, high hourly wage labor will necessarily find that it is being supplanted by machine-made products and shop assembled units.

Mr. Tate brought out many of the improvements which we are all familiar with in the building and equipment of the modern small house, and said that even more startling than these and more useful than the reduced cost, is the modern financing provided through the Federal Housing Administration, and other agencies, which have revolutionized the problem of home buying. The new amortized loan insures proper selection of the site, expert inspection of the materials, a low interest rate, a monthly payment usually less than the family has been paying for rent, which discharges the debt and produces a clear title to the property at the end of a definite number of years. This program is of tremendous benefit to those of us who are trying to build and sell these homes, because it has helped to put the house within the limits of the pocketbooks of many more American families and has made the owning of a home a more attractive and sound investment.

Mr Tate quoted from a Chicago paper which recently ran a full page ad featuring second-hand Fords, Plymouths, and Chevrolets on a payment of $17.70 per month. On the same day in a paper in Boise, Idaho, a compact, convenient, well-built home was advertised on a monthly payment of $17.00. This indicates that the house is really in competition with the automobile today in its appeal to the American pocketbook. Although one might say that the payments on the car will probably not continue for as long a period, it is doubtlessly true that similar payments will continue on its successors and descendants.

At the present time approximately 75% of the houses being built come within a price range that makes them available to only 25% of the people. Families who can afford houses costing from $2,000 to $4,000 complete, constitute 52% of the market, and yet during 1938 only 15% of the houses built were in that price range. Mr. Tate told us, however, that during 1937 the National Lumber manufacturers Association organized a movement which was participated in by nearly all of the building material lines, to develop efficient models of small homes in that price range that would appeal to the popular fancy. They actually built only three houses in that year, and eight in 1938, but in the present year, they have concentrated on two models—one a four-room house for $2,000, and a five-room house for $2,500, built under competitive price conditions at prevailing wage rates, and with the necessary profits throughout. A good many of these have been built during the year.

While in Washington, I talked with a number of architects, material manufacturers, and others, who are familiar with some of the progress that has been made and the difficulties encountered by the prefabricated house group. In fact Mr. Walter Harnischfeger was there, and during the open forum session, gave the Conference the benefit of some of his experiences and the difficulties which he had encountered in attempting to carry this out.

Some of the difficulties which he pointed out and which were also referred to by other speakers, were the inequalities of antiquated building codes, which because of their phrasing and lack of foresight, have handicapped the use of new materials and new developments in the construction industry. Many of the delegates felt that by the revision of the building codes, we could hope to make many legitimate savings through more desirable systems of construction and finish. This question of the building code and its revision, I feel, can be energetically pushed by our Chapter. It is logically a field in which we can and should take a leading part, and we all know from our frequent contacts with it, many of the antiquated requirements and regualtions which have only their venerability to recom-' mend them.

In the afternoon session, we heard Mr. Fermor S. Cannon, President of the Railroadmen's Federal Savings & Loan Association, speak on private enterprise in home financing. Mr. Cannon called attention to the differences in various State laws regarding home financing. He stated that in many localities, there is a legal charge of as much as $30 to $40 in connection with placing a $2,000 mortgage upon a $2,500 home. If collection goes to foreclosure, there are various legal and court expenses, which may amount to as much as $250 or more. These are costs which the home borrower must also pay, if he wishes to recover his property after the foreclosure action has taken place. It is difficult to see how such excessive legal expenses and costs can be justified in connection with the comparatively simple procedure of borrowing money for the financing of a small home.

In addition to these difficulties, there are foreclosure and repossession laws in various States which entail a tremendous hazard on the part of the lender. In some States proceedings may take as long as two years, and may involve a loss of interest income to the lender on a $2,000 mortgage of $200. The lender may also find himself compelled to pay $50 or $60 in taxes which have accumulated in the meantime plus a probable repair bill from $100 to $150. Finally when he does resell the property, he will be faced with a sales cost of $125 or more. Here in Wisconsin our laws are particularly lenient to the borrower, and I believe that if we were to investigate the facts, some change in these laws would make the lending of money a safer proposition, and thus encourage people to lend on small homes, and in the final analysis benefit the borrower and encourage home construction. Many of these costs are essentially non-productive, and by an intelligent revision of the laws which require them, much could probably be done to help the building industry.

Mr. Walter R. McCornack, Dean of the School

(*Continued on page 9*)

Encourage Sensible Buying and Selling Policies

Washington, Sept. 29,—As the best means of safeguarding from hysterical extremes orderly expansion of the home building industry already underway before the outbreak of European war, Wilson Compton, secretary and manager of the National Lumber Manufacturers Association, today urged building and loan officials attending the Annual Convention of the United States Building and Loan League at Atlantic City, to encourage sensible buying policies and sensible selling policies as an anecdote to rash, impulsive purchases born of a nation-wide, war-time speculative psychology.

