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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Architect. I shall continue to do so this year with another list. This may help the situation some. At least, I intend to do what I can to educate the people.

"It is very difficult to understand how the Institute can sell a paper on the advantages of architectural service and at the same time sell plans to eliminate this service. It is very evident that those who run the Institute do not make their living building small houses."

These sentiments express the views of about two hundred of our members, most of whom are striving to obtain a good practice and we think their views are worthy of consideration.

HUGH ROBERTS, *Secretary.*

The Next Convention—What Will It Do?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL:

Several matters may engage the attention of the next Convention, in Washington in May. One of these may be the relation to the Architects' Small House Service Bureau. The columns of the JOURNAL have been open to discussion and there are indications, as by the letter signed by Thomas Edward White on page 44 of the January issue, that the question has become obscured. Can it be made plainer?

To the editor of the JOURNAL, in suggesting the discussion, the question seemed to be: "Should the Institute endorsement and control of the Bureau be continued or withdrawn?"

Would the question be clearer if there were substituted the question that perhaps underlies the whole? Suppose the Convention were to discuss this: "Should the name of the Institute be lent to groups of architects who may wish to experiment with an idea?" If the Convention said no, that would be that. If it said yes, then would arise the question as to how. By what action? By Convention action? By a majority vote? Should a hundred men be trusted in such a matter or is the field too open for the effect of oratory? Would a two-thirds vote be safer? Or three-fourths? Or to be safer still, would two Conventions be required to affirm?

Or should the name of the Institute be lent in the way by which the United States Constitution is amended? Convention action first, and then ratification by the Chapters? By how many Chapters then? A majority? Two-thirds? Three-fourths?

Or should the name of the Institute only be lent after a letter ballot by the members? What would then be required? A majority vote? Two-thirds? Three-fourths? Should the proportion relate to the whole number of members or to those voting? Should it be, say, two-thirds, but not less than a majority of the whole number of members? Do all these questions seem absurd? If so they are asked because it seems vitally important to establish the size of the majority that shall have the power to lend the name of the Institute for cooperative group effort or extraneous private ventures. (We are not here dealing with internal rules and regulations.) If no principle is established, other groups may wish to borrow this name and, at present, would have ground to feel justified in asking for the loan of it.

Certainly there are dangers ahead in lending it, for the name of the Institute to be of any value to anybody, must be above suspicion, must it not?

Therefore, is not the name of the Institute the vital factor? Is not the lending of it something that should, in some manner, be made the vital concern of every member? Is it not time to deal with the principle now, rather than to become fogged in the merits or demerits of any idea which any group of architects may ask the Institute to endorse?

HARRY T. STEPHENS.

Chapter Publications

TO THE EDITOR OF THE JOURNAL:

The publication in the February JOURNAL of *The General Conditions*, the official publication of the WASHINGTON, D.C. CHAPTER, creates a precedent which I should gladly see followed by all Chapters whose activities justify a monthly publication, and what Chapter's activities should not?

In such an organization as the Institute the natural and proper sources of ideas and activities are the Chapters, not the central governing body and not the Conventions. The more closely the membership of the Institute can be kept in touch with the activities of the various Chapters the more homogeneous and helpful the Institute will become.

But each Chapter should stand as the embodiment of the Institute in the minds of the community in which it is located. This is a serious responsibility in any case, but in the case of the WASHINGTON, D. C. CHAPTER this responsibility gains weight from the fact that that Chapter represents us all at the seat of our Nation's government, at one point of contact with all other governments.

Therefore I have been somewhat hurt by the wholly flippant reference to the grade of fellow and I am moved to express the hope that in spite of any sins of omission or commission on the part of the Institute that may require discussion or correction, the WASHINGTON, D. C. CHAPTER in its public utterances may be inclined to give more serious thought to its special function of guardianship of the dignity of our historic professional institution.

J. MONROE HEWLETT.

Obituary

Burt L. Fenner

Elected to Membership in 1908

To Fellowship in 1913

Secretary of the Institute 1915-1916

Died at New York City, 25 January, 1926

In the death of Burt L. Fenner the country has lost one of the most outstanding figures in the architectural profession. Architecture is a difficult and many-sided profession today, and Fenner contributed the valuable service of a trained architect, of an admirable executive officer and of a sound business man; he also gave an abundant common sense to every phase of professional work which he undertook. Many men have contributed to the success and the growing usefulness of the American Institute of Architects, but none did more essential work for the Institute than he. No one could work with Fenner without being impressed by the sound value of his judgment on any matter coming up for consideration, and his experience was so wide, and so perfectly coordinated in his mind, as to make his statements overwhelmingly convincing.

