

CAPITOL PROJECT STIRS ARCHITECTS

Parley Debates Resolution on West Front Repair

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DENVER, June 27 — The controversy over the proposed remodeling of the West Front of the United States Capitol erupted violently here on the first working day of the 98th national convention of the American Institute of Architects.

The professional program began this morning with a keynote speech by John Kenneth Galbraith, the economist, on economics and the environment. It continued in the afternoon with a lively debate on a resolution that would put the 22,000 members of the country's leading architectural organization solidly against the hotly argued Capitol rebuilding project.

After a brief, bitter fight, the resolution was tabled.

The resolution was a sleeper in a routine business program. It urged Congress to reject the plans of the Commission for the Extension of the Capitol, and declare it public policy to leave the exterior of the Capitol unchanged, with any reconstruction or renovation carried out in strict accordance with the present design.

It also called for the appointment of a Commission of Architects and other related professionals to develop a master plan for Capitol Hill, to coordinate space and building needs.

The Past Recalled

"If the West Front of the Capitol is extended we will have buried the last of the walls that date from the early years of the Republic, and will have obscured a part of our history that can never be restored," the resolution read.

Speaking as a consultant to J. George Stewart, Architect of the Capitol, Paul Thiry of Seattle, attacked the resolution from the floor. Mr. Thiry is a member of the National Capitol Planning Commission.

"It is a breach of etiquette in the ethics of the A.I.A. to suggest that the architect's commission to do the work should be superseded," he said.

Morris Ketchum Jr., president of the A.I.A., responded heatedly, "We do not feel that we are in any way unethical in working for the public interest. This is not a question only for architects, but for the nation."

A motion was made and carried to table the resolution over Mr. Ketchum's objection that this would eliminate any chance of action before the rebuilding project went ahead.

More than 3,000 architects, building products manufacturers, allied professionals and their families have come to the Denver Hilton Hotel for meetings on the theme of "Technology, Environment and Man,"

that will continue through July 1.

Dr. Galbraith's address, delivered to an audience of 1,200 architects in the Center Theater, adjacent to the hotel, also dealt with controversial subjects.

His main points, in his own words, contain the "prospect for some political blood letting." He called for an end to poverty through a guaranteed minimum income, and an end to environmental disorders through public ownership of land.

"A Federal guaranty of the income of the disadvantaged would lift from city budgets the present burden of welfare costs," he explained. "It would release funds urgently required in the cities, where they are needed most."

In the rococo splendor of an elaborately swagged, swirled, gilded and quilted motion picture theater—a rapidly disappearing type of American architectural landmark — Dr. Galbraith spoke of the battle of beauty vs. business.

He scored the system that puts economic priorities over sound urban design and declared open war on oil companies.

"The service station is our

most ubiquitous and ugly structure," he said.

"Highways and roadsides are made hideous by vendors of gasoline, fried food, outdoor advertising, sleep and short order sex. But one must never interfere with small business, or with a dynamic real estate industry."

Other speakers this week will be Dr. Isador I. Rabi, who won the Nobel Prize for physics; Dr. Robert T. Wood, Under Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development; Dr. Sterling Moss McMurrin, philosopher and provost of the University of Utah; and Dr. Nathan M. Pusey, president of Harvard University.

Medals were awarded to the painter Ben Shahn; Alexander Girard, architect and interior designer; Harold Balazs, craftsman; Gideon Kramer, chair designer; and Morley Baer, photographer.

Special citations went to the Museum of Modern Art, for its continuing work with architecture and the environment, and to the Gateway Arch of St. Louis, as memorial architecture. The arch is the work of the late Eero Saarinen, and Severud Associates, engineers.