Warning that home building is a sensitive barometer and that building recovery can quickly be put into a stalemate, Mr. Compton urged the entire building industry to avoid extremes which retard building, and to encourage the stimulants which have seemed to be under way during the past three years.

In comparing the position of the home building industry at the outbreak of current hostilities, with circumstances a quarter of a century ago, Mr. Compton indicated that history has not repeated itself and that while the trend of building at the time of the first World War was down, it is now up, and that the conditions of the exchanges, credits and private fiinance, while then disorderly and insecure, are now orderly and secure.

Mr. Compton called attention to the fact that those who contemplate building, but choose to wait because of war, and those who anticipate higher costs and rush to buy, are both contributing to a condition which both fear and wish to avoid.

If the building industry can be permitted to continue on the constructive plane at which it has been operating in the last three years, there will be no necessity of impulsive, "get-there-first" buying and consequent disruption to the normal price structure.

Mr. Compton pointed out that America needs 400,000 to 800,000 new housing units annually and stated that to maintain our present standards the private home building industry will be required to build at least five-and-one-quarter million new housing units within the next ten years.

The housing shortage is confined to the price range below $5,000. One-half of American families, based on last year's incomes, can afford to own or rent houses costing up to $4,000. But only 15% of the houses built last year were in this price range, said Mr. Compton, who also expressed his belief that the realization of this fact has finally headed the national home building industry in the right direction.

Mr. Compton outlined the organization and procedure of the informal cooperation of 33 principal home building industries known as National Small Homes Demonstration, which for the past three years has been engaged in a program promoting and encouraging the construction of lower-cost, improved-design, small homes in the $2,000 to $3,500 cost range, among material merchants, builders and realtors across the country.

Mr. Compton stated that nearly 4,000 building material dealers had been enrolled in this cooperative effort to reduce home costs and that nearly 3,000 low priced Demonstration Homes had been constructed in over 1,000 communities.

A.I.S.C. and its Relation to the Architect

by
HENRY WRIGHT
Associate Editor of Architectural Forum

New York, October 17—Mr. Henry Wright, Associate Editor of Architectural Forum of New York, today addressed the Seventeenth Annual Convention of American Institute of Steel Construction at the Waldorf-Astoria on the subject of planned centralization. The full text of Mr. Wright's address follows:

My acquaintance with the American Institute of Steel Construction is of long standing, despite the fact that this is the first time I have met its membership face to face. I first learned of the Institute when serving my architectural apprenticeship at the drafting table. I had not been doing this sort of work for long before I learned to use your excellent handbook, not for designing steelwork, but mostly for problems involving brick and wood, to solve knotty questions in dimensioning odd angles, or how many square yards there were in an acre. Indeed, "Steel Construction" proved so useful in a host of ways that it was the prized possession of a great many draftsmen who never got closer to an I-beam than sketching its outline on a full-size drawing.

Another way in which many of us came to know the Institute was through your excellent series of advertisements in the architectural press, presenting Hugh Ferris' drawings of the city of the future. As each new ad in this series appeared, a group used to gather and debate one or another of the points raised by the drawing. As I recall it, we would often as not disagree quite violently with Mr. Ferris and I suspect this was what you intended: to get people to thinking, even if they didn't agree with you. In any event, this campaign had the effect of bringing the work of the Institute forcibly to the attention of the architecural profession.

When your Secretary, Mr. Iden, first suggested that I address this convention, I was immensely flattered. The proposed topic gave me the idea that Mr. Iden thought I was clairvoyant or at least blessed with the gift of prophecy, since—to quote him exactly—he proposed the title: "When May a Renewed Demand for Urban Building Be Expected and Probable Character of Structures"—a topic which might easily stump a combination of Roger Babson and Lewis Mumford.

Now, I would like at the outset to disclaim any such hybrid erudition. If there is anything that most of us have learned in the past few years, it is a healthy distrust for the sort of prophet who pretends to forecast economic developments; similarly, I think that most of us have come to suspect the glittering generalities of reformers who are prepared, at the drop of a hat, to furnish a blueprint for the future as they think it should be. Rather, I would like to confine this discussion, as far as possible, to facts.

It is a fact, and the starting point of any consideration of urban buildings, that the rate of skyscraper construction has been slowed considerably, for a time was virtually at a standstill. After a decade which registered an unprecedented boom in this type of building, with an average volume of $1,000,000,000 per year, construction of this kind during the '30s average but $300,000,000—a drop of 66 per cent. Around this fact has centered a great deal of opinion — informed and misinformed—opinion which is important to everyone concerned with the use of steel in building.

Catchword of one group of these observers has been the term "Decentralization". According to the vociferous champions of this point of view, most of the evils of the day, from unemployment to swing music, may be attributed—directly or indirectly—to high buildings. The skyscraper, they say, is a dismal flop, untenanted, anti-social, and a white elephant in good times as well as bad.

This attitude reminds me of the drunken husband who bumped into so many miscellaneous objects while trying to get into bed without waking his wife that he decided he was lost in an impenetrable forest, a clear of mistaken identity. Talk of the "necessity" for decentralization resulting from high buildings has about as much foundation in fact. The alarming thing about it, however, is that the man in the street has been pretty much sold on the idea that urban congestion is produced by the skyscraper, that it is getting worse from year to year, and that nothing could be more disastrous than a revival of office building construction to the rate of the prosperous '20s. This widespread belief, if uncontested, will certainly have an important effect on the character of future urban construction, may even be reflected in ill-considered legislation of a restrictive type.

Consequently, the truth of such assertions is of vital concern to building, and in particular to the steel industry. Is the skyscraper guilty as charged, or is it merely a convenient scapegoat, "Picked up" because of its conspicuous presence at the scene of the crime?

The indictment is on two counts, social and economic. In the first count, the defendant is charged with causing street and sidewalk congestion, shutting out light and air, and aiding and abetting the trend towards centralization, which is held to be socially unhealthy. In the second count, he is accused of embezzlement—the upper floors of high buildings are said to steal profits from the lower floors and render the building as a whole uneconomic. In my opinion, both counts are false.

The theory that skyscrapers cause, or even necessarily result in crowding and congestion is an oversimplification. It is based on so many misconceptions, however, that it requires some patience to dissect. Most easily disposed of is the question of vehicular congestion. Manhattan had its problems of congestion long before it sprouted skyscrapers; its prime trouble spots have always been at points where main arteries of through traffic intersect, and depend more on concentrations resulting from bridges and tunnels, manufacturing districts such as the garment center, and bus and trolley routes than on the height of adjacent buildings.

(Continued in December Issue)

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more than 663,000 openings. That illustrates how fine the wire is drawn for the manufacture of insect screen cloth. It must be thread-like in size in order not to keep out air and light. Bronze insect screen cloth retains its strength because rust does not weaken it and it soon pays for itself through years of satisfactory service.

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(Continued from page 7)

of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, followed with a very interesting and forceful talk on mass housing in cities. Mr. McCornack stressed the need for attempting to build houses for the lower third of our population. He stated that 60% of the people cannot pay more than $30 per month for housing, and the majority of these can only pay $15 or $16. He also stressed the need of revising the building codes, many of which he feels are illegal and go far beyond what they were intended to do. He stated that building codes should extend only to the limits of the police power of the municipality for the safety and health of the occupants. With some of the unnecessary and illegal restraints removed, he believes a reduction of 20% in the cost of building would be possible.

He made a plea for private initiative to come into this field because he felt that in every case the cost of Government housing is considerably higher than if done by private capital. Slum clearance, he felt, must confine itself to providing shelter at approximately $300 per room. He stated that it was impossible for the balance of the citizens to subsidize this lower one-third in the type of housing which has been built by the Government to date. One possibility of legitimate subsidies by a city government might be to pass on the saving in cost of service in the present slum areas which would be eliminated with decent housing.

On Thursday evening, there were two dinner and

(Continued on page 10)

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(Continued from page 9)

round table conferences at the Carlton Hotel. The one which I attended had to do with the Construction Census and Local Building Congress and Construction League problems, and was under the Chairmanship of William Stanley Parker of Boston. The other meeting dealt with Apprenticeships of the Construction Industry.

At Mr. Parker's dinner, we listened to several speakers from the Bureau of the Census, who told us of a very interesting construction census which the Federal Government will undertake just after the first of next year. This will deal with all types of living units, and will list them as to accommodations provided, type of construction, occupancy, etc. As soon as the results have been tabulated, I believe we will have a very good picture of what types of homes are in the greatest demand, and what the actual and potential need for addition living units is.

The evening session then took up the question of local building congresses and construction league problems. Colonel Aring, President of the Washington Building Congress, and Mr. Sam Davis, Manager of the Construction League at Dayton, Ohio, spoke on the matter of organization and the scope of their activities. I have requested from Colonel Aring and Mr. Thomas Holden of the New York Building Congress, a table of organization and a complete description of their building congresses. You will recall that the Building Congress which was started here some years ago, has apparently dropped out of sight due largely to the fact that some of the original sponsors of the Congress have moved out of town. After hearing a very inspiring story of the success of these Eastern congresses, I feel that we should make every effort to revive ours, and to enlist the help of all the other elements of the construction industry in our efforts to improve our business.

