

# Points of View

## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE

### Thinking Globally, Practicing Locally



by John D. Anderson, FAIA

Within days of deciding that this month's Last Page topic would be Globalization, and having started to put together some thoughts, the summer issue of *ArchitectureBoston* arrived. Virtually every page is devoted to Globalization, and the

temptation is strong to ask all of you readers to get this magazine and read it from cover to cover. The articles are great; the insights at once disturbing and optimistic.

We may argue forever about the forms and course that Globalization may take, and you may have strong feelings about whether it's good or evil. But few—save those who have been disrupting meetings in Seattle, Prague, and Genoa—would contend that Globalization is not already here and here to stay.

#### Playing an active role on a global stage

The AIA is playing an increasingly active role in many global arenas. Thanks to the brilliant work of our resident fellow in international relations, James Scheeler, FAIA, the U. S. and the AIA are looked upon as the leaders in creating binding model accords among many of the world's professional architectural associations. At the same time, thanks to the hard work of the world's architects, the International Union of Architects (UIA) is now emerging as a serious and effective international body.

Add to this the increasingly active role that is being taken by NCARB as the AIA's partner in addressing the complex issues of international reciprocity, and you can see that the global pot is boiling on the front burners. NCARB's recent and current leadership is dealing with this vexing topic in a totally new and creative way. Instead of putting out the U.S. system of education/experience/examination as the only means of assessing the adequacy of architectural competence, take it or leave it, NCARB is looking at other reasonable measures for demonstrating equivalency. NCARB has also begun to generate "Practice in a Host Nation" programs, most recently with the Czech Republic.

#### Model for management

On another front closer to home, a number of nations have asked for the AIA's help in virtually copying our long-standing

practice and management systems. Witness the following unexpurgated paragraph from a letter I received from the Deputy Secretary General of the Architectural Society of China (ASC) just last month:

I am now writing to request you kindly to send us a complete set of information about membership management and organization of the AIA. As you know, The Architectural Society of China (ASC) is comprehensive Institute including the disciplines such as architecture, building structure, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, heating, air-conditioning, building physics, building materials etc. In order to do a better management for the membership of our Society, we do need to absorb the good experience of management of the AIA membership and organization.

#### Being a good citizen of the world

This brings me to an opportunity that's wrapped in a dilemma. The dilemma is this: How do we ethically respond to the wishes of so many foreign clients for status-producing, clearly "Made-in-USA Architecture"? The answer and opportunity is this: By showing a deep contextual concern for local culture, history, and urban form. To do so means leaving a lot of our own cultural baggage at home and learning from the site. After all, we are not designing isolated objects; we are helping create community.

The opportunity, within reach, is that by being a respectful, open citizen of the world, we can finally begin to destroy the 800-pound-gorilla image that has plagued America's architects for years. How do we do that?

First, collectively through the AIA, by freely providing the information about architectural practice and its institutionalized systems here in the U.S. and helping to level the playing field by agreeing on an ethic of equivalency rather than "we've got the only ball; the game will be played our way."

And then, as individual practitioners, by being alert to the good foreign models that I am convinced are out there to be emulated. Not only will our work abroad become an exciting part of the existing host country cultural fabric, we will bring back home new insights, new skills, and the inspiration to put them into practice.

This really is one planet. It's the only one we've got. Let's make it architecturally healthy and exciting by learning from one another and treating each other like good neighbors in this emerging global village, which is our home. ■■

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