



# riba Journal

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## Going to the polls

The chief object of criticism in the subscriptions controversy was Council. This was right to the extent that Council is the governing body of the Institute, but the implication that it is a monolithic entity implies a misunderstanding of its nature. Its decisions – or 'determinations' in the language of the charter – are corporate, to be sure, but Council is an assembly and not a parliament. It does not consist of a government and an opposition which vote on rigid party lines, and therefore is better understood as a collection of individuals. There are factions within it, as in any similar body, but these are informal and transient.

For these reasons, a Council election is a more complicated affair for members than a parliamentary election is for citizens, whose task is made easier by voting for the party rather than the man. When the poll approaches, it is the election manifestos of the candidates which provide the voting member with the guidance he needs. The quality of these has been criticised in the RIBA J and elsewhere on the grounds that, with the introduction of the

single transferable vote, members needed maximum understanding of candidates' principles if the system were to yield advantages over the simple poll. Whether or not the subscription controversy has been the headlong collision between Establishment and Populists which some members have claimed, it's clear that in the forthcoming elections, candidates will have to take account of the tone of recent events and make their positions explicit and their statements meaningful if going to the polls is not to be an unreal exercise.

Between next month and March, members will be able to put up candidates for the Council election. Thereafter it will be up to the membership to vote for those who best represent their points of view, and they should take full advantage of their opportunity to do so. Assertions that the governing body is unrepresentative will have a hollow ring if members do not use their constitutional means to affect its composition. The RIBA can be run only by its Council, and Council is the creation of the membership.

## Architecture: for love or money?

I have no intention, in my presidency, of presiding over the death or even the decline of the RIBA. On the contrary, I think that if we all behave with good sense, we can emerge from our present troubles stronger than when we entered them. I do not deny the seriousness of our difficulties, but they are not insuperable. A situation where the weekly journals fill their space with news and views about the RIBA, and members who have been silent for years are stirred into activity (even if it's a protest), is fundamentally a healthy one.

Most of the questions being asked are legitimate. Many of the suggestions made are helpful and are respected, as long as it is appreciated that some are in conflict and that not all can be acted upon. Those members who think that their elected Council is wrong have every right to make their opinions known and to take steps to change the decisions they dislike. In the last resort, they can throw their Council representatives out and elect others who are more to their liking. If the result is that more elections are contested, more members vote, and more candidates stand, it will put new life into an institution which demands invigoration and modernisation from time to time.

But some of the questions being asked, and some of the things being said, lead me to question whether enough architects really understand what the Institute is for. It is a fundamental misconception to believe that the RIBA is really an organised pressure group for its own members. This, as it happens, is what the enemies and critics of the profession say the professional institutions already are. They accuse the professions of setting up closed shops, keeping prices up and numbers down, and generally fleecing the public. We have gone to some trouble to show the Monopolies Com-

mission and others that this is not what we do in the RIBA.

The business of the RIBA is, and always has been, as our charter puts it, the advancement of architecture and the promotion of knowledge. My main purpose is to examine architecture, as it is being practised and as it is developing today, so that I can make some suggestions for its advancement in current conditions.

I am not saying that the RIBA is wholly altruistic. For one thing, one can hardly advance architecture by depressing architects or driving them out of business. Architecture cannot flourish where the climate of government, legislation, taxation, and public opinion is hostile, or reflects a serious lack of education or information. One of the biggest jobs for the RIBA is to improve this climate, to improve the context within which architecture is practised. Another is to help architects to be better architects and to offer a better architectural service. All this encourages better architecture. But let us once say, or even think, that our real job is to put more money into architects' pockets – and our advice will be suspect and our influence in the world correspondingly reduced.

This is certainly a rôle for trade unions for those in salaried employment, but it is not a rôle that the RIBA, though 80 per cent of its members are salaried, can conceivably play. We simply have a different job to do. The RIBA is in fact a voluntary association of architects who have come together to advance architecture, which is the one interest we all have in common. The RIBA also reflects another very important principle in British political life, which traditionally allows the professions to govern themselves, instead of putting them under state control as happens in many other countries. But

if we use this freedom, not to govern the profession in the public interest, but to promote our own purely selfish interests, the way is open to state regulation and control.

It's because the RIBA is a self governing professional institute, whose objects are to advance architecture and to promote knowledge, that it has a royal charter and charitable status. By relieving charities like the RIBA of rates and taxes, parliament gives us a considerable subsidy which it does not give trade unions or trade associations. This is a valuable privilege which is intended to help us, for example, to provide a great national library of architecture, which is the main repository of architectural knowledge, indispensable alike to the scholar and the practitioner. The support we get, it is true, is now inadequate, and we are asking the government to give us more help in maintaining the library. But we do not think it would be worthy of our rôle as an institute charged with promoting knowledge to give the library away and throw the whole burden of keeping it up on the taxpayers.

Exemption from taxation is also intended to help us in the public interest to set and maintain standards of education, of entry, of practice, and of integrity. Nearly everything we do is, in fact, intended to advance architecture: very little consists of personal services which members could choose to buy or not – other, that is, than the services for which we already charge members and practices. Even when we discuss money, insist on payment by a fee scale, or negotiate the conditions of engagement, we do so because we want to create conditions which encourage architecture and practice.

The RIBA represents the whole profession, and it is sad that while it is this

which gives us our unique external strength, it also makes for weakening internal discord. In my experience, when we talk to government about the need for architects to be paid as professionals on a recognised scale that subordinates the profit motive to service, or about the best way to organise architectural services in local government, or about the effects of housing cost yardsticks, or about the need for comprehensive conservation grants or a comprehensive form of building legislation, or about a hundred other things, our strength lies in our supposed unity and in our disinterested professional attitude. We are the envy of foreign and Commonwealth architects because we represent nearly 90 per cent of practising architects in this country, because we form a unique combination: not, as in some countries, a small private élite, but those in public and private practice and in industry, the salaried staffs and principals, the teachers and researchers, all in one institute on a basis of equality. This is what has won for architects in this country greater opportunities than they have anywhere else in the world, and our biggest concern should not be our own subscriptions, but the need for us to use these opportunities better in the future than we have done in the past.

While we represent so many different architects, it is understandable that some may feel that the Institute does more for one section than another. Council has to be careful never to act or appear to act in a way preferential to the interests of one or other of two pairs of groups in particular: public or private, and principal or employee. Private practice has to realise that it is the development of strong public practice in this country after the war which has given the profession and the RIBA its unique strength. Council (where the majority consists at present of principals, public and private) has to remember that the majority of our members are salaried, and when acting to improve the climate for architectural practice it must consider the best interests of the whole profession. The benefits to individual members, being indirect and often hard to see, are generally not appreciated by the majority, but the RIBA's strength and authority is dependent upon the support of that majority. That is our internal problem.

#### *Scarce resources*

While we argue among ourselves and denigrate ourselves, we absorb scarce resources, and there is little energy left at the RIBA for the advancement of architecture or concern for the environmental crisis. If we were allowed to use more of our resources for these purposes we could be more effective. A strong, self confident profession is more likely to command respect and be able to exercise a good influence than is

one made up of uncertain members squabbling among themselves.

The RIBA is not, however, only concerned with its members: it is concerned with, and relates to, three other groups as well – the community, the government, and the industry. These relationships can be considered diagrammatically as a five sided figure with government, community, members, and industry at four corners, and the RIBA at the fifth, with a two way link with each: that is, it seeks to influence and is influenced by all four. Such a representation makes clear the dependence of the profession on the activity and approach of government, the community, and the rest of the industry, and that the best – indeed, the only – centre for activity to create the conditions within which the profession can operate to the advantage of all is the RIBA. It brings home the importance of the RIBA's relations with the other three groups and suggests that some of the links are weaker than others, or that there is an ill balance in the two way flow. From this, we can identify the way ahead for future activity by the RIBA. But before I put forward some suggestions, I want to identify and discuss a number of matters about which I think we have to be more clear.

#### *'Wise design'*

The first is the architect's job and what in fact we mean by wise design. Second, our social responsibilities, particularly in relation to our day to day activities. Third, the outside influences and the performance of others which bear upon our work. And fourth, the need to work toward unity within the profession and the industry.

I can never understand those who doubt what the architect's job is, or those who are pessimistic about the architect's future. Clearly and simply, we are designers of buildings – buildings which should bring joy to the heart. As long as activities require shelter and people require homes (even if only a few require monuments), there will be plenty of jobs for architects to do. We are now involved in an increasing variety of rôles within the total operation of creating a building and are becoming specialists in particular tasks, related to the earlier stages in the design operation, or to the collection of feedback from completed schemes, or to the growing number of specialisms inside and outside the traditional design pattern. Clients and public are, however, primarily interested in finished buildings and not interested in the multitudinous specialist rôles which modern conditions dictate that the architect must fill, and it is unreasonable to expect otherwise. The client's understandable lack of interest in the process whereby buildings are created perpetuates misunderstanding about how buildings are actually created. They may be vaguely aware that build-

ings result from the contributions of a vast variety of people – the principal architect, architect specialists, other disciplines in the design team, manufacturers, and contractors – but are generally unaware of the constraints which bear increasingly upon the operation, and of the consequences of their decisions as clients.

It may seem odd that it is necessary also to attempt to define what we mean in the 1970s by 'wise design'. What capabilities are essential in every building, and what is the measure of these that must be met before the building may be considered good? Traditionally, they were commodity, firmness and delight, but I suggest that these are insufficient to serve us today. A building has to have social relevance: it has to meet the real and symbolic requirements of the client, provide satisfaction to the users within and without, and contribute to the wider environment – 'delight'. It must meet the spatial requirements of the functions it has to house (and, increasingly, be adaptable to functions that cannot initially be foreseen). Its structure has to provide support and its shell has to act as a satisfactory climate modifier, keeping out water, avoiding solar buildup, and so on. Its economic basis has to be sound, and it has to make for an 'addition of value', for this is the main reason why most clients build.

Good buildings must be assessed by the aggregate of success in each of these four areas. The qualities of buildings which give rise to criticism can be brought home to an ill balance in the four capabilities, stemming from too narrow an approach, excessive interest in one or more of the four areas at the expense of the others, or from lack of knowledge. But the four are not of equal weighting. Delight (except in rare cases) is still the most important, for it is the one which impinges on the maximum number of people. Clearly, however, deficiencies in the other three can detract to the extent of nullifying the overall merit of a building, however good it is in its aesthetic qualities. The piece of architectural sculpture which leaks, overheats, or costs too much is not wise design. But buildings, however satisfactory in the other areas, are even more serious failures if they fail to give delight. Architecture is not only an art, it is more than an art and the most difficult art, because it must satisfy so many nonartistic criteria also.

#### *Fine balance*

A few buildings may still be created by a dominant architect, who requires all with whom he works to dance, without question, to his tune. A limited number of brilliant architects can do this and still produce really excellent (though perhaps costly) buildings. But most architects, while still providing the personal vision which produces architecture as opposed to mere

building, will accept and coordinate the active contributions of others, in order to achieve that balance between the four capabilities which is appropriate to the particular design. For the majority, the way ahead is, I feel sure, to design simpler, better mannered, less egotistical buildings developed through a more balanced approach to design.

To distinguish this from the more haphazard design which is still pretty general today, I will call it 'total design'. But the working procedures necessary to achieve it are only now developing, and all is not right within the team itself. We are rather like an engine in which one of the cylinders is different from the rest, with the result that the output is not as good as it should be. That is why we are giving all the support in our power to help the services engineers (now involved in up to 50 per cent of the design) to get their own charter to provide them with the status necessary to attract the best recruits and the authority to set their own qualifying standards. When this has been achieved, we will have a balanced engine with the potential to run well, though there will still be a lot to learn about how to get the best out of it. The next decade requires much further work on this and considerable effort to monitor both the process and the product, assessing not only the physical but the social performance: we also need to know more about design for production. All this represents a major task to provide us with a better based fund of sound knowledge, for we can no longer rely entirely on an individual person's experience and stylistic whims.

### *Real value*

The concept of long life, loose fit, low energy building has an increasing number of supporters and appears to be sensible and logical, but there are those - including Reyner Banham - who challenge it in favour of throw-away buildings. At the celebrations at Persepolis, it was a measure of status to be housed in a tent rather than a traditional building, but this hardly makes the case for a departure from permanent structure for normal circumstances. We need more facts, about the economics of enduring but adaptable buildings. Once we have these, we must debate the pros and cons of the concept, here and in the regions, so that the RIBA can develop a corporate view strong enough to influence government policy and our clients.

For, particularly in the public sector, lowest initial cost is becoming increasingly the order of the day, and we are laying up both economic and environmental problems for the future. Our gross fixed capital formation (embracing vehicles, plant, machinery, and construction) is low compared with other industrialised countries, and I suspect that the element

representing investment in building would compare particularly unfavourably. I was saddened on a recent visit to Oxford to see on one side of the railway tracks the original station buildings, which have served well for perhaps a century, and on the other the recently completed replacements. Though these are competently detailed, the application of far too rigid cost limits has resulted in buildings mean in space and mean in materials, out of character with the general building quality in the university town, and likely to become shoddy in no time at all. Apart from British Rail's responsibility to do something better in an historic town, I am confident that the long term economics of the development just don't stand up.

The RIBA must develop a stronger and more authoritative voice to encourage government departments and national agencies to turn away from lowest initial cost toward long term value for money. For this to be possible, I believe we have to do two things: first, to collect more evidence to show the long term dangers of the former and the advantages to everybody of the latter: second, to put ourselves into such a position as a profession that those who employ us may be confident that our approach to design will be responsible and our management of the operation effective, so that the outcome will have the right balance between my four capabilities. As greater confidence develops, so will our individual and corporate authority. There are, however, public doubts and scepticisms to be removed. Until the architectural profession's general responsibility in economic matters has been established, our motives may be suspect. Fortunately, the National Board for Prices & Incomes cleared us on one score. Lord Peddie, speaking recently of our fee system, said: 'At first glance, it might appear that progressive payment based upon increasing value of the building was hardly conducive to the interest of the client. But it must be emphasised that the PIB after detailed enquiry was convinced that, in spite of such a system, there was no evidence at all of architects' being unmindful of clients' interest because of a pursuit of higher fees. This was a great tribute to the ethical standards of the profession.'

### *Cost limits*

That such is the position is, I believe, also accepted by government departments in our constant pressure for adjustment of cost limits. We are not out to avoid the investigation and refinement necessary at the design stage to control costs, nor are we opposed in principle to a cost limit system, but we want that system developed so that there are opportunities for long term value. The country needs new cost control procedures for the public sector (and revised taxation procedures for

the private sector) which do not subordinate quality to quantity and whose long term economics are on a sounder footing. We would like to work with our colleagues in the industry and the government departments to find a solution to this problem.

Long life, greater adaptability, and lower cost-in-use buildings will invariably mean increased initial costs, and we need all the respect and authority we can get to convince those who call the financial tune that they are justified. If we can fully master multidisciplinary design working so that we become more successful in achieving the optimum balance of expenditure throughout all the elements of building, we will be in a stronger position to ask for more and to convince clients we do so in their interest.

### *Social effects*

But lest it appear that I am laying too much stress on money, let me turn to even more important matters. In industry, management has to be concerned in a balanced way with processes, products, organisation, and the market. Architects are also concerned with these, but in addition we are concerned with the effect on others of what we produce, as industry would be if it were more socially responsible.

We know from our own reactions that manmade surroundings can (like nature itself) oppress us, depress us, cheer us up, or irritate us, but the degree to which our surroundings (and in particular our buildings) affect the pattern of human behaviour is not so immediately obvious. Architects have been accused of acting on the theory of 'architectural determinism', of believing that they can engineer social behaviour through design. Sociologists are surely right to criticise this theory in its extreme form, but the spate of criticism that architects have designed inhuman or antisocial environments, which contribute to loneliness, unhappiness, or delinquency, suggests that architecture is widely believed to have some influence, good or bad, on social behaviour.

Though we are less certain of our ability to design for behaviour, we can certainly design for reaction, and there is little doubt that our efforts do have a bearing on the quality of life and that our work has social value for good or evil. But it is a somewhat strange fact that the architect's responsibility for external character and environment (where there are so few clear criteria against which to measure success) has always been accepted, while his responsibility for the internal environment (where clearer criteria do exist) is only recently being taken seriously. When evaluating buildings in the past (the RIBA awards are an example), it has been the almost universal practice to judge them from the exterior, mainly in visual terms, and rarely to judge them by their fitness for human

use or human needs. Perhaps this is because the analytical criteria by which success in these aspects can be measured are still unsophisticated, and so it is easier to commend the architect's intuitive skill in achieving good external quality and relating the building well to its surroundings, while overlooking his success or failure in the internal environment, where intuition is not enough.

