

# Office Correspondence

FEDERAL RESERVE  
BOARDDate **May 12, 1936**To The Board of GovernorsSubject: President's views on housing.

From

J. M. Daiger



Attached is a copy of a letter sent by President Roosevelt last week to the American Institute of Architects, together with a copy of the Institute's response to the President.

The letter constitutes, I think, a clear summary of the essential purposes that the President has in mind with regard to housing, and is in fact the only formal statement on housing that he has made, according to my recollection, in the past two years.

TO " For circulation.

---

FROM Chairman Eccles.

---

REMARKS:

Attached is a copy of a letter sent by President Roosevelt last week to the American Institute of Architects, together with a copy of the Institute's response to the President. Mr. Daiger prepared the letter sent out by the President. I am sure you will find both letters interesting.

COPY

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 6, 1936

Dear Mr. Voorhees:

I wish that it were possible for me to go down to Williamsburg to take part in the discussion of housing which the American Institute of Architects has arranged as part of its convention program; for the members of the Institute know, I am sure, the great interest I have in this whole problem of raising the standard of our human habitations. Since I cannot, however, join directly in the housing discussion scheduled for tomorrow morning, will you not convey to the Institute my good wishes for the success of its sixty-eighth convention and express my earnest hope that the ideas developed in these current sessions will be directed toward one of the most urgent tasks that private enterprise and government now have in common.

Long years of neglect of much of our older housing, followed by a severe depression during which the home-building industry remained virtually at a standstill, has left us with an industrial and social problem of the first magnitude -- the problem namely, of providing enough housing both to replace an enormous accumulated obsolescence and to take care of a constantly growing population. It becomes necessary, therefore, if the practical realities of this housing need are to be met, for the architect, along with the industrialist and financier, to think in terms of a much wider range and a much larger volume of home building during the years immediately ahead than we attained during the misguided construction boom of the 1920's.

FOR CIRCULATION

First to Mr. <sup>Cedler</sup>

- Mr. Broderick ✓
- Mr. Szymanski ✓
- Mr. McKee ✓
- Mr. Ransom ✓
- Mr. Morison ✓
- Mr. Clay ✓
- Mr. Moore ✓
- Mr. Bethea ✓
- Mr. Carson ✓
- Mr. <sup>Rouley</sup> ✓
- Mr. <sup>James</sup> ✓
- Mr. <sup>Soldner</sup> ✓

And yet, if there is here in the field of housing a problem and a need of the first magnitude, there is also an opportunity of the first magnitude. Is it not obviously the most practical answer to the question of those who ask what private industry can do that it is not already doing to put our unemployed workers back into gainful occupations? Is it not the greatest potential market for the unused resources and idle facilities of our mines and forests and factories and railroads? Is it not a standing invitation and challenge to the imagination, initiative, and enterprise of men with capital, men with a genius for production and marketing, men with an eye to the next great field of American industrial development and expansion?

I think it is all these things, and more; for it is also the means of raising the living standards of millions of our people, and in that process increasing the wealth and prosperity of the country as a whole.

Please

It seems to me a happy circumstance that this year's convention of the American Institute of Architects is being held in the inspiring setting of the City of Williamsburg and the College of William and Mary; and I think it is altogether fitting that on this occasion the Institute should pay tribute to the persons who have made possible the restoration of Williamsburg to the beauty and grace and dignity of its historic past. Paradoxically, though, the Williamsburg restoration is a triumph of modern architectural skill, and it is in many respects a modern community and in all essential respects a modern institution of learning that we now find there.

Hence, I should count it fortunate if the members of the Institute, returning home from an old American community that men of their profession have lately made a new center of national interest and a new source of national pride, would grapple vigorously with the problem of restoring the parts of their own communities that have fallen into obsolescence and decay, and with providing dwellings for the present and the future that are neither crudely designed nor shoddily built, nor prohibitive in price for the family of moderate means.

If we are to avoid now both the excesses and the shortcomings of previous building activities our architects can perform no greater service, it seems to me, than by directing their efforts toward the small house of moderate cost for occupancy by the wage earners and salaried workers in our urban communities. It is they who constitute the mass market for housing, as they do for the other necessities of life.

To reach this market as we set about the rehabilitation of our blighted and decadent urban areas and the building of the American home of today and tomorrow, is as I see it the crux of the problem for which private enterprise and government must find a solution in collaboration with men of the architects calling.

Very sincerely yours,

(s) Franklin D. Roosevelt

Mr. Stephen Voorhees,  
President, The American Institute of Architects  
Phi Beta Kappa Hall  
Williamsburg, Virginia

COPY

WESTERN UNION MESSAGE

May 7, 1936

HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON D C

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

YOUR CORDIAL GREETINGS TO THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS WERE RECEIVED WITH ENTHUSIASM BY THE DELEGATES AND MEMBERS ASSEMBLED IN SIXTY EIGHTH CONVENTION AT THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN WILLIAMSBURG.

THIS INSTITUTE, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE GREAT PROFESSION OF ARCHITECTURE, HAS FOR SOME TIME AND DURING THE PAST YEAR PARTICULARLY, CONCENTRATED ITS BEST THOUGHT ON THE PROBLEMS WHICH CONFRONT THE COUNTRY IN THE ENTIRE FIELD OF HOUSING. THE PROFESSION IS WHOLE HEARTEDLY DEDICATED TO SEEK AND TO FIND IN THE YEARS AHEAD A SOLUTION WHICH MAY BE OF SOCIAL VALUE AND OF ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE TO THE NATION AS A WHOLE.

NOT ONLY IN THE FIELD OF MASS HOUSING, BUT IN THE WIDER FIELD OF THE SMALL INDIVIDUAL HOME, WE ARE STRIVING TO BRING TO THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY THE TECHNIQUE, THE TRAINING, AND THE INTELLIGENCE OF OUR PROFESSION.

ON BEHALF OF ALL OF MY COLLEAGUES, I PLEDGE YOU OUR UNFLAGGING SUPPORT IN RAISING THE STANDARDS OF SHELTER IN THE COMMUNITIES FROM WHICH OUR MEMBERSHIP IS DRAWN. AND IN THEIR BEHALF ALSO, I WISH TO EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE FOR THE INSPIRING CHALLENGE OF YOUR GREETINGS.

YOURS

STEPHEN F. VOORHEES  
PRESIDENT, THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS