

YOU AND THE ROLE OF THE CAA

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This paper sets out to examine the relationship between the individual architect and the CAA within the general framework of the CAA's role in 'International Affairs'. In so doing, the nature and structure of the CAA is reviewed to ascertain how an individual architect relates to the CAA, his attitude towards the organisation and his contribution towards the total effort of the CAA in 'International Affairs'.

Similarly, an attempt is made to examine the way the CAA relates to and participates in the international architectural scene, the nature of the CAA organisation, its constraints as well as its strengths.

In conclusion, some suggestions are offered to help bridge the gap between the individual architect and the CAA and also some possibilities for increasing the effectiveness of the CAA in international affairs.

1. Introduction

This contribution being one of the four sub-topics under the general theme of this 4th Session runs the risk of overlapping with the other three papers. However, an attempt is made to follow as closely as possible the scope of the paper as defined in the title of this session and the sub-topic.

The first word 'YOU' in the title is taken to mean 'You — the *individual* architect, the average member of an institute, association or society of architects.'

This then immediately poses a problem because the individual architect does *not* have any direct relationship with the CAA and yet we are to discuss how he, which word should also include the feminine gender, has anything to do with the role of the organisation of CAA, and in particular in 'international affairs'.

2. Involvement

As all those who are present at this session and those who are sufficiently interested to read the report of the proceedings of this Conference will readily attest from their own personal experience, even in situations where there is *direct* relationship between an individual and an organisation such as would exist in any institute, association or society of architects, there exist the very real problem of achieving adequate involvement of the individual members in the activities of their respective organisations. Thus, the usual situation is that the task of running the organisation is left to the very small minority of members who for various reasons of their own are sufficiently motivated to become involved.

Thus the individual member having delegated the responsibility of running his institute to the few members, either by choice or otherwise, generally only maintains his relationship with an organisation such as the CAA by proxy.

Hence, the real problem as far as the CAA is concerned is how to increase the involvement of the individual architect in the affairs of the CAA. Perhaps this is an unreasonable expectation? Perhaps the most that the CAA can hopefully expect to achieve is an awareness of its existence, its general objectives, and in special instances to become involved.

Even to achieve this relatively low level of involvement, or more accurately, awareness in CAA requires the initiative of the CAA and the support of the 'members'. By this statement it is implied that the existing level of awareness of the CAA by the average individual member of a member institute, association or society is inadequate.

The basic reason for this situation is the inadequate communication between the CAA and the *individual architect* coupled to the practical relevance of the CAA in the affairs of the individual.

3. Communication

Apart from the leaflets that are sent out to publicise conferences of the CAA, which only reach and interest the small minority of individual members, not very much is heard about the activities of the CAA. There are of course the brief 'news' items that are printed in the newsletters and journals of member institutes but these are of matters that have little interest or relevance to the individual reader so that more often than not, they are not even noticed.

The result of this is that CAA to the average if not the majority of individual members of its member institutes, remain an obscure set of initials which has something to do with the Commonwealth and architects. And, if a poll is taken the odds are that this would be confirmed!

What then has happened to the communication system of the CAA? After reading the report of the

York Conference of 1976 and which was circulated very much later, there were only 3 issues of the Newsletter all published in 1977. Since then, there has been nothing else! Could it be that there is nothing of interest or of relevance that the CAA has undertaken that its 'membership' would like to know about?

It should also be mentioned that a CAA Handbook was published in 1976 containing among other items relating directly to the CAA, information about its members. However, to be useful, such information must be current and with the lapse of more than three years, it is likely that a good proportion of such information must be out of date by now.

4. Relevance

The *relevance of the CAA* is the *key factor* to provide the motivation for the individual architect to become interested and thus hopefully involved in it. What then is the relevance of the CAA to the individual architect? How can the CAA be more relevant than the individual's own institute?

To the full-fledged member, and depending on his personal position, Sub-Article 12 of the CAA's Articles of Association may be of relevance. This Sub-Article provides for the promotion of the free movement of architects between countries by the accrediting of qualifications and the encouragement of systems of inter-recognition of qualifications. This objective whilst laudible is of very limited application because the movement of architects between countries, especially to work, is governed by the immigration and labour law of the countries concerned.

To the aspiring member-to-be, the CAA List of Schools Recommended for Recognition (by whom?) has been of the greatest relevance in some countries. However, to other countries, the CAA List of School has caused and in at least one country, continues to cause some confusion and problem in relation to the acceptability of degrees both for registration and membership purposes as well as for employment.

5. The CAA Structure

Having stated that there is *no direct relationship* between the individual member and the CAA, thus resulting in a situation of relationship by proxy coupled to the inadequate communication between the CAA and the individual which is further affected by the low level of relevance, it may be of help to briefly examine the root cause of the problem. That is, the structure of the CAA itself.

According to the Articles of Association, the primary purpose of the CAA is 'to promote cooperation between institutes of architects in the Commonwealth and with other institutes of architects ... with the object of ensuring the maximum contribution by architects to the well being of society and the creation of a satisfactory physical environment'. Further, in Article 4, the members of the CAA are institutes, associations or societies of architects.

Thus, the CAA only directly relates to 'national' institutes of architects and then only in the Commonwealth. Because of this the critical link between the CAA and the individual architect is therefore the respective 'national' institutes. Out of the 25 Member

Institutes less than a handful would be from the developed category with the rest from the so-called third world. As can be expected, institutes of architects in the less developed countries do have their problems which are inevitable. And these revolve around the constraints of resources both human and financial. In addition, the priorities of the member institutes in these countries are geared to national priorities which are usually nationally-orientated. Therefore, as far as 'international' activities are concerned, they must rank very low on the priority list unless by such involvement there could result in some tangible benefits which would help achieve the national objectives. In other words the altruistic motivation of the majority of member institutes for actively participating in the affairs of any organisation, including the CAA, which involves itself internationally can be discounted. Perhaps this same argument could also be applied to those few institutes from the more fortunate developed countries as it must become increasingly more difficult to justify pure altruistic actions without backing them by other more down to earth motives, which for obvious reasons are never mentioned and of course, never admitted openly or otherwise!

Given this situation and accepting the fact that the CAA is an association of institutes as opposed to individuals, the actions that it can appropriately take on an international level are restricted to general statements or exhortations as what should be done about the improvement in the provision of shelter or the betterment of the environment at suitable international forums. However, being the collective voice of the 25 member institutes such statements can only be generalised thus losing their impact. In addition to this, and from observations over the past few years it is extremely questionable as to the effectiveness of such actions that have been taken by the CAA.

Perhaps it is being over ambitious to expect the CAA to be effective on an international level? At least directly and for the time being. If indeed it is the ultimate objective of the CAA to assert itself in international affairs, then it should begin with improving itself among its own member institutes first. And after having achieved this immediate and more realistic objective internally first, it could by example try to venture forth to tell the rest of the world what should be done.

In fact this limited objective of achieving a level of mutual cooperation and assistance among the member institutes of the CAA have been discussed and agreed upon at the past conferences of the CAA but its actual implementation is a very different matter. For example the agreement reached on the receipt and dissemination of information through the CAA remains unfulfilled.

There must be a reason for the CAA's inability to implement past decisions effectively and without too much imagination, the blame could be attributed to the constraints of financial resources. Should the CAA therefore not look into its financial situation first if it wishes to become more effective?

Having touched on the constraints of the CAA it would not be balanced if its basic strength is not mentioned. Apart from the unique concept of the Commonwealth as a body of equals, another very

useful and important feature of the association is the existence of a common language which makes the otherwise difficult task of communication very much easier. This feature is not fully appreciated until it is put to actual use say at international conferences when considerable problems are encountered in really understanding what others are trying to convey. This useful facility could be used more extensively to further the basic objectives of the CAA.

6. Conclusion

The original purpose of this contribution is to discuss the relationship between the individual architect and the CAA in its role in international affairs. As has been pointed out, since there is no direct link between the individual and the CAA, the participation by the individual would thus have to depend on how his institute reacts to the CAA. For his institute to be adequately motivated to contribute to the international activities of the CAA acceptable justifications must be available. As far as this requirement is concerned, participation in the CAA's affairs should result in some tangible benefits and which in turn should further the country's national objectives. It would therefore appear that if the CAA is really intent on involving the individual architect in its international forays it would have to re-evaluate its programme of activities, rearrange its priorities, improve its financial resources and energetically implements its decisions.

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