Overall quality requires the 'total' design approach to which I have already referred, but in applying this, there are difficulties and pitfalls. First, multidisciplinary working, while undoubtedly making for greater success in purely physical terms, can risk subordinating those intangible and sensitive elements in design which bring 'joy to the heart'. Second, formalising criteria and developing techniques – though of immense value to the good designer to supplement his natural skill and intuition – can lead to dull and inhuman buildings if those who lack any personal flair resort to purely mechanical operation of rules and procedures

#### *Broader aspects*

There is danger also, if the swing away from dominant concern for a building's external character to dominant concern for the internal environment is too violent, that we will end up with results as ill balanced as before. While contributing to the satisfaction and comfort of the occupants or the profit of the developer, the building may contribute nothing to, or even detract from, the wider environment. Here again, what we require is balance – balance between the two levels at which architects have a responsibility to consider the social implications of what they do: concern for the context of buildings in their surroundings and for the effect they will have on other people (the supra client responsibility), and concern for the success of the building in serving its primary purpose and for the wellbeing of its users.

It has to be remembered, however, that very little of an architect's work in creating a building is directly concerned with such social considerations (except by default where there is a failure). Most of his time is spent on analysis, decisionmaking, cost implications, programming, and the technical details which go into a successfully completed job. Without competence in these fields, an architect cannot start to make a social contribution, and it is encouraging that the students now going through the schools are quite clear on this score.

I don't propose to rehearse the merits of the basic concept of professionalism, though it saddens me that it should be considered clever today to say, 'Whenever I hear someone start to talk about his professional integrity, I start to count the spoons.' Professionalism means impartiality and integrity,

and integrity demands competence: it is only professional humbug and narrow professionalism which have constantly to be challenged. The reconciliation of the architect's responsibility to his client with his responsibility to society is at the heart of true professionalism, and the degree to which the results are successful is a better measure of architectural calibre than personal economic success, though these are not necessarily incompatible.

Here, then, we have the first identifiable outside factor which bears upon the environmental result: the client's choice between entrusting the design of his building to a person or firm who will consider only his requirements, and entrusting it to those who will look also beyond to the broader social, locational, and environmental aspects. 'Total' design is a decisionmaking process in which neither the architect nor his colleagues in the design team will make all the decisions, and on which many legal, financial, commercial, social, or even simple human forces will bear. So we have to examine these forces and to study the behavioural patterns of the other people involved, particularly those who control the financial resources.

The architect's position, the organisational structure within which he works, and his relationships with client organisations play a considerable part in influencing his performance and the nature of the buildings he produces or contributes to. Whether an architect is free to coordinate all the specialists properly, or whether, because of their individual status and position within the operation, the specialists are prone to take decisions in isolation in their particular field, or whether the job is dominated by concern for some particular aspect (be it profit, or technical efficiency, or complete disregard for human requirements) – these factors will play a bigger part in governing the eventual form and character of the completed building than the personal skill of the individual architect concerned. But very important decisions are often made before these relationships have been set up. The method chosen by the client for the procurement of his building is likely to have a greater effect on the finished result than anything else, for the method will govern the position and authority of the architect within the operation.

#### *Client's choice*

One has only to make a simple survey in one's mind's eye of successes and failures in different building types to be aware of the importance of the client's choice of architect or of method of procurement of his building. Generally, university clients have been selective and have usually obtained competent buildings within the UGC cost limits, and stimulating, if not always good mannered, buildings where more money has been available.

Schools range in quality between wide extremes, and it would be interesting to find out to what extent failures and successes result from the choice of the architects, the organisational framework for decisionmaking, or the attitudes and aspirations of the local education authority. To look at public and private housing in the same way would also be rewarding.