On Friday morning, November 17th, we heard a very interesting talk by Mr. Stuart M. Crocker, Vice-President of the International General Electric Company, on the subject of "Modernizing Industrial Plants" In Mr. Crocker's estimation, modernization of industrial plants should mean the continual maintenance of the plant which will most efficiently produce whatever it is manufacturing. He was careful to caution the men there that any new manufacturing facilities in these times of stress must be thoroughly studied, and well justified before any construction work is entertained. The cost of any changes or additions to a manufacturing plant and the attendant annual charges must be weighed against the increasing efficiency and reductions in the cost of the product. He was thoroughly convinced, however, that the question of plant modernization is the current No. 1 problem with all industrial executives. He urged his listeners to approach plant management with these ideas in mind, and felt that it would be a comparatively simple matter to convince them of the wisdom of doing a reasonable amount of modernization at this time in order to lower manufacturing costs and improve efficiencies in production.

Mr. Ralph Thomas Walker, the well-known architect of New York, followed with a very interesting and convincing talk on modernizing of commercial buildings. He stressed the opportunities which the present conditions offer for using present buildings which are of sound construction as the basis of well remodeled and rebuilt modern structures. He brought out much the same point that Mr. Crocker had made regarding the necessity for justifying the expense of remodeling, but felt that this was a splendid opportunity for architects to develop work for themselves.

Mr. Clyde Shute, Manager of the Statistical Department of the F. W. Dodge Corporation, spoke on the market for non-residential buildings. He explained how the Dodge Corporation goes about making its analyses and forecasts, and said that in the light of the information they had uncovered during the past month or two, they were confident that the building business next year would be at least 15% higher than in 1939. This seemed very encouraging to all of us present, and we were also told that with somewhat more favorable circumstances, which may shortly develop, we might expect this increase to go much higher.

The noon meeting on Friday was held in the Rose Room at the Washington Hotel. At this meeting the topic was Jurisdictional Disputes. The speaker was Mr. John Coyne, President of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor, and there were present practically all of the presidents of the various building trade unions. Mr. Coyne explained the new procedure which the Federation has adopted in the case of any jurisdictional disputes. Under this procedure no strike or tie-up of a building is allowed pending the settlement of the dispute. You probably all recall work of your own which has been held up in the past due to the inability of the trades to decide which branch was to carry out certain provisions of the plans and specifications. Under the new ruling, this is entirely eliminated and Mr. Coyne said that since it had been in force, the last few months, the requests for rulings on jurisdictional disputes had dropped off fully 85%. He felt that these would shortly be eliminated entirely, and that the union leaders would be able to make these decisions as soon as a new product is introduced in the building field and to make their decisions stick with the union members.

In the afternoon session on Friday, we heard a general statement by Mr. Thomas S. Holden, Vice-President of the F. W. Dodge Corporation, on the Effect of War on Construction, and this was followed by six other speakers who made special statements regarding its effect on various phases of the building business. They were all areed that the present European war would have no hampering effect on building construction unless this country entered into active participation.

I was interested in my entire trip through the East in noting how unanimously everyone I talked with was opposed to having anything to do with the European struggle. This, I believe, is indicative of a considerable change in feeling, since the first of September. Perhaps you also heard at that time that the East was pretty well resigned to our being drawn into the conflict, but I can assure you that their thoughts are far from warlike at the present time.

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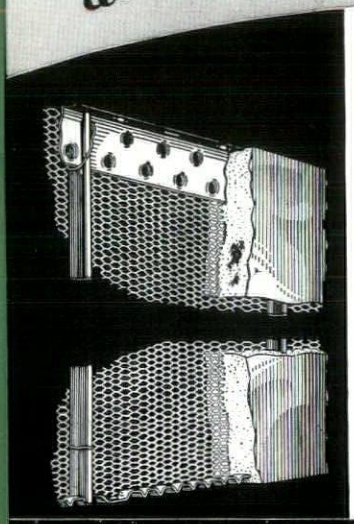

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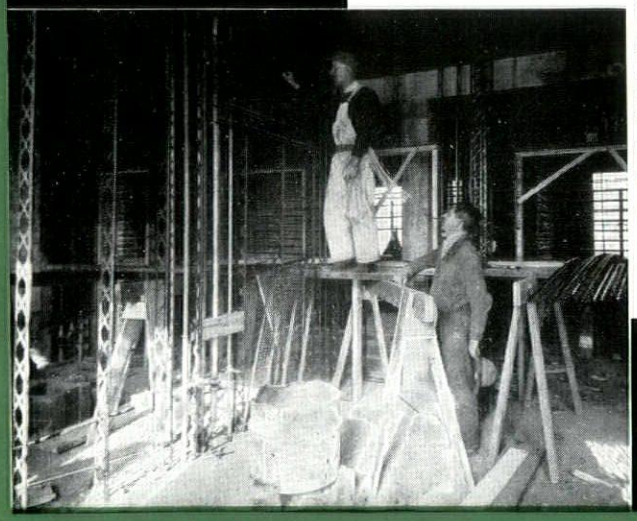

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