

Politicking for Postwar Modernism: The Architectural Research Group of Ottawa and Montreal

Dustin Valen

Volume 45, numéro 2, spring 2017

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1051384ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1051384ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)
1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Valen, D. (2017). Politicking for Postwar Modernism: The Architectural Research Group of Ottawa and Montreal. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 45(2), 25–44. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1051384ar>

Résumé de l'article

La diffusion de principes modernistes de construction et de planification au Canada s'est effectuée par de nombreux canaux, parmi lesquels le Groupe de recherche architecturale d'Ottawa et de Montréal a joué un rôle central. Créé en 1938 pour effectuer des recherches en reconstruction d'après-guerre, le groupe a produit des articles, des allocutions radiophoniques et des expositions afin de cultiver un sentiment moderniste à travers le Canada. L'engagement du gouvernement fédéral envers le réaménagement et la reconstruction des villes canadiennes fut l'occasion pour ces jeunes architectes d'infléchir l'avenir de la pratique au Canada. Ils critiquent l'« arriération » des praticiens conservateurs tout en faisant la promotion des idées de l'avant-garde européenne et en organisant de nombreux échanges transatlantiques. Cet article se penche sur le rôle du groupe dans la promotion du modernisme en architecture et en urbanisme ainsi que la contribution de quelques-uns de ses membres clés. Loin d'avoir été de simples récepteurs passifs du modernisme international, les professionnels canadiens ont activement façonné ces idées dans les années qui suivirent immédiatement la guerre. En outre, le gouvernement fédéral canadien a joué un rôle unique d'accélérateur en permettant aux architectes et planificateurs modernistes d'agir au sein et par l'entremise de plusieurs agences parrainées par l'État.

Politicking for Postwar Modernism: The Architectural Research Group of Ottawa and Montreal

Dustin Valen

The diffusion of modernist principles in Canadian building and planning occurred through many channels, but among these the Architectural Research Group of Ottawa and Montreal played a crucial role. Formed in 1938 to conduct research into postwar reconstruction, the group produced articles, radio addresses, and exhibitions in an effort to nurture modernist sentiment across the country. For these young architects, the federal government's commitment to replanning and rebuilding postwar Canadian cities presented them with an opportunity to intervene in the future of Canadian practice. They decried the "backwardness" of conservative practitioners while promoting the ideas of a European avant-garde and orchestrating numerous transatlantic exchanges. This article discusses the group's role in politicking for architectural and urban modernism, as well as the contributions of some of its key members. It shows that Canadian professionals were not simply passive receptors of international modernism but played an active part in shaping these ideas during the immediate postwar period, and that Canada's federal government played a unique role in accelerating this process by allowing modernist architects and planners to operate within and through a number of government-sponsored agencies.

La diffusion de principes modernistes de construction et de planification au Canada s'est effectuée par de nombreux canaux, parmi lesquels le Groupe de recherche architecturale d'Ottawa et de Montréal a joué un rôle central. Créé en 1938 pour effectuer des recherches en reconstruction d'après-guerre, le groupe a produit des articles, des allocutions radiophoniques et des expositions afin de cultiver un sentiment moderniste à travers le Canada. L'engagement du gouvernement fédéral envers le réaménagement et la reconstruction des villes canadiennes fut l'occasion pour ces jeunes architectes d'infléchir l'avenir de la pratique au Canada. Ils critiquent l'« arriération » des praticiens conservateurs tout en faisant la promotion des idées de l'avant-garde européenne et en organisant de nombreux échanges transatlantiques. Cet article se penche sur le rôle du groupe dans la promotion du modernisme en architecture et en urbanisme ainsi que la contribution de quelques-uns de ses membres clés. Loin d'avoir été de simples récepteurs passifs du modernisme international, les professionnels canadiens ont activement façonné ces idées dans les années qui

suivirent immédiatement la guerre. En outre, le gouvernement fédéral canadien a joué un rôle unique d'accélérateur en permettant aux architectes et planificateurs modernistes d'agir au sein et par l'entremise de plusieurs agences parrainées par l'État.

