What Does The Future Hold For Architects?

By DAVID L. PERKINS, AIA

A recent issue of the AIA Journal explored this question on the basis of comments of architects representing some 50 firms. Although the architects held a diversity of opinions on what directions the profession would be taking in the years ahead, most agreed that architecture would see chaotic changes.

Several spokesmen discussed the pressures that the construction management approach is placing on the architect. MacDonald Becton, AIA, Los Angeles, feels that the architect must either take the challenge of project management or fade into anonymity. MacDonald credits the AIA with placing on the architectural projects of a firm the background position in the changing construction industry.

“Architectural projects grow in size and complexity, clients are tempted to bring in a construction management firm to direct the job and the architect, or even a systems oriented consultant. The nice role of the architect is diminished, with efficiency and project management taking precedence over architectural design and planning.”

New Services

Although the AIA’s proposed ethical code opposes the architect’s role in construction, a majority of the architects contacted endorsed the idea and saw it as one of the new waves of services to be added to the professions in the near future.

Harold Sipolant, AIA, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, commented: “I do not foresee ourselves getting into the contracting business, but we certainly will not hesitate to align ourselves with a responsible contractor who will be interested in our services being a part of the new wave of services being added to the profession in the near future.”

James M. Luckman, AIA, Los Angeles, is in the enviable position of being part of a firm which is now practicing some of the services other architects are talking about adding in the future. The Charles Luckman Associates firm has already taken the lead in managing complex projects and may soon begin using computers.

Luckman states that the architect, in order to design in the way buildings, having similar requirements and a mass market, will be provided.” He foresees the industry using mass production for large components under revised zoning and building codes. He feels that the new methods, tools and procedures, including prefabrication, will increase the importance of the nation’s housing goals and the demand for low cost development.

A Philadelphia architect credits HUD with placing on the architectural projects of a firm the background position in the changing construction industry.

High construction costs and difficult financing have many architects worried about the outlook for the construction market in general. The building industry has many architects worried about the outlook for the construction market. The building costs will increase. Perhaps a slowdown in the months ahead. And our services are changing continuously to reflect this demand.”

What’s ahead for architects?

No two spokesmen for the profession answered this question the same. But the broad spectrum of opinions converge on one point — the future architect is going to cut a drastically different figure from the men who are designing buildings today, but the must retain a position of leadership and be the “Capital’s” of the building team to prevent the complete industrialization of buildings and the space they occupy, thus losing all contact with need for aesthetics and human scale.

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