National AIA Convention Report

By Philippe Register
Vice-President
New Mexico Chapter, AIA

Being the first convention I have ever attended, I have no way of knowing whether or not it was a "good" convention. However, comments I have heard from those who have been attending for some years past say that it was.

Certain things, either places visited, or things spoken, stand out above the checkered board of the convention routine.

One of these was the keynote address by Edward D. Stone. Here is a condensation of some of the highlights:

"Beauty" is the keynote of Mr. Stone’s theme. In attempting to provide a heritage of "Beauty" for future generations, Mr. Stone touches on the deplorable conditions of our present American scene.

"As we view our cities, towns, villages and our countryside, I am afraid we must acknowledge that we are a people who have not yet learned to appreciate beauty and, in fact, in this era of prosperity and overabundance we can afford everything but beauty. Our highways are a nightmare of billboards, honkey-tonks and filling stations."

He states that to overcome this, we must educate people to the importance of beautiful surroundings. He states that less than 10% of our people have been out of the country. Perhaps jets will change this, so that our people may be able to see what beautiful countries the older cultures have created.

Mr. Stone suggests that certain steps be taken in the interests of advancing beauty in architecture:

"It has occurred to me that since the horseless carriage is largely responsible for all of our troubles and we are a country that eulogizes free enterprise, why hasn’t it occurred to the great oil and automotive industries of this country to try to resolve some of the problems they have created. Why can’t they be shamed into planning studies of our countryside, our villages, our towns, and our cities? To such great corporations the financing of such studies would be peanuts. I believe they could be induced by us to undertake to finance such studies since the destiny of the individual and the future usefulness of the motorcar are deeply involved."

He also suggests:

“Our government must be made aware of its responsibility. To accomplish this, we, of course, need a cabinet official cor-

responding to the Secretary of Agriculture, with outposts in every state and architects and planners to guide communities just as the State and County Agents have educated the farmer.”

Mr. Stone concludes:

“If programs such as these were inaugurated, our profession would begin to fulfill its destiny. We would not be wasting our effort on creating precious prototypes for our own personal satisfaction in the midst of chaos, but rather adding individual and brilliant buildings in a well-ordered plan of our country as a whole.”

An outstanding seminar discussion took place Wednesday afternoon, June 24, on “Individual Theories of Design,” with Philip C. Johnson as chairman. Other members of the panel were William L. Pereira, Minoru Yamasaki and Charles E. Pratt. In this discussion, Mr. Yamasaki brought out his belief in introducing into his architecture the qualities of delight and serenity. Mr. Yamasaki also emphasized his absorbing interest in the “human experience” which, when introduced into a building, creates a “plus” which is beyond the aesthetic beauty of the building.

Perhaps the most challenging talk of the convention was the one made Friday morning, June 26th, by Samuel T. Hurst, Dean of the School of Architecture and the Arts at

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Alabama Polytechnic Institute. In his talk, Mr. Hurst reminded the profession of architecture of its design responsibilities. He referred to the discipline of design as being in a state of precarious balance between disorder or one side and the "super order" of dogma on the other.

To further explain this theme, the following is quoted from his talk:

"1. The discipline of LEARNING and the dogma of the LEARNED. Learning is to the scholar and professional as breathing is to the infant child, a natural life-giving, on-going essential process. It is impossible not to learn something in the course of living, but most difficult to learn much except as the process is encouraged by every available means. Nor is it very possible to stop learning, except to die on the vine of life. The dogma of The Learned would let us believe that a plateau of knowledge exists upon which we might dwell with full assurance of accomplishment and no compulsion to go further. The body of knowledge expands far more rapidly than our ability to encompass it and today’s Learned Man is too often tomorrow’s Intellectual Fossil.

"2. The discipline of EXPERIENCE and the dogma of TRADITION. Each of us brings to every new encounter with knowledge a background of experience, real, direct, describable and consciously or subconsciously the source of our ideas, our values, and our judgments. This experience as discipline provides a yardstick by which to measure new knowledge and understand its impact. Thus it serves the creative process. However, this experience as Tradition, accepted as dogma, accompanied by bias and loose emotional interpretation of its meaning, no longer serves our process but rather obstructs it and diverts the search for truth.