Speculative office blocks cause much concern to the public and to a good proportion of the architectural profession. It is understandable that the clients for this particular building type have been more interested than any other in financial gain and least interested in the consequences for others of their developments. It is not without significance that those who commissioned such buildings were least selective in the appointment of their architects, entrusting their work to those who discovered sites for them, regardless of their architectural ability, or to those most skilled and resolute in the exploitation of sites without thought for others – in short, those architects least concerned to uphold the professional ethic of putting the community first. What is interesting, in retrospect, is that these architects, while appearing to their clients to have the qualities they looked for as financial advisers, have in many cases provided poor value for money, as their decisions have often been conservative aesthetically and backward technically, and have often provided disastrous internal working arrangements. Fortunately, some developers are now finding that the better architect organisations can provide a balanced service, combining financial knowhow with environmental responsibility and technical competence.

#### *DOE contracts*

Why do particular client groups go about procuring their buildings in particular ways? What actions stem from the client's own initiative, and what are the result of pressures? Why is the Department of the Environment giving advice upon – if not actually advocating – design/build contracts in a circular issued by its contracts branch, apparently without thought for the implications of such contracts for the environment which the department's very name declares its intention to serve? No real study has ever been carried out to find the answers to these questions. If the answers were known, it might be found that the RIBA and individual architects could do little to influence clients to operate in a different way. On the other hand, if it were clear that clients' actions prevented them from obtaining the best results (either for themselves or for the community), the RIBA and responsible authorities, such as the Department of the Environment, might take steps to create a climate of understanding among clients and find

ways to encourage higher standards.

The factors stemming from the actions of others which have a vital importance for the architect's work fall into three broad categories: political, legislative, and commercial. In the first category – political – fall the situations which arise from government and local government policies and organisational frameworks and the uncoordinated responsibilities of different government departments. The setting up of the Department of the Environment offers the opportunity for improvement, and Peter Walker's recent speech at Brighton suggests that he is clear on what needs to be done. We can only offer to help where we can, criticise where appropriate, and hope that what he has outlined is carried through to reality.

### *Horror stories*

In the second category – legislative – we have on the one hand legislation itself (which may be good or bad, or have unexpected repercussions) and its interpretation, and on the other hand, lack of legislation, or an excessive variety of uncoordinated, irrational, or unnecessary controls bearing upon the design and building operation. Clients may have their horror stories about architects, but every architect will have dozens of horror stories about bureaucratic interpretations of legislation and costly waste of effort as a result.

There is urgent need to consolidate and rationalise building law and the innumerable regulations bearing upon building, and to coordinate the building legislation that crosses the boundaries of government departments. I have commended Peter Walker for asking himself the right strategic questions in relation to the environment, but unfortunately I see no sign that his department has any serious intention of clearing up the jungle of building law and controls which waste millions of pounds by unnecessary delay and constraints on design, but often fail to achieve their objectives.

My third category – commercial initiative – is already exercising considerable impact on our environment. The very choice of method of procurement of his building by a client may predetermine the form of the final result. A local authority, faced with the alternatives of entrusting the development of a particular area to contractors or to an independent professional team, may decide the form of the development by the choice of the process: the former might be selling a high rise proprietary system, while the latter would be free to suggest a low rise solution.

If those aspects of the architect's effort which contribute to the quality of life are to survive outside pressures, one can only doubt the merit of any system of procurement which does not permit the normal relationship between the client and the architect

– any system which vests leadership of the design operation in any of the other parties with narrower interests. In a purely commercial situation, concern for the social and psychological implications of buildings is likely to be the first element of design to be thrown overboard. A leading contractor has made his position quite clear in defining his main responsibilities and stressing the order in which he puts them: his first responsibility was to his shareholders, his second to his employees, his third to the customer, his fourth to suppliers and subcontractors, his fifth to the community. This is surely putting money before love.

It is in the context of these thoughts about our social responsibilities, our job, and the activities of those who influence it and with whom we work, that I want to suggest a change in direction for the RIBA – a change in attitude leading to a change in priorities, showing clearly that we are returning to our original charter objectives, that we are again becoming more concerned with architecture than with architects.

I want to see more talk about architecture at the RIBA and in the regions, more time spent on studying what there is to learn from existing buildings (successes and failures), and on the process by which our buildings are brought into being and the outside influences which bear upon it – not, of course, on the process for its own sake: a satisfactory process can still produce a bad end, but discussing architecture must include a lot of discussion of means related to ends. The objective is to create the necessary conditions under which architects can produce good architecture, and giving attention to this must not be interpreted as turning away from architecture and becoming obsessed with architects again.

