

JOURNAL

ROYAL ARCHITECTURAL
INSTITUTE OF CANADA



REBUILDING THE CITIES

By **STEPHEN LEACOCK**

VOL. 19 TORONTO, DECEMBER, 1942 NO. 12

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JOURNAL

ROYAL ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTE OF CANADA

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AS WE cross the threshold of the New Year, we cannot but look back over the way we have come to evaluate our progress and the contribution our activities have made to the well-being of our community and our profession.

The exigencies of war have greatly disrupted our normal routine, both as individuals and as an Institute. To many it has meant a complete revision of their manner of life. Many of our younger members have stepped from our ranks to fill important places in the fighting forces of the nation. Some have closed their offices to do their bit in accelerating Canada's industrial war effort, while others, under many difficulties, are endeavouring to maintain their offices and service to the public against the day when our profession will be called upon to do its share in the building of a post-war world.

The magical development of the Dominion's war industry, which will play an important part in an Allied victory, could not have been achieved without the architects of Canada, who have made their technical contribution in every capacity from draughtsman to chief architect.

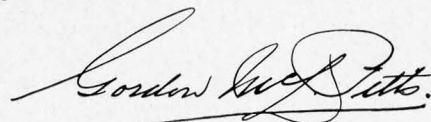
As an Institute we have also endeavoured to contribute to the national welfare in ways peculiar to our profession. Through the medium of special issues of our *Journal* we have had the opportunity of bringing to the public, technical information of value, which has been received with much appreciation in many quarters. The development of this policy is bringing us most favourably before the people of Canada, and there are definite indications that it is having most satisfactory results in interpreting our profession to the public we serve.

In addition, Standing and Special Committees of the Institute have been busily engaged on the special tasks entrusted to them, and we are greatly indebted to the Chairmen and members of these committees for the time and thought which they have so generously given to this work and for the highly successful results of their labours.

Many of the plans which are progressing so favourably even under the strain and stress of war, are designed to come to fruition with the cessation of hostilities. Ours is a constructive, not a destructive ideology, and where others break down, it is our ambition to build up. We therefore look forward with much anticipation and high hope to the era in which our talents may have their greatest scope; to the dawn of that "brave new world" which will forever insure "Peace on earth, goodwill to men."

To the members of Council and my other associates who have laboured so earnestly and faithfully in the interests of the Institute and the profession, I give hearty thanks on your behalf, and to each member of the Institute I extend the Season's Greetings, with a wish for a Happy and a Prosperous New Year.

And with Tiny Tim we say, "God bless us every one."

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Gordon W. Little". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name of the President.

President.

REBUILDING THE CITIES

A Broad View of Reconstruction by STEPHEN LEACOCK

"To shovel up the slums, to shovel up half the city and throw it away, that is the word of the day in every great North American city. The biggest man is the man who will throw it furthest. Later he will have a statue with a Latin motto on the base to mean, 'Knock it all down'."

—Stephen Leacock in *Montreal Seaport and City*.

War is a strange business. It does what peace can never effect. The bombing of the great European cities has brought out the fact that they needed bombing anyway. The book-sellers of Paternoster Row in London stand among the debris rubbing their hands to think what a fine book quarter they can make of it now. They expect great things in Bristol, too, though they still need a few edges trimmed off. Similarly we expect to give the Germans a fine chance with Berlin, and the Italians are to have a whole lot of fun with Turin and Genoa.

But with the cities—well, we can all see it so clearly now. They are all wrong. Some are so old and so crooked that you can't move round in them, you can't drain them, you can't light them. Some are so tall and so congested that you can't see out of them and the sun can't get into them. Dr. Alexis Carrell says that soon human beings won't be able to live in New York. I can't already.

All the streets in all the cities are too narrow. Yet the queer thing is they've been making them wider and wider for centuries. When Peter Kalm came to Montreal in 1749 he spoke of the beautiful wide streets—and he meant it—and he was talking of the old French town at that—St. James St., Notre Dame and St. Paul. They were certainly wide as compared with what he knew in Europe—streets with names that sound like Rue des Anges, Rue des Saints, and in England Pump Court and Brick Alley.

When Governor Simcoe laid out Yonge St. in Toronto he made it wide, hopelessly too wide, they said. Go and look at it now. It's that little path that runs north through the middle of the city; look close and you'll see it. Wider and wider they built them; St. Catherine's Road below the Montreal mountain farms was spaciousness itself. Three buggies could pass abreast. The only towns that built streets wide enough were the towns that never grew. I know a place in Missouri—it's called Centre Something—where the street (there is only one) is so wide that it's too wide to cross. People live either on one side or the other. I remember that when I lectured there they asked me which side I'd like to lecture to. The rest of that town is railway tracks, great belts of them. Centre Something doesn't need to rebuild; only to wait.

So there we see already Lesson Number One in city planning. Look far enough ahead; no short sight this time.

But the only trouble is that it is so hard to see what's ahead. We might manage it if we had one of those real old prophets out of the Old Testament—mature men, six hundred years old—

with a bombing range of 3000 years. But by ourselves it's difficult.

Hence what I want to do in this discussion is to show rather where the difficulties lie than to hope to solve them. For example—the first insuperable difficulty—will there be cities at all? Already in England the bombing of industrial cities has led to the decentralization of industry—putting the factories out in the country. Some people are saying that they'll never come back. Why should they? With telephones everybody can talk to everybody; air travel lands anybody anywhere (or nowhere) in a few minutes; goods and material move more easily in decentralized areas. As to the workers—bring them all along, into new homes, with the breath of the country in the back yards. The first time those fellows see a primrose, they'll go crazy.

So over in England they're saying that the thing to do with the city is to get it out of the city. They imagine a set of centres—semi-rural, semi-industrial, with workers' homes that are little country houses—gardens, rockeries, rookeries—all those things. They even say that the workers who still have to stay in the city for their day's work will prefer to live out in the semi-country anyway.

How like Utopia it sounds!—the city day's work done—and away in a comfortable train—swift as wings, smooth as rubber—reading the afternoon paper on a wicker seat with lots of room—no standing up and all free, of course, for this is a semi-collectivist state and transport is thrown in, society emancipated from the bottom up.

How brief the trip. Practically not more in time than any ordinary city worker spends today between house and office. I understand that at present the average man puts in seventeen and a half minutes and covers a mile and a quarter. But I don't hold much by that. The "average man" is a poor shrimp; statistics make too much of him. In reality he has a chest measurement below 37 and never got as far as algebra in school. So we won't reckon by him.

But, as I say, how wonderful this return home after work; the rush for the overalls, the spade, the trout rod, the golf clubs . . .

What the future could be, if we only had the stuff to make it! We certainly need bombing. Drop some more.

But now here is the strange contradiction. We have no sooner visualized these "garden homes for all" in the semi-country than we find that there are plenty of people who won't want them. So it appears from the discussions going on in England—in the papers, I mean. I always take my discussions from England because over there they certainly do discuss things. Here we can't. We're so much alike that we can't discuss. We can only fight. But over there they have different sorts of people who sign themselves "Old Fog" and "late

Major, Rawalpindi Field Force, Third Base," and "Workingman"—and so on. We don't have those people here.

So when you ask them where they want to live you find that there are ever so many who want to live in the city for the sake of the city, the bright lights, the noise, the moving scene about them—it's like a club. So what they are saying over in England is that rebuilding the cities will involve a lot of inner-city housing for those who won't go out. This I think is true; it's like being Liberals and Conservatives; people are just that way and can't help it. This question of inner-city versus outer will vary very much from city to city, especially according to climate. In Toronto people will want to get out as far as they can; in Montreal they will want to stick inside. They always have.

In my book on Montreal, from which I quoted above, there is a passage contrasting, waiting for a suburban bus on a summer evening in California where young love stands under the magnolia trees hoping the bus will never come, as against waiting in the Montreal suburbs on a February night, thirty below, a blizzard blowing, wind dead astern, for a bus that doesn't come because it's snowed up in Cartierville.

So in such a city as Montreal you must rebuild housing inside the city. You must do it on a giant scale. You must begin by shovelling up flat a huge big area. Shovel the proprietors up with it and throw them into the St. Lawrence. It's quicker than letting crooked proprietors bribe crooked aldermen to cheat the life out of the city by paying too much. I know that just now we have no crooked aldermen left in Montreal. We have councillors now and they won't even accept salaries. Some one left twenty-five cents on the board room table the other night and it was there in the morning—at least, fifteen cents. But crooked aldermen will come back. They always do, certain as spring.

So look what an appalling difficulty you must face when you begin to plan to re-build a city; what an avalanche of illicit profits, of crooked bargains, what opportunities for legal theft! Do you know I believe honestly, and I mean it, that we can't plan to rebuild our cities until we first rebuild ourselves. I don't want to talk religion because that's terribly bad taste and very

offensive, but somebody has spoken somewhere about renewing a right spirit within us. Till we get it we'd better let the cities alone.

But suppose we got it—or enough of it to make a start—again we should find a lot of technical difficulties as to what and how to build, and if we re-build the city wrong again we've wasted another generation. For instance it is my opinion that the houses of the city of the future will involve certain general principles utterly unknown now. We always think of houses as facing the street. That was nice in the old days. Peter Kalm tells us of how in the old French Montreal of 1749 all the people sat in the evening on their house-steps along St. Paul and Notre Dame Streets, talking and sewing and watching the world go by. But now the world goes by in a cloud of gasoline and a roar of brakes—noise, noise, that never ends. The houses of the coming city will turn their backs on the street—blind walls with doors for garages—and turn their faces inward, locking shoulders round a great inner courtyard, all trees and lawn and flowers. There it is that children will play, young love saunter, and old age doze in the sun.

Community life?—not exactly. Still everyman his own, but such a lot for all . . . We can't tell yet how far life in common will go? Will the people—not that damn average man—I mean ordinary people, want to have community meals in dining halls built into the houses, or will they be like me and want to eat alone, rather cook an egg for myself than share an omelette with a prince—especially with some princes I've seen pictures of . . .

No, no—I begin to think that we're not ready to build yet. We don't know enough about it. We've got to *think* some more. You remember how Tennyson wrote in one of his poems, "Consider William, take a month to think." He had England down pat, didn't he? Well, that's us.

And anyway when you come to talk of the housing of the poor, perhaps there won't be any poor! They may slip out on us. So we should perhaps begin by asking them, are they going to stay poor? Because if not, I for one won't spend a lot of money on housing the rich.

—Stephen Leacock.

COMMENTS ON THE UTHWATT REPORT

"This is a people's war and I believe that the people of Britain intend to make it a people's peace. There is every hope that the Uthwatt Report will be adopted; that this will be only the first step in taking all the necessary action to plan and rebuild Britain in one generation—to preserve the beauties of the countryside; to build fine and noble cities and to provide a pleasant and comfortable house for every family."

Sir Ernest Simon (A former Lord Mayor of Manchester.)

"A practical scheme with a great weight of expert authority behind it for making a good job of postwar physical reconstruction. . . . A complete scheme for giving effect to a pro-

gramme of reconstruction to which, in broad principle, the Government is committed. . . . There are many obvious difficulties which present themselves and a host of technical details which will, no doubt, be the subject of much criticism and controversy, but the broad principles laid down in the Report can scarcely be resisted if the Government is seriously intent upon following out the promises it has made."

London Spectator.

"A document of fundamental importance . . . an entirely practical plan on which real preparations for post-war reconstruction can be made."

London New Statesman and Nation.

THE UTHWATT REPORT

A Summary by ARTHUR FLEMING, K.C., Legal Adviser to the Ontario Association of Architects

A Committee was set up in England in January, 1941, to advise on—

(a) steps to be taken now or before the end of the war to prevent the work of reconstruction being prejudiced; and

(b) alterations of the existing Law which might be necessary to facilitate a stabilization of land values and the acquisition of land for use on an equitable basis.

The Committee has since become known as the Uthwatt Committee after the name of Mr. Justice Uthwatt of the High Court, its chairman.

Its final report was issued on September 10th, 1942, and a digest appeared in the Architects' Journal published under that date.

The following is an attempt to take from that digest such parts of the Report as may be of interest to Canadian Architects.

Certain of the problems which the Committee considered are not now present in Canada and others are not of as great importance in this country as in the Old Land. No large areas in this country have been laid waste by bombing and have to be replanned in the light of modern requirements in surroundings which were developed during the Industrial Revolution, when traffic, industry and housing were very different from today and no far-sighted consideration was given for the health and recreation of occupants.

The Committee is of the opinion that the complete reconstruction of such surrounding areas is as important as the rebuilding of the war-devastated areas and that the tasks cannot be treated as separate and distinct. When plans for the post-war period are being formulated, there must also be considered the requirements of agriculture, the location and re-establishment of industry for peace-time production, the decongestion of built-up areas, the building of adequate housing accommodations, the provision of open spaces, green belts and other amenities, the development and concentration of public utility services, the overhaul of existing transport and communication systems, and post-war development in civil aviation and the relation of all these matters to the demands of future defence.

The Uthwatt Report is based on the assumption that national planning is intended to be a permanent feature of the internal affairs of England, and that a system of national planning with a high degree of initiation and control by the Central Planning Authority, based on organized research into the social and economic aspects of the use and development of land and having the backing of national financial resources where necessary, will be put into effect by the requisite legislation.

The Report points out that at present English jurisprudence does not recognize any right of requisitioning property by the State without liability to pay compensation to the individual for the loss of his property. On the other hand, where a State regulation limits the use which an owner may make of his property but does not deprive him of ownership, any rights he may lose are not taken over by the State and no claim for compensation then lies against the State. There may be some statutory exemptions to these general principles but broadly speaking, they apply. The difference in treatment as regards compensation rests on the difference between expropriation of property on the one hand and restriction on user, while leaving ownership and compensation undisturbed, on the other hand. The Committee points out that, in theory, compensation to one individual for deprivation or restriction should be balanced by the betterment which accrues to the land of some other in-

dividual or individuals, but that unless all the land in the country is in the ownership of a single body, it will be necessary to pay compensation and to collect for betterment on account of shifts in value due to planning. The Committee, therefore, concludes that an adequate solution to the problem must lie in such a measure of unification in existing rights of land as will enable shifts of value to operate within the same ownership coupled with a land system that does not contain within it contradictions provoking a conflict between private and public interest and hindering the proper operation of planning machinery.

The Report then proceeds to discuss how this unification may be brought about. It rejects the idea of a system of pooling between all the owners of land and buildings in specified areas. If such a group of owners turn their holdings into a common corporation, there will develop a conflict of interest between the persons in occupation of the land and the shareholders of the corporation. The desire for profits interferes with good planning and questions arise between the different pools as regards public utilities, and the conflict between public and private interests remains. Shifts of value resulting from planning restrictions or directions extend beyond the boundaries of the corporation, thereby raising again the questions of compensation and betterment which it is hoped to avoid.

The Committee thinks that the solution of the compensation-betterment difficulty can only lie in a degree of unification in existing rights in land carried out on a national scale and involving their national ownership, but the Committee recognizes that land nationalization is not practicable as an immediate measure. The public is not ready for it, the financial operations would be of such magnitude as to be out of consideration in the immediate post-war period, and a complicated administrative machinery, which is not now in existence, would have to be set up.

The Report, therefore, recommends what it describes as a Development Rights Scheme in respect of undeveloped land. This involves the immediate vesting in the State of the rights of development in all land lying outside built-up areas on payment of fair compensation. The vesting of such rights is secured by the imposition of a prohibition against development otherwise than with the consent of the State, accompanied by the grant of compulsory powers of acquiring the land itself when wanted for public purposes or approved private development. The State acquires the development value for all time and pays for it so that thereafter compensation is no longer a factor hindering the preparation and execution of proper planning schemes.

In detail this scheme in respect of undeveloped land involves four points:—

- (1) The placing of a general prohibition against development of all undeveloped land outside built-up areas and immediate payment to owners of the land affected, by compensation for the loss of development value.
- (2) Unfettered determination through planning machinery of the areas in which public or private development is to take place, the amount and type of development being determined as regards development for public purposes by national needs, and as regards private development by private demand.
- (3) Purchase by the State of the land itself if and when required for approved development, whether for public purposes or for private purposes.

(4) In the case of approved development for private purposes, the leasing of such land by the State to the person or body undertaking the development.

It will be noted that until the land itself is wanted for purposes of development, the owner remains in possession and control save only that he may not develop.

The first step will be to ascertain the property lying outside the built-up areas to be included and in distributing the compensation to be paid to the owners.

The State acquires no right to use, manage, or enter upon the land; it only prevents the land being treated as building land or diverted to industrial purposes. In the meantime, the owner is not restricted in exploiting the existing use of the land; it may be used for any purpose which does not amount to development. The farmer on the outskirts of a city will remain free to farm his land in such a manner as he thinks fit and to make such improvements as he thinks proper for his farm as such. The only limitation is that the land may not be put to some other use.

Any compensation paid by reason of the imposition of the prohibition against development will go to the persons interested in the land according to their rights and interests. Where there is a mortgage for instance, the compensation will be treated as if it arose from the sale of part of the property.

If it is desired by the owner or any other private interest that the property should be developed, for example, for town lots, the Central Planning Authority will have the decision. The Central Planning Authority will then acquire the owner's interest by compulsory purchase, if necessary, the price to be determined by arbitration, the property to be valued as it stands at the date of acquisition, having regard to the fact that development rights have already been paid for. Compensation will also have to be paid for severance, disturbance or any other injurious affection suffered in respect of the owner's interest in his remaining land.

The next step in the process will be the disposition of the land by the Central Planning Authority to the developer. If the development is to be entrusted to private interests, they will be granted a lease for a period of years having regard to the nature of the development and containing provisions which secure that the land be developed and used in accordance with agreed proposals and such other provisions dictated by planning and other relevant considerations as the circumstances require. On the other hand, if the farmer wishes to build a house on his land for his own occupation, an exception can be made to the general rule of procedure; a licence will be granted to him for the erection of his house, subject to appropriate conditions.

As to compensation, the sum to be paid should represent the fair value to the State of the development rights as a whole. This should be assessed for the whole country as a single sum to be divided among the claimants in accordance with the value of the development rights attached to their land. The Committee recognizes that such a sum is a matter of estimation and not of arithmetical computation.

Once acquired, the Committee considers that the development rights and all other interest in land which may be acquired under the scheme should be managed by the same body as controls planning; that is, The Central Planning Authority. Until development is proposed nothing but the enforcement of the restriction on development and the granting of temporary licences will be required. The question of whether development is to be permitted will be determined as a matter of planning by the Central Authority. It is anticipated that regional or local bodies may have to be set up under the Central Authority.

As to developed areas, the Committee admits that the comprehensive replanning of towns and cities will necessarily be

a lengthy task and that there will, in different places, be considerable variation in the order in which it is undertaken. For example, war damaged areas will probably have the first call, then will come the question of clearing slums, providing houses for the working classes, redeveloping areas containing obsolete buildings, providing improved traffic facilities and open spaces.

Nevertheless, the Committee recommends the immediate granting to the Central Planning Authority of powers of control over building and all other development throughout the whole country by reference to national planning considerations.

After examining the powers available under existing legislation, the Committee concludes that they will not provide a satisfactory basis for urgent measures of reconstruction. It considers that the only effective method for achieving the desired result is to confer on the Planning Authority compulsory powers of purchase, much wider and more simple than under existing legislation, over any land which may be required for planning or other public purposes.

It recommends that powers of purchase should be conferred for the purpose—

(a) Of acquiring war damaged and other reconstruction areas. Much of the work of rebuilding in the replanned area might be carried out by private enterprise, but the land should be made available to developers for approved development in accordance with the plan, on leases only.

(b) Of acquiring land required for the acceleration of the general planning scheme so that land may be taken from owners who may not be disposed to proceed with development or redevelopment in accordance with the plan and disposed of in favour of persons who will undertake the work. If the development contemplated is one upon which private enterprise is unwilling to engage, the Central Authority should have compulsory powers to purchase the land for redevelopment by the Authority itself where this is essential to accelerate the carrying out of the planning scheme.

(c) Of acquiring land in advance of requirements.

(d) Of acquiring land, whether within or without a development area, for the purpose of providing alternative accommodations for persons displaced from a particular place in a development area.

(e) Of acquiring land to secure for the Central Planning Authority the benefit of any enhancement of value accruing as the result of reconstruction, replanning or public improvements.

(f) Of acquiring interests or rights over lands for the purpose of making adjustments in respect of boundaries, easements and rights of light.

The Committee does not discuss or make any recommendations as to the extent to which the cost of post-war reconstruction and modernization inside urban areas should fall on local resources or national funds.

The Committee considered the methods provided under existing Statutes for securing to public authorities the whole or a share of the increase in value of lands, arising from public improvements. One method is by recoupment; that is, by purchasing adjoining lands and reselling them at their improved value. Another is by set-off of the betterment against compensation payable for lands of the same owner. A third method is by direct charge upon all persons whose lands are increased in value by the improvement.

The Committee is convinced that the segregation of betterment ascribable to planning is impracticable and that the only way to solve the problem is to arbitrarily take for the community some fixed proportion of the whole of any increase in site values without any attempt at a precise analysis of the causes to which it may be due.

It is pointed out that there are certain fundamental principles to which any method for assessing and collecting a levy on

increase in land values, should conform, if it is to be equitably and administratively practicable. These are—

(a) Any increase in value due to the enterprise and expenditure of the developer must be omitted from the levy, but all the increase in site value, whether due to specific public improvements or planning schemes or general community influences, should be included.

(b) Before any increase in site value can become the subject of a levy, it must not only have occurred and been approved, but must also have been realized or enjoyed or be realizable.

(c) There must be no duplication of the levy.

(d) The levy must be secured by one method and by one authority regardless of how the proceeds may be ultimately applied.

The Committee, therefore proposes:—

(a) That as soon as the necessary legislation is available there shall be ascertained the annual site value of every rateable property as actually developed, such value to be a fixed datum line from which to measure all future increase in annual site values.

(b) That a revaluation should be made every five years of the annual site value as then developed.

(c) That there should be a levy in each of the five years following each revaluation of a fixed proportion (say 75%) of the amount of any increase in the annual site value over the fixed datum line as revealed by the revaluation.

(d) That the levy should be borne by the person actually enjoying or capable of realizing the increased value.

(e) That the necessary valuations should be made through the existing valuation machinery for ordinary rating purposes and entered in the rating valuation lists.

It is the view of the Committee that the levy should be borne ultimately by the person who is, for the year in question, actually enjoying or is in a position to realize the increase in value.

As soon as the necessary legislation is enacted, all persons would know of the possibility of a levy on any increase in the annual site value of their properties so that all transactions of sale or lease thereafter would be made with the knowledge of the prospective liability.

The Committee concludes its Report by expressing the view that the form which the Central Planning Authority should assume is that of a Ministry for National Development which would guide the policy of development and a Commission for administering the detail of the scheme.

BOOK REVIEW

THE NATIONAL BUILDING CODE

Published by the National Research Council, Codes and Specifications Section, Ottawa Price, \$1.00

The National Building Code prepared under the joint sponsorship of the National Research Council and the National Housing Administration is a voluminous work of 422 pages including appendices and index.

It is a complete compendium of sound building practice arranged in five main parts covering Administration, Definitions, Structural Requirements, Fire Protection and Requirements bearing on Health and Sanitation. It also includes an Appendix in which are included amongst other useful things a draft of a Standard Plumbing By-law.

It is not a book for light reading but a work of reference which makes it very difficult to express any off-hand opinion of it, as a workable Code. After reading it, however, from cover to cover, our first impression is that it is most comprehensive and detailed, perhaps too much so for those who have had little or no scientific and mathematical education, and such people form the vast majority of those who make it necessary to enact laws governing the construction of buildings. We had hoped

that the National Code would have been phrased in simpler and more direct English so as to be unmistakably clear to any one with an 8th grade education.

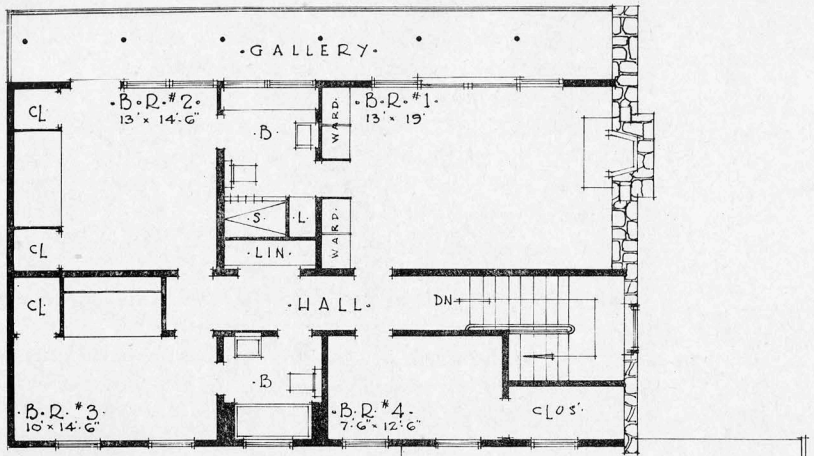
That it falls far short of this, is known to its framers, otherwise there would be no necessity for that part of Appendix A, which provides for a Board of Appeal to provide for "reasonable interpretations" of its provisions, composed of one Architect, one builder, one lawyer and two engineers.

On the other hand, its insistence upon the application of mathematical formulae to the solution of even the simplest problems of construction at once puts a premium on the services of architects and engineers, for there is little left to the judgment of the experienced builder even in the choice of such stable commodities as building stone.

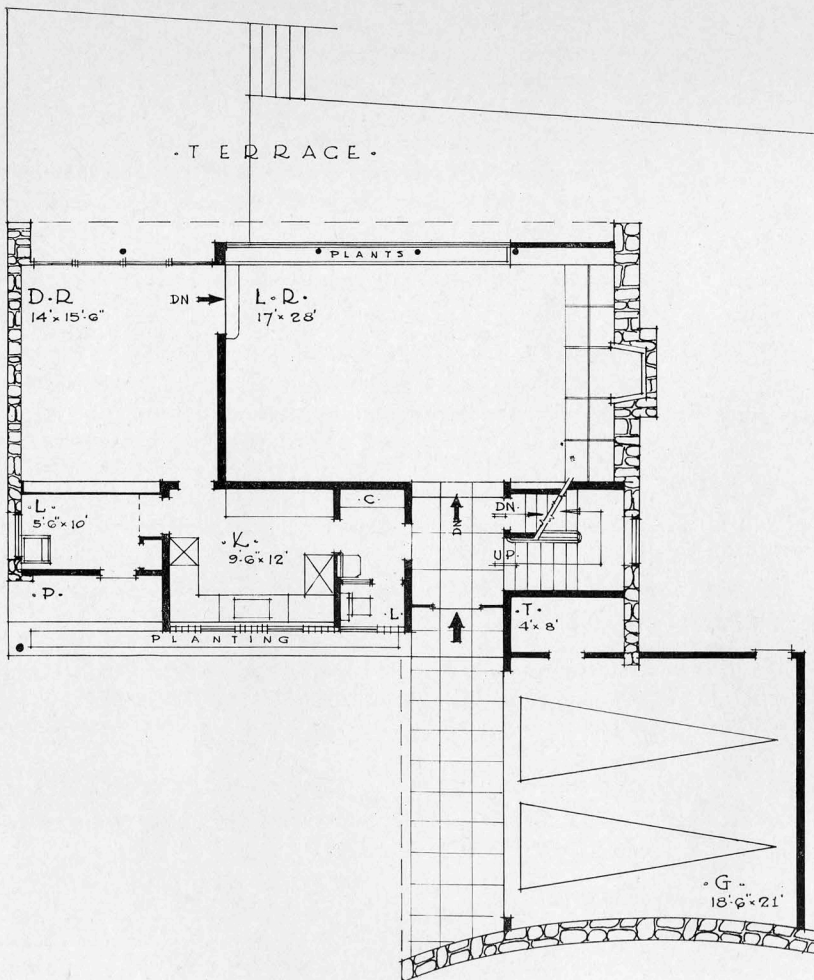
The tendency of modern building codes to become text books or at least hand books on building construction has reached an "all time high" in this volume.

Whether or not it is ever adopted by municipalities it will remain a monument to the efforts of those who prepared it and is well worth the price asked for it.