He had long served the Institute before he was called on to take the position of Secretary at a critical point in the history of the Institute. It was going through a period of reorganization, it was ceasing to be an unimportant and loosely managed body of men, who, in some ways, were almost amateurs in architecture, and was be-

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coming an influential professional body of the highest standing, destined to have considerable power. It was his work, as Secretary, which largely contributed to the standing which the American Institute of Architects has today. This work he did with no apparent effort, a side issue of public service in a busy life, for in 1915 he had been a partner in McKim Mead & White for ten years, and after the deaths of Stanford White and McKim, he was the chief executive in the most important firm in the country. Under such conditions it was no small task which he performed for the Institute in the years of 1915-1916.

No less notable was his work for the Government during the war. Housing was a very important factor in our contribution to the war, and Fenner was largely instrumental in the establishment of the United States Housing Corporation, with Mr. Eidlitz as its head. As at first organized there were three departments, architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture, which were intended to cooperate and work together under the leadership of Mr. Eidlitz. Mr. Fenner was the head of the architectural division. It became very quickly apparent that it required more force than the chief possessed to reconcile the rival claims of architect, engineer, and landscape architect in the control and direction of each undertaking. It speaks volumes for the regard in which Mr. Fenner was held, that when another man was put at the head of the architectural division and Mr. Fenner made General Manager, with full control over all three, it was accepted at once. From that time on every project was handled with dispatch and without the slightest sign of friction or conflict of authority.

In outlining thus briefly the outstanding instances of public service, one has not touched at all on the regular work of his professional life. The important works by the firm during the last twenty years are in themselves the best testimony to what he did there: the Municipal

building, the Pennsylvania station, the Post Office, the Pennsylvania Hotel, the Morgan Library, the Metropolitan Museum, all executed in New York during this time. Again this makes no mention of the charming personality which endeared him to all who knew him. No one in the profession was more widely known, none so generally respected, and none had such a host of friends and yet was so wholly lacking in enemies. He has laid down his life at his prime. Born in 1869, he was in his 57th year. After a year of practise in Rochester, his home town, he studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1890-91, and then in 1891 entered McKim's office, and was taken into partnership fifteen years later, in 1906. Thirty-five years in the office, twenty years as partner!

Such is his record. His death leaves a gap which will be hard to fill, and the personal loss will be felt by the host of young architects who have come out of McKim's office, and who have known and valued Fenner's influence, and also by that greater host of men who knew and loved him.

R. C. S.

Thomas Nash

Elected to the Institute in 1915
Died at New York City, 7 January, 1926

Sylvain Schnaittacher

Elected to the Institute in 1905
Elected to the Board of Directors in 1924
Died at San Francisco, California, 10 February, 1926

Louis Chapell Newhall

Elected to the Institute in 1907
Elected to Fellowship in 1914
Died at Boston, Massachusetts, 26 December, 1925

Institute Business

Meetings of the Board of Directors held on December 11, 12, 13, 14, 1925¹

MEMBERS PRESENT. The meeting was called to order by President D. Everett Waide at 11:15 A. M. on December 11, 1925, at the Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles, California. Present: First Vice-President Garfield; and Directors Fisher, Zantzinger, Sayward, Schnaittacher, Goldsmith, Hewlett and Jackson; also the Editor of the JOURNAL, Mr. Whitaker; and the Executive Secretary, Mr. Kemper.

The President reported good news from Secretary Edwin H. Brown who, in September, was obliged to give up the duties of his office and take a complete rest; also he reported with regret the absence, and the resignation, of the Acting Secretary, William L. Steele, who

must now relinquish most of his Institute duties on account of the demands of business affairs; and the absence of the Treasurer, Wm. B. Ittner, who was prevented from attending by unexpected business.

Other Directors absent on account of business were C. Herrick Hammond and Nat G. Walker.

ACTING SECRETARY ELECTED. The resignation of Vice-President Steele was accepted with regret, and with appreciation of his services as Acting Secretary. Director C. C. Zantzinger was elected Acting Secretary, to serve until the 59th Convention or until the return of the Secretary.

Later in the meeting Director Wm. E. Fisher was elected to serve on the Executive Committee to succeed Wm. L. Steele, resigned.

MINUTES CORRECTED AND APPROVED. The Minutes

¹ There have been deleted from these minutes various items of a privileged nature.