Formed in 1938 to conduct research into postwar reconstruction, the Architectural Research Group of Ottawa and Montreal was instrumental in spreading and acclimatizing modernist thought across the country. As a group, they produced articles, radio addresses, and exhibitions in an effort to stimulate building and planning reform. For these young architects, the federal government's commitment to re-planning and rebuilding postwar Canadian cities presented them with an opportunity to intervene in the future of Canadian practice. They decried the "backwardness" of conservative, Canadian practitioners while promoting the ideas of a European avant-garde and orchestrating numerous transatlantic exchanges. Considering the diversity and scope of their activities, it is altogether surprising that the group and many of its members remain virtually unknown to scholars throughout Canada today, despite the fact that among the group's members were some of the foremost proponents of Modern architecture and planning in Canada, many of whom went on to occupy prominent positions in leading private and public institutions. This article discusses the group's role in politicking for architectural and urban modernism, as well as the contributions of some of its key members. In particular, it focuses on the role of Canadian architect Hazen Edward Sise, who, in addition to being one of the group's most active members, now serves as their unofficial record keeper by virtue of the preservation of his personal papers at the Library and Archives Canada. His archive provides an invaluable window onto the activities of a group of practitioners for whom very few personal records exist.

In Canada the diffusion of modernist sentiment was catalyzed by one magnetic event. In 1945 the federal government invited the famous French architect and urban designer Jacques Gréber to prepare a plan for the national capital and its surrounding region. Outraged by the government's decision and their own lack of participation, young Canadian architects

attempted to devalue the government's planning efforts in Ottawa by offering an alternative, "participatory" framework for community planning, which they then aggressively marketed through public channels. Operating within and through key government-sponsored agencies, they chastised the government for its allegedly outmoded and conservative approach to re-planning the country's capital. However, their real goal in mounting this campaign was to promote a specific vision of modernity while using Ottawa's example as a rallying cry for young professionals across the country.

The reception and diffusion of modernist principles in Canadian architecture and planning during the immediate postwar period has received little scholarly attention. Historians of Modern architecture point to educational reforms in schools of architecture across the country and the consumption of international media during the postwar years as leading Canadian practitioners to turn their attention towards European and American culture. Also frequently noted is the accelerated pace of transatlantic exchange that took place as a result of European emigration during and after the Second World War.¹ Likewise, historians of planning often identify the influence of functionalist planning doctrine in many postwar planning schemes, stressing also the importance of interventionist public policy, like the National Housing Acts of 1938 and 1944, which gave Canada's federal government a leading role in promoting and financing urban renewal.² While historians generally agree that postwar Canadian architecture and urbanism was inflected with a high degree of modernist cosmopolitanism, the reception and diffusion of these ideas within Canada is seldom discussed, nor is the way in which Canada's public institutions helped spread this knowledge.³ Even less well understood are the contributions made by Canadian professionals to an evolving modernist discourse at the international level.

Although by the 1950s and 1960s most Canadian cities were a veritable crucible of urban and architectural modernism—including its functional, material, and aesthetic dimensions—it was during the immediate postwar period that these modernist inclinations were cultivated. From roughly the late 1930s to the late 1940s Canadian practitioners and their publics were introduced and warmed to the ideas of international modernism, establishing a broad basis of support for these future, transformative projects. This article will be of interest to historians of Modern architecture and urbanism, as well as those concerned with the broader field of postwar Canadian culture. It shows that Canadian professionals were not simply passive receptors of international modernism but played an active part in transmitting and shaping these ideas during the immediate postwar period. And that Canada's federal government played a unique role in accelerating this process by allowing modernist architects and planners to operate within and through a number of government-sponsored agencies.

Part of the difficulty in identifying the precise influences that Modern Movement polemics had on postwar Canadian planning and building practices is the fact that modernism itself consisted of many diverse practices, views, and geographies. By the 1940s a rationalist approach to planning and building espoused by members of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) was receiving worldwide attention. This approach was articulated in a manifesto-like charter produced as a result of the group's fourth congress in 1933 that was subsequently published by Le Corbusier in 1943 and formed the basis of José Luis Sert's influential book *Can Our Cities Survive?* (1942) in which Sert outlined an integrated approach to urban planning by dividing the city into four functional parts: dwelling, work, transportation, and recreation.⁴ Functionalism, however, was also an elastic concept that could be applied to a range of scales, from objects, to buildings, cities, and regions. Nor did it preclude modernist planners from synthesizing other popular British and American planning movements, which they often combined with a proclivity for renewal. Like many of their contemporaries, Modern architects were possessed with an unshakable faith in progress, and they believed the rational application of scientific and technical expertise to planning and building practices was the logical outcome of this historical process. For them, modernity was equally a social and political project whereby the logical organization of the built environment would have a positive effect on the economic, technological, and spiritual well-being of humankind. What situated CIAM at the vanguard of this conversation was their adept use of propaganda to promote their brand of modernism. In print, exhibitions, and films, avant-garde architects wove their technocratic faith into a compelling grand narrative that situated modernism at the apex of history.⁵

By the late 1930s, many Canadians were convinced of this modernist creed and made a substantial effort to transfer these lessons to Canada. Two exhibitions organized by members of the Architectural Research Group in 1941 and 1946 are illustrative in this regard. They show how Modern architecture and planning principles were communicated to a mass audience in the pre-television age, but also how Canadian practitioners used visual media to articulate their own professional aspirations. In this, their work resembles that of other architects and planners in colonial states such as Australia and South Africa, where a series of postwar exhibitions served as vehicles for the importation of European-styled modernism.⁶ However, the Architectural Research Group's promotions are also illuminating for their use of contradistinctive terms, including democracy/absolutism and participation/elitism, as a persuasive strategy to bolster their modernist polemic. In part, this strategy reflects a subtext of "participation" within CIAM discourse itself that aimed to humanize the avant-garde.⁷ But it also highlights how Modern Movement adherents negotiated specific challenges in Canada as state intervention in urban reform and conservatism

within the established profession risked marginalizing their practice.

The Architectural Research Group's vision of Canadian modernity was based on that of CIAM. Using Stephen Ward's framework for the international diffusion of planning, the group can be seen as promoting the "undiluted borrowing" of foreign ideas and practices.⁸ Ward observes how a shift occurred during the 1930s and 1940s as British influences came to supplant American-inspired New Deal reformism in Canadian planning discourse. He credits this shift to the large number of British migrant planning professionals who arrived in Canada during the postwar years and who occupied senior positions in many Canadian public institutions.⁹ Indeed, among the Architectural Research Group's members were several British émigrés as well as Canadians with British experience. However, evaluating their work in this framework points to the marked influence of CIAM within the constellation of Canadian practice and suggests further that public engagement with non-specialist audiences was an important vector for the diffusion and praxis of Canadian modernism.

The Architectural Research Group

In 1938 a small group of Montreal-based architects formed the Architectural Research Group (ARG) to investigate re-planning and rebuilding in Montreal.¹⁰ For almost a decade, the city's infrastructure and housing had languished and decayed as a result of the Great Depression.¹¹ Chief among ARG's goals was to reinvigorate the architectural profession by addressing the urgent need for town planning and housing reform, as well as new techniques in building construction like prefabrication and standardization. In 1940 the group was joined by John Bland, a Canadian-born architect who had recently returned to Montreal to direct McGill's School of Architecture.¹² That year the group sent an open letter to the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) urging architects to consider not just the problem of building "but of everything which grows from building—streets, towns and regions, real estate values and slums, health, amenity and productive efficiency."¹³ It was urgent, they argued, for national and provincial associations to consider the pressing needs of Canada's largest cities, including worsening traffic conditions, obsolete building legislation, and uncontrolled growth, before the anticipated postwar building and population boom. "If the associations, or the older or more successful or blasé architects, can't or won't see the importance of these opportunities, these duties, to the profession," they charged, "surely the younger men have enough faith left to join together and rebuild the status and the reputation of the profession."¹⁴

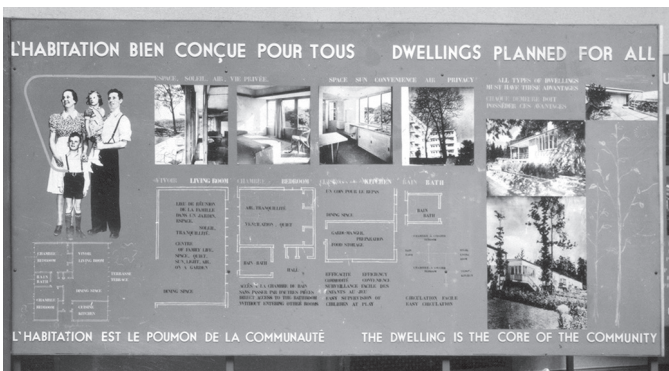
By 1941 ARG remained a small but active group mostly comprising recent graduates and a number of Bland's own students (fig. 1). That year the group produced an exhibition on city planning entitled "City for Living," which emphasized the value of planning "from an architectural viewpoint."¹⁵ Co-created