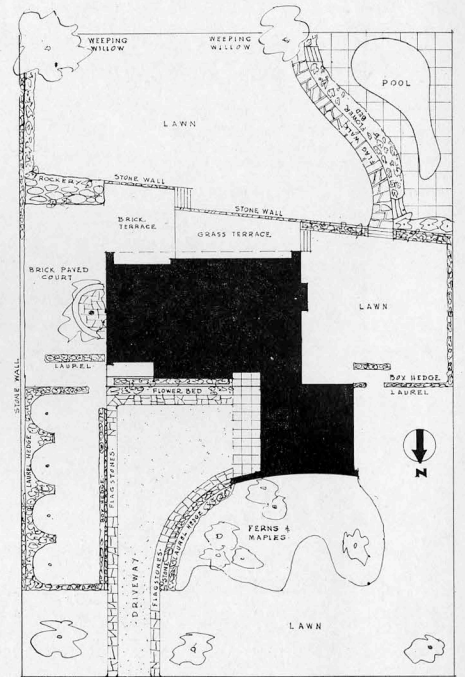
—A. S. Mathers.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



PLOT PLAN

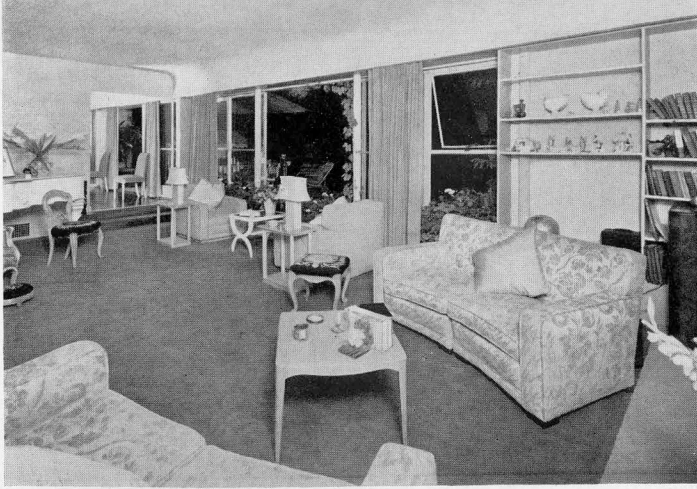


North elevation showing driveway and open garage with totem pole motif, typical of British Columbia native craftsmanship. The house is built of boulder stone and white plywood vertical siding. The trim around the windows is painted peach.



South elevation facing garden showing outside living.

HOUSE OF MR. C. B. K. VAN NORMAN, VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA
C. B. K. VAN NORMAN, ARCHITECT



Living room showing entrance to dining room and outside living terrace.



Dining room showing access to outside living. Colour scheme electro plate copper wall with black marbilized linoleum floor with inlaid copper strips. Chairs upholstered in pale blue.



Dining room showing built in china cupboard.



Bedroom showing bleached maple corrugated wainscoting. Top of bed upholstered in natural fluted leather with quilted satin bedspread over twin beds. Carpet peach colour.

A LETTER FROM A VALUED CORRESPONDENT IN ALBERTA

I HAVE already commented, in my "Provincial Letter", upon the "A.R.P." number of May, 1942. That was a good piece of co-operative research by a number of architects upon a special subject which, although outside the ordinary sphere of architecture, dealt with what is everybody's business at the present time. There has been too little of such co-operation amongst architects in the past.

The September number "Brave New World" makes a good introduction to the subject of its title and should be followed up. It is important that architectural journals should take a wider view than they have been accustomed to do of the social as well as the technical *environment* of their profession. In the past architects have confined themselves to a too restricted field of thought and work. They must now greatly widen this.

The article "Out of Uniform—What?" calls attention to an important portion of the social situation in a broad manner. That on "Post-War Planning of Schools" is of the sort that is always in point. A logical extension, which must in future be aimed at, is the elevation of the School into a neighbourhood social and intellectual centre. It is up to architects to urge such developments. Similarly "Parks for Post-War Reconstruction" require to be tied in more fully with residential and other city development.

"Reforestation and Transportation" has a bearing upon the future of wood in construction, which is one of fast-growing importance, as a glance over Mr. LeClair's own Journal "Timber" of September last may convince anyone. I hope you will be able to publish from time to time some of the outstanding examples of, say, "split-ring" and "glued-laminated" achievements. Several such methods have long been practised in Europe and are now making progress on this continent. They will affect "the shape of things to come".

The article "Out of the Jungle" is, to my mind, the most appropriate of all to the needs of the present time. It is based on well considered ideas of Town Planning. Taken in conjunction with "Housing" it points to the most immediate requirements of our cities and of our general community.

I have the optimistic hope that the R.A.I.C. Journal will aid architects to become more public-minded and to take a more active part in guiding their respective communities to better co-ordination of public and private buildings. I should like to see it a journal to which the public would often refer and get a lead from—not simply a record of what has been or is being done, but an exponent of ideals to be aimed at and an adviser upon the steps towards accomplishing these ideals. Architects have too long isolated themselves from the public, with the result that the public has acquired the habit of ignoring the architects.

—Cecil S. Burgess.

PROVINCIAL PAGE

ALBERTA

The questionnaire on town planning in the October issue of *"The Journal"* includes an enquiry on the subsidizing of housing. This would scarcely seem to be any part of the professional duties of an architect. The subject does quite properly come within the scope of the town planner and is one of the many subjects that differentiate his sphere from that of the architect. Town Planning is a profession that takes in a wide field and the success and progress of architecture in the future will depend upon the ground-work that must now be provided by town planners. This profession is now, unfortunately, only in its infancy and systematic training for it only in embryo.

It seems, however, to be here in order to present some of the matters involved in considering the subject of the subsidizing of housing. The practice of building houses with a profit to the building contractor and with delayed payments with interest on the part of the purchaser is a well established custom which has proved socially serviceable. It may well be continued in the future by those who can afford it. But, with all the assistance that this procedure can give, it does not provide adequate housing for that large wage-earning class which makes adequate housing possible for others. It never set out to do so; that is not its business or function. This provision has been nobody's business and just has not been done. The wage earner has been left to shift for himself as best he could. He now finds that the best he can do is not good enough. Like Oliver Twist "he asks for more." He wants good housing. The request somewhat shocks our traditional ideas of social arrangements, but it is natural and just and must be fairly met. To talk about reduced interest rates to these people is absurd, because they cannot even meet the capital cost, let alone any interest. What are we to do about it?

We must first have clear ideas about what is required—who and how many are to be provided for—what is the standard of housing to be aimed at—in what manner is the demand to be supplied?

