

From: Brian Waters <brianrichardanthony@googlemail.com>
Date: 23 April 2011 11:27:47 GMT+01:00
To: ACA <office@acarchitects.co.uk>
Cc: Alison Coutinho <alisoncoutinho@hotmail.co.uk>, Alison Low Low <secretarygeneral@acarchitects.co.uk>, Terry Brown <terry.brown@gmw-architects.com>
Subject: Re: Look at this story on Building Design

Sorry. Thought they would send a link to the story!

When we have firmed the awaydaydate can you pls draft me an I citation letter to the RIBA president elect to join us at the end for a chat and then a drink?

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Do architects need to be represented by a union?



Setting a precedent? The Architects' Revolutionary Council.

BD 21 April 2011

Setting a precedent? The Architects' Revolutionary Council.

Yes, says Jon Goodbun, unions could tackle issues like low pay; while Brian Waters thinks the profession needs to focus on its relationships with clients

Yes

Architects in general are confused about their social status, so traditionally they have been hard to group. They think of themselves as artists or entrepreneurs, but often work in factory-like conditions churning out drawings.

This confusion is reflected at universities where architecture lecturers and students like to see themselves as liberal and left-wing, ignoring the fact that the degree of politicisation and unionisation among them is very low.

Thus the opportunities for unions to play a role in architectural practice are certainly there, especially as issues that concern unions such as low pay and the culture of free internships are endemic in the industry. Unions globally are increasingly involved in ecological struggles, and could become critical agents in fighting for the built environment here.

The RIBA is based on a 19th century model and is often unable to respond to the complex forms modern practice takes. But unions are not in competition with the RIBA.

The unionisation of architects doesn't have to be based upon traditional models. Architects have a history of organising themselves in innovative ways such as the Architects' Revolutionary Council of the 1970s or Bruno Taut's Arbeitsrat für Kunst in Weimar Germany.

Architects of today are very web 2.0 literate, so more innovative and nimble social network-based unions are possible.

Emerging networks of environmental and design activists might feed into architects' unions, and could even help direct the monolithic lumbering of the RIBA.

No

I don't think I need labour the point when it comes to discussing our indispensability. The RIBA's recent report on the future of the profession has done enough for our morale. Planning in London magazine once defined "key workers" as "anyone who, if they went on strike, you would notice". That rules us out then. The central purpose of union membership as organised labour is therefore defeated.

Architects found themselves in a position of weakness even in the good times. This is demonstrated by the low level of average profitability and poor average incomes as compared with professions such as solicitors or accountants.

The RIBA is often unfairly dismissed as a union for architects but this is to misunderstand and to undervalue its objectives in representing both architecture and its members.

The institute has been criticised for failing to protect students and interns from exploitation and, while there are some unacceptable cases, there are exemplars where proper pay goes along with good mentoring and valued experience. The

ACA is in the process of collecting such examples and invites practices to send summaries to office@acarchitects.co.uk.

A critical review of the role of the profession in a fast-changing world needs to be followed up with a bold rebranding and, in my view, a focus on the professional role where what matters above all else is the trust relationship between architect and client.

Unionisation will do nothing to add to that.

Postscript:

What do you think?

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On 23 Apr 2011, at 11:14, "ACA" <office@acarchitects.co.uk> wrote:

Dear Brian,

Sorry, but could you send me a PDF with the article? We do not subscribe to BD.....

Happy Easter!

Best wishes

Shona

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From: bdonline@ubm.com [mailto:bdonline@ubm.com]

Sent: 21 April 2011 18:20

To: office@acarchitects.co.uk

Subject: Look at this story on Building Design

This story from Building Design has been sent to you by Brian Waters.
brian@bwcp.co.uk

Brian Waters said Shona one for the cuttings

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