### *More research*

The starting point appears to be a commitment to a philosophy of competence in the total design to which I have referred. This means corporate study by RIBA members (at HQ, in schools, and in the regions) and colleagues in other disciplines, and experimental working. It means developing clarity of thought about the subtle difference between plagiarism and the wise mobilising of existing knowledge and skills in the service of better design. It means more climbing on other people's shoulders and less ad hoc originality. It means the development of a greater understanding of the outside influences and activities of others which have a bearing on our performance. And it means taking steps to ensure that setting standards of design and developing social and technical legislative policies, which become the constraints within which designers operate, are not left to government and industry: architects must collec-

tively become more forceful in these areas. It means a RIBA commitment to building up a fund of knowledge and to using it in action. It means that the RIBA should perhaps broaden its concern for research and make it more central to its activities. And it means, of course, that we must continue to work for increased competence at our job, which means more highly organised continuing education.

### *RIBA priorities*

But lest I am judged by my Council colleagues as irresponsible, I must return for a moment to the problems of resources within the RIBA. It is not always appreciated that the very existence of the Institute means that certain duties are inescapable and absorb a high proportion of our income: duties in relation to, for example, the library, holding examinations, keeping the records, administering the code, appointing arbitrators, answering members' queries from at home and abroad, running the building itself, and a host of other activities. Once these have been provided for, there is usually only a small amount of money, if any, left for other work, and Council has very little room to manoeuvre in deciding what limited effort can be put into influencing events and maintaining the two way contact with the four groups to which I referred earlier.

Obviously, we have to see that the inescapable activities are carried out with the minimum drain on resources and then get our priorities right for the allocation of what is left. This is, however, easier said than done. To take but one example: how does one weigh up the claims of work on the new housing finance legislation against pressure for comprehensive building legislation when one can't do both? How does one find any resources at all to influence others to want better architecture, or even to organise discussion of the sort of problems I outlined earlier, or dozens of other subjects which may be thought more relevant? For one thing is clear: involvement by the RIBA in any subject whatever absorbs resources. So our problem is to identify the very few subjects, out of a vast number, that can be tackled at one time, and in making this selection we are bound to dissatisfy a lot of members.

When putting forward my suggestions for priorities I am therefore only giving a lead. The final choice will rest with the Council: and the sad truth is that without considerable financial support, we will be able to do little. Those necessary two way links with government and the central agencies, with the community, with our members, and with the industry, which I referred to earlier, provide the framework for my review.

*Government, central agencies* Every few years it is appropriate to reread

Sydney Webb's address to the RIBA in 1917 on 'The functions of an architectural society'. It was republished in the RIBAJ in April 1964 and could well be read again by every member. Webb's advice was clear: 'A very large part of the public functions of a professional association . . . is to claim the right and duty of criticism of everything that is done by government, or for that matter by any public authority, in the lines of its own profession. To inform the government of the day of the professional opinion upon every kind of act which is done by government, or left undone, on which the profession has a distinct opinion.'

The Intelligence Unit and the Public Affairs Department are already active and outward looking in this field. This work needs to be expanded to strengthen contact with government and those agencies whose activities bear upon the process. Corporate objective comment is welcomed and respected by Whitehall, and it can do much to improve the climate in which architects ultimately have to operate. In the fields of controls, regulations, and standards, it is not possible to make effective comment without fully understanding the proposals put forward by government departments and agencies: and, to be in a position to make such comment, there seems no alternative to duplicating some at least of their study and development work. This is a problem that has bedevilled the RIBA for a long time. If we put in a lot of effort (albeit largely voluntary work by members), this suggests wasteful duplication, but if this work is not done, we are not in a position to comment, and members find themselves faced with new and sometimes intolerable constraints when it is too late. We need to put more resources into this side of RIBA activities.

*Members* In the membership there are sectional groups with particular interests who have banded together to discuss and act on matters of particular concern to them, often in areas from which the RIBA is excluded by its charter and charitable status. As long as activity in any one section is not at the expense of another, this is perfectly proper and to be encouraged. I do not see why these specialist groups should not be associated with us, as SAAT is, and I am arranging a meeting to discuss procedures. But let it be realised that such a development offers little opportunity to hive off RIBA activity and that some staff effort in coordinating and encouraging mutual dependence will be unavoidable.