Who, now, most urgently require good housing? There can be no doubt that the wage-earner with young children has the first call. Single persons or childless couples are not in so great need. The demand, then, is chiefly on account of the children. This fact largely determines the type of housing that is a first necessity. It must be such as is suitable for the welfare of young children. This also suggests something of the method and meaning of "subsidizing." Precedent exists for aid of this kind in the partial exemptions from federal taxation on account of children and in the "mothers' allowances." Such precedents may be amenable to farther extension.

As to standards of housing—this requires much detailed consideration. Public services must be supplied. These are costly and the cost is borne by the city taxation. The question here arises as to what relief may be given, by graduation of taxes or otherwise, for the more necessitous. A minimum standard of housing should require that no child should be brought up in an apartment house. It is not fair to the child. It must farther be recognised that home ownership creates a healthy family atmosphere to which there is no equal. It may be neither practicable nor desirable that all should own their own homes, but, where children are concerned, as many as possible should do so and tenancy where it is necessary should be as secure as possible.

How is the demand to be met? One is tempted to reply, "How is an all-out war carried on?" In more detail, however, various methods may be suggested and, in practice, various methods will, no doubt, be adopted according to circumstances.

As an example there may be considered one of the methods operated with success around Stockholm in Sweden:—

A new subdivision is laid out with streets and services. Five standard plans of houses are prepared. A workshop is set up. Applicants for houses choose their sites and their plans and they make an initial deposit. The workshop prepares the materials cut, ready to place in position and delivers them on the site. The home owners proceed to assemble their houses, working in the evenings and at week-ends. A certain amount of expert assistance is supplied and paid for. A whole subdivision is built at one time. Many of those at work are skilled tradesmen of various sorts and they help one another out. The cash outlay is thus materially reduced. Repayment is in the form of annual ground rent.

Such a procedure as the above would apply well to men released from the army and from munition works. These are people of sense and self-helpfulness. They have already taught us—what we ought to have realised before—that there are many "skills" that may be acquired in a few months, that no five-year apprenticeship is required, in this age, for the ordinary routine work of the commoner trades, certainly not for those who have been already engaged on skilful work. Young people of the present day, when machinery eases labour, take to skilled work like ducks to the water. The workshops that form part of the scheme would be at the same time schools of various trades, furnishing employment and training workers.

—Cecil S. Burgess.

ONTARIO

Now that the campaign in North Africa has slowed up a bit, (but not for long, as we all hope), we can turn our thoughts again to architecture—or rather, we could if there were any architecture to think about. It may be, however, that we ought to turn these barren years to good account by honest examination of architectural and related subjects in the abstract, while we are free of the more immediate and practical problems which absorb our energies when offices are busy. At any rate, the Toronto Chapter is providing opportunity for its members to exchange views on the problems of post-war reconstruction, at a round-table discussion to be held at Hart House on the 15th December. If attendance and general interest are sufficiently encouraging, this meeting may be followed by others in the early part of the New Year.

The Report of the Advisory Committee on Housing, (Toronto), recommends that arrangements be made with Wartime Housing Limited for the erection of over two thousand temporary houses for war-industry workers, (about a quarter of them within the city limits and the remainder in adjacent areas), and two thousand permanent houses within the city to be rented to people not working in war industry. Not unexpectedly, the Report has aroused a great deal of controversy, much of it revolving around the alleged encroachment on a field hitherto reserved as a playground for the private builder. Volumes could be written about the merits and demerits of uncontrolled private initiative, but in this matter of home-building there is no doubt whatever that it has ruined more good countryside than any other single agency yet encountered; and it is not very likely that the private builder would extend a hearty welcome to effective control in the public interest. It may be worth while, however, to give serious consideration to some compromise—such as large-scale development by private groups, subject to rigid control well supplied with teeth—before turning the whole problem over for solution along the lines of public ownership.

—Gladstone Evans.

QUEBEC

The next Annual Meeting of our Association takes place in the ancient capital, Quebec City, on January 23rd. The next Annual Meeting of the Royal Architectural Institute will take place on the 19th, 20th, and 21st of February in Montreal. Committees are already at work on both and announcements will appear in the *Journal*.

The young women who have enrolled at the universities for the purpose of studying architecture are, we understand, giving a good account of themselves, but to Miss Pauline Roy of Quebec City, graduate of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, belongs the distinction of being our first woman member. We welcome this innovation and wish Miss Roy every success in her chosen career.

On Saturday, November 14th a group of architects from the Council made a tour for the purpose of inspecting three home developments now under way in the Montreal district. The first visited was a co-operative venture in Rosemount ward and this one impressed us most favourably. Only a small part of a large tract has thus far been developed but they are looking ahead. In their office on the site is a large blueprint showing the complete scheme which is reminiscent of a town in New Jersey called Radburn. There is not space to describe it in detail but as an altruistic experiment in community building, and the first of its kind in our province, its progress will be followed with keenest interest. Of the other two visited Crawford Park attracted us because the homes showed better design and benefited by a woodland background.

We understand that houses in all three developments have been built and financed under the Dominion Housing Act and are owned by teachers, clerks, foremen and skilled mechanics. Low income housing still remains untouched.

Gordon McLeod Pitts has accepted nomination as a McGill appointee to the Council of the City of Montreal and after December 14th will be sharing with others the responsibility of looking after aldermanic affairs. After having held loftiest rank in all the architectural and engineering bodies, different McGill organizations, the Senate of McGill University and others which escape our memory at this moment, to become an alderman is just another job and opportunity for service. As usual he will do it well. As Bert Hazelgrove said when he was in Montreal last Saturday, "there remains only one more honour for Gordon and that's canonization." His appreciative earth-bound fellows have done their best.

We are no less pleased to record that another eminent member of the profession, J. Cecil McDougall, former president of our Association, has also been appointed to sit on the Council of the City of Montreal.

They will take their seats on the new Council December 14th and we are hoping and expecting that they will measure up to the high standard service set by another of our confreres for the past two years. Percy E. Nobbs, who has ably served as alderman, vice-president of the City Planning Commission, and as leading spirit of the Housing Committee, has made a definite contribution to civic betterment. One of his activities has been the preparation of the First Report on a Programme for Post War Housing for Low Wage Earners. This as an official document has been sent to Ottawa. The incoming architect aldermen will have a high mark to shoot at.