"3. The discipline of FORM and the dogma of FORMALISM. Form gives unity and beauty to life and makes it comprehensible to man, but form in itself is not an end. It is those elements which are formed and the resulting structure which is useful. To achieve form, we establish system. System corrupted is then elevated to a goal in itself becoming the dogma of Formalism.

"4. The discipline of CONTINUITY and the dogma of CONFORMITY. It is continuity which relates present to past and to future and event to event in the chain of natural progression. Continuity allows room for digression and accepts evolution; it does not require the new to keep the form of the old, but simply to respect the old for what it is worth. Conformity on the other hand makes no allowance.

(Continued on Page 14)
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Convention Scenes

AIA President John Noble Richards presents the Kemper Award to Bradley P. Kidder, Santa Fe architect.

Shown examining Kidder's Kemper Award are, left to right, Brad Kidder; Mrs. Kidder; Mrs. Phil Register; John McHugh; and Mrs. Miles Brittelle, Sr.

Three delegates from the Western Mountain Region gather to exchange greetings at the National Convention. They are (left to right) W. Miles Brittelle, Sr., New Mexico AIA Chapter president; Brad Kidder; and Martin Ray Young, Arizona architect.

Officials of several Chapters in the Western Mountain Region gather here for a meeting with Regional Director Frederic "Bunk" Porter during the Convention. Being aprised by "Bunk" Porter of national activities relative to Chapter affairs are, left to right, (front row) James Elmore and Jimmie Nunn of the Central Arizona Chapter; and Brad Kidder, a delegate from the New Mexico Chapter; (center row) John Brenner, Central Arizona Chapter president; Eliot Hitchcock of the Wyoming Chapter; and John McHugh of Santa Fe; (back row) Phil Register, New Mexico Chapter vice-president; and W. Miles Brittelle, Sr., New Mexico Chapter president.

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Convention Report
(Continued from Page 7)

"5. The discipline of COMMUNICATION and the dogma of RECOGNITION. The creative individual in any field needs a degree of communication with his time and place. In the useful arts it is especially so. That communication may be that of violent opposition, complete misunderstanding or passionate acclaim. Communication becomes the dogma of recognition when he is so compelled by desire for agreement and acclaim that his work shapes itself self-consciously toward those ends.

"6. Finally the discipline of ACCEPTABILITY and the dogma of SUCCESS. No honest man will contend that he does not seek the approval of his fellows. Acceptability means reward for work done and the prospect of doing more. But the dogma of success subverts integrity to the purposes of the market place and the search for truth to the service of selling.

"This of course has been an arbitrary alignment of good-man, bad-man ideas and perhaps needs apology to the words chosen to represent the bad. I have no real quarrel with these words. I have tried to say that good discipline becomes bad dogma only as we let it. Discipline is humble, honest, expansive in its effect, encouraging us to go out on a limb and perhaps to live there.

"Dogma is arrogant, restrictive, inhibiting in its effect, requiring us to be overly cautious, circumspect, often just average and above all secure. It restricts the creative process to the popular service of man. Ours is a responsibility to practice discipline and to defend it against over-riding dogma in those enter-

(Continued on Page 16)
Convention Report
(Continued from Page 14)

prises in which we together are engaged."

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The representation from New Mexico included:
Mr. and Mrs. W. Miles Brittelle, Sr., President, New Mexico Chapter, AIA, Mr. and
Mrs. Bradley W. Kidder, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Garcia, Mr. and Mrs. Phil Register,
Mr. John McHugh, and Mr. Richard Waggoner, President, Student Chapter, AIA, UNM.

In leaving New Orleans and the convention, one had a sense of having participated
in the discussion of policies for the advancement of the profession of architecture. As the
convention drew to a close, there was definitely the feeling that the profession had
brought to light some of the problems which have arisen as a result of our rapidly advanc-
technology and exploding population. My personal hope is that these problems
will be brought to the fore earlier in subsequent conventions so that the profession
can perhaps have the time at the conventions to exchange more ideas in the time
available.

Student AIA
Convention Report

Richard "Dick" Waggoner, President of
the UNM Student Chapter, AIA was elected
as Regional Director at the Student Chapter
National Conference, AIA, succeeding
Charles E. Jones, Jr. of the University of
Arizona, who was elevated by election to the
presidency of the National Student AIA. The
Conference was held at Tulane University,
with that University's Student Chapter as hosts.

The opening and keynote address was