Where matters are handled within the RIBA, we will continue our policy that where a subject of particular concern to one group is being discussed, there shall always be a leavening of others whose particular interests lie elsewhere, who can help the specialists to understand the other man's view.

In addition to the normal services

provided by the existing departments of the RIBA, I would like to see centres developed at Portland Place and in the regions to provide the opportunity to discuss with a wider range of members, not only what the RIBA is doing, but architecture on a multidisciplinary basis against a background of knowledge, which could lead to individual and corporate development. The centres would provide focal points where members committed to the use of knowledge in action could gather together to develop ideas and exchange experiences. As concern would not be with knowledge for its own sake but with finding ways of putting knowledge to practical use, what I propose is not so much a revival of the RIBA's 'learned society' role, though this would be an important secondary outcome. The centres of active learning would monitor political, social, and commercial changes as well as technological changes, for, perhaps contrary to popular belief, their influences are the more far reaching. We might, one day, publish 'proceedings' or their modern equivalent.

The RIBAJ will be publishing from time to time discussion papers prepared by the Intelligence Unit. I hope that these may be considered and commented upon in the regions, and perhaps that particular regions may undertake the gathering together of reaction and comment.

*The community* I see the Clients' Bureau as an outward looking section of the RIBA concerned primarily with the community and the market which the architectural profession serves. It should seek to monitor what is happening in the client world, to keep in touch with those who are making the decisions on procurement, and to study in general the architectural needs of the community so that the RIBA can adjust to them where appropriate, and can assist architects to provide the services that are required. We need more knowledge about the interface between the architect's and the client's worlds. We need a study of the architect in society to follow the 'office survey' of more than a decade ago, to provide the essential information for the operation of the bureau, but this would require outside financial support.

I want to see the development of the RIBA, as Malcolm MacEwen has suggested, as an architectural centre. This would embrace the learning centre, but would be wider in its interests and in the range of people one hopes it would involve. It would be concerned with the relationship between architecture and the other arts, as well as forming a forum for those who want good architecture and those who have a bearing on the process. It would operate conferences, seminars, discussion meetings for client groups, teachers, and the general public. It would fulfill our responsibility to influence the public in the particular

sphere of our expertise and, in particular, to want better buildings and environments.

The subscriber class (already provided for in the charter) should be developed so that others can participate in our activities and pay a subscription for so doing.

*The industry* Because the rest of the community is becoming fed up with separatist institutional policy, which smacks of the 'closed shop', I think we should investigate the possibility of admitting to corporate membership everyone who contributes to the built environment, and then invite our colleagues' institutions to offer the same privileges to us. This does not mean that every quantity surveyor, structural engineer, or town planner would instantly have the title 'architect' or even the affix 'RIBA'. On the contrary, we would maintain a clear distinction between our architect members (who would retain control of their institution), but our colleague members would participate in RIBA affairs to our mutual benefit without laying any claim to being architects. If others saw fit to admit us, it would be on that basis.

One action which the RIBA might take could link all the groups together in an interesting and stimulating way. We could provide centres for experiment in new forms of professional involvement in socially useful action to improve the environment, following the pattern of the American 'community design centres'. Such centres - at headquarters and in the regions - would channel freely given skilled time in collective, useful effort. The work could take a variety of forms: investigations, collaboration with research workers, identification of procedural problems, development of procedures, and the provision, in appropriate cases, of free environmental help. Such centres would be free of RIBA control, but able to call on staff and members for advice and help at all levels.

To do these things, the RIBA must be strong: to be strong, it must not be disunited. Architects may be self employed or salaried, they may work in the public, private, industrial, teaching, or research sectors, they may see architecture as a way of life or merely as a way of earning a living, they may be intuitive or systematic, they may be humanist or materialist. So we can never expect to have a 'standard' architect, even if this were desirable. We can never hope for complete unity of approach and thinking. But it is to be hoped that there can be unity in one thing at least: the importance of the RIBA's being strong enough to exercise that corporate influence which can create the climate in which each of us can operate best, in our own individual way. For heaven's sake, let us spend less of our effort on self-administration and discord and more on architecture, for love or money.

26 October