The writer of this letter has been requested to enter into the record his appointment, by the Executive Committee, as member of the Advisory Town Planning Board of Montreal.

—Harold Lawson.

SASKATCHEWAN

The annual meeting of the Saskatchewan Association of Architects was held on November 9th at the Bessborough Hotel, Saskatoon. The meeting was fairly well attended and the discussions were varied and at times quite heated.

The National Building Code recently published by the Dominion Government was presented and committees were appointed to study the code and approach the various municipal governments with a view to having it adopted in whole or in part. This was considered to be a long and arduous study as the code is a large volume of over 400 pages and embodies the complicated "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt nots" of the entire construction field. Considerable doubt was expressed whether all sections of the code could be incorporated into the various municipal building by-laws but it was definitely felt that a unified building code was required which would be applicable to all centres in order to eliminate the disparity now existing in the by-laws of the various municipalities. The disastrous fire at a Saskatoon gasoline Service Station was considered a most potent illustration of the dire need for revision in the building by-laws as the building was designed without architectural service and it was pointed out that under the revision of the Saskatchewan Architects Act, the minimum cost on which architects' services are now required is \$15,000.00. However, it was considered that the municipal governments should set a considerably lower minimum for the protection of the public. The desire was expressed to have the municipal governments refuse building permits unless plans or specifications were presented, prepared by architects, but it was considered that this would hardly be applicable to small jobs.

Post war planning was discussed and it was shown that great possibilities were offered if industry could be persuaded to locate in Western Canada. England's decentralization of industry was contrasted with conditions in Canada where industry and Government are concentrated in the East. It was felt that some departments of the Dominion Government could well be located in Western Canada, among them the Department of Agriculture. Many more industries could economically operate here, especially those engaged in the processing of food. This is not a matter which affects Architects alone, but the entire building industry and people of the West.

There has been very little work of any size passing through the Saskatchewan Architects' offices although there have been a few rather nice small jobs. The members of the Saskatchewan Association were somewhat disappointed that the Provincial Page of the *Journal* has had no contributions and were inclined to think that they had been let down by their scribe. This, however, is not the case. As the members can readily see, an honest co-operation is required with the members, to furnish ye scribe with material for publication. It is quite understandable that there is a sense of professional secrecy between the various members, but yet, if the left hand does not let the right hand know what goes on, the cow dries up. It is to be regretted that no material was received even for the "Western Issue". It is considered that the East is quite interested in seeing what is being done in the West, albeit there have been no million dollar factories or theatres, and ye scribe is certain that any plans, photos, perspectives, etc., would be welcomed and published by the *Journal*.

Work is being carried on for the preparation of the new Saskatchewan Association's hand book and it was stated that possibly one thousand would be printed. To this, ye scribe raised an eyebrow, enquiring as to the logic of mailing these hand books to only contractors, supply firms, building inspectors, libraries and other architectural associations, as this group of people is already conversant with an Architect and his work. Eaton's catalogue and Esquire are printed, literally in millions. Every man and his dog knows Eatons—and Esquire. Of Canada's eleven million population, ye scribe would like to know, how many really know what an Architect is.

Regina was chosen as the place for the next annual meeting.

—Robert F. Duke.

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ROYAL ARCHITECTURAL INSTITUTE OF CANADA

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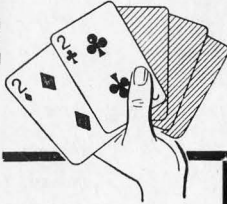
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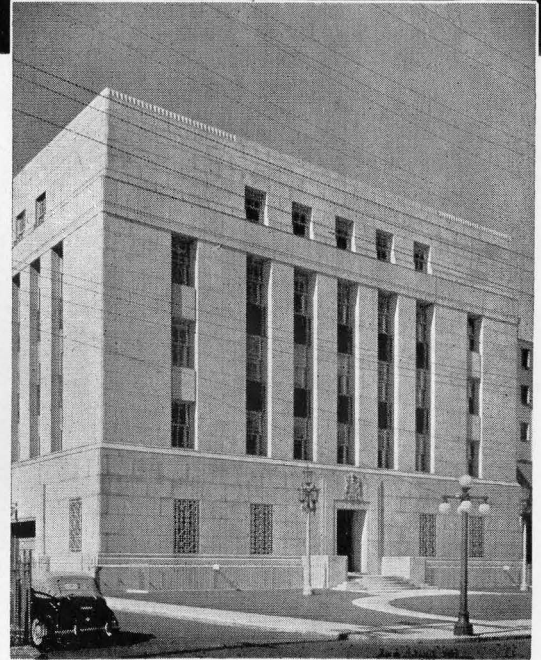
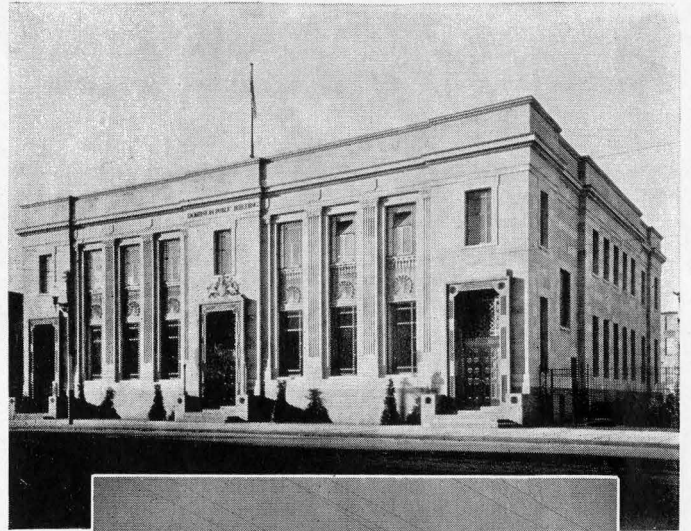
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