Tomorrow's Architect

By DAVID L. PERKINS
AIA, Architect

On June 20, 1969 the delegates to the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards convention met in Chicago. They reviewed the multitude of changes that have overtaken (and will overtake in the future) the architectural profession. And their conclusion was simple and sweeping: It's time to change the method of training architects and the licensing examination!

The architectural student who has a 1969 or 1970 degree has little in common with the possessor of a 1949 or 1950 degree. Today's graduate is being drawn toward a variety of tangential fields; he is caught up in the involvement in all aspects of our social problems. He is an architect, but he wants to be also a planner, an organizer, an urban designer, a technologist... and all of these things equally. This yearning toward total involvement is a fine wish, but it is more than just a wish. The convention realized that architecture in 1970, 1980 or 1990 must and will be one of these things. Its question: How can we best prepare our future architects?

Licensing Exam

Apparently the present architectural training and licensing exam is not adequately doing the job. The following are some of the convention's recommendations for changing it:

1. The forward steps now being proposed could only be based on the acceptance by all of the states of a national, uniform examination and examination.
2. We need to re-assess our whole process for training and examination and particularly the content or emphasis to meet the changing needs of our complicated society, or we will suffer the disastrous consequences of losing.
3. We still train and examine in the long standing divisions of subject matter, that is, history, theory, structure, design, site planning, and so forth, even though these subject matter divisions do not respond holly in content or emphasis to the need of our profession now and particularly to our projection of the future. We, the architects, must recognize there are expressions from the profession and from candidates questioning the relevancy of the present subject matter in the light of the changing interest and changing demands of our society.
4. The training and examination process is now largely oriented to providing a tactician's level of knowledge rather than providing for a technologist's level of knowledge. This content or emphasis to professional training itself can further the objectives are to be satisfied.
5. The candidate who possesses outstanding capabilities in say, management or some technically oriented new sub-discipline, but yet possesses less than the minimal competence in design of buildings now required, is presently excluded from the profession and must seek another profession or enter architecture as a second class citizen. More than likely in the future he will enter another profession in competition with the architect.
6. The examination committee proposes to increase the length of the examination, from 38 to 33 hours. Beyond the examination, the profession itself can further the change. Rather than lose many promising young architects to other fields, we must recognize that some graduates seek employment as urban designers or in city planning offices or for government, some want to work in new areas of computer usage and some want to work in the Peace Corps, or similar governmental programs.

Vitalize Role

Why not accept this type of experience as full credit (up to a maximum of two years) toward the three year internship required by all state statutes and allow the remaining one year of internship under a registered architect to continue to be required. Further studies should be made to formalize the internship and make it more vital to the young graduate.

In order to broaden our program we could also devise a system, as many schools are contemplating, whereby a B.A. or M.A. graduate in another field (arts, law, planning, etc.) might return to the university and complete another three years' work for a Master of Architecture degree, thus developing professionals with a broader scope into other related fields.

In short, our profession must begin to prepare these young men for the type of work they desire and of which they are capable, as well as filling the needs of our complicated society, or we will suffer the disastrous consequences of losing them.