*Figure 1: ARG members John Bland, Campbell Merrett, and Harry Mayerovitch with Chloethiel Woodard, 1941
Courtesy the Merrett family*

by ARG members John Bland, Campbell Merrett, and Harry Mayerovitch, as well as the American architect Chloethiel Woodard, the exhibition consisted of a series of didactic panels encircling the gallery that incorporated photographs, drawings, and text¹⁶ (figs. 2, 3, and 4). It was divided into three sections describing the history of Montreal and its growth since 1642, the present state of affairs, and the city's imagined future as seen through a series of Modern planning objectives. It argued for better planning measures to control uncontrolled expansion, remove slums, improve urban health, and provide better parks, schools, and other amenities. Meant to stimulate discussions between citizens and professionals about the need for a comprehensive urban and regional plan for Montreal, the exhibition opened the same day Montreal City Council voted to create a dedicated planning department.¹⁷ The opening was attended by hundreds of people, including the city's mayor, members of the newly appointed planning commission, and several journalists.¹⁸ In the weeks that followed over 6000 people visited the exhibition, breaking attendance records at the gallery.¹⁹

The exhibition organizers worked closely with several ARG members and assistants to construct and install the exhibition. Among their collaborators was a young, Montreal-born architect by the name of Hazen Sise (fig. 5). Sise was a self-styled apostle of modernism who had spent several years in Europe, where he apprenticed in the atelier of Le Corbusier and joined



Figures 2, 3, and 4: ARG, “City for Living,” 1941
 Source: John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection, Rare Books and Special Collections, McGill University

CIAM.²⁰ The success of ARG’s exhibition would have a transformative effect on Sise.²¹ Not long after the exhibition opened, Sise left Montreal to work as a film producer with the National Film Board of Canada in Ottawa.²² From there, he remained a tireless promoter of Modern architecture and planning, adopting ARG’s methods and extending their message to Ottawa. Of particular importance to Sise was the degree to which the exhibition had mobilized visual propaganda to convey modernist planning ideology as a democratizing force. Not long after he



Figure 5: Hazen Sise, 1955
 Photo by Gaby (Gabriel Desmarais) © Ronald Desmarais

arrived at the Film Board, Sise authored a manuscript promoting the recent ARG exhibition. “Transforming our environment,” he wrote, “must be tackled as a collective endeavour, democratically, not imposed from above.”²³ As he summarized the exhibition’s key argument, “In this way ‘City for Living’ grew. Not in an ivory tower as the conception of a few, possibly isolated minds. It grew and in growing was continually modified by contact with the real, everyday world of people. Starting as the brain-child of a few, it ended as the product of many minds. By the time it was opened to the public it had already been discussed and written about; it had become a part, even [though] a small part, of civic consciousness. This is the only fruitful way—and in fact the only way which should be acceptable to a democratic people.”²⁴

By demonstrating the collaborative nature of rational and functional city planning, Sise believed the exhibition portrayed modernist principles not as “ivory tower” ideology but as a practical response to the “everyday world of people.” In doing so, the exhibition’s visual argument also anticipated to a remarkable degree the Film Board’s new role in promoting and shaping

Canada's postwar transformation. Under the stewardship of John Grierson, the National Film Board would quickly become one of the most effective propaganda organs in Canadian history as its mandate shifted from supporting the war effort to promoting urban and architectural reform in a postwar world. Grierson believed that the propagandizing power of media was ideally suited to advancing government policy and could be used to stimulate Canada's postwar reconstruction.²⁵ As such, he accorded a special role to visual artists, architects, and other design professionals who he often placed on staff at the Film Board. In 1940, for example, he recruited the Montreal-born architect and painter Harry Mayerovitch to direct the Wartime Information Board's Graphic Arts Division. Sise was also allowed considerable freedom in promoting planning and reconstruction under Grierson's supervision. Beginning in the late 1940s, the Film Board started producing didactic films, publications, and other displays meant to explain the social and economic benefits of reconstruction to Canadians in non-specialist terms.

It was with this dual role in mind that Sise co-founded the Architectural Research Group of Ottawa (ARGO) in 1943, together with a group of young, Ottawa-based architects and servicemen.²⁶ Henceforth, Sise was the animating force behind ARGO. To a large extent, his views were ARGO's views, and vice-versa. Like their predecessor in Montreal, the group sought to promote planning and building as a collaborative venture between specialists and citizens, and to exploit visual propaganda to this effect. Two years later, a published list of past and present members included twenty-seven individuals.²⁷

Plan for the National Capital

Beginning in 1945, the democratic sensibilities underlying ARGO's modernist project would serve another purpose altogether. That year Sise composed a special edition of *Canadian Affairs* (a journal printed and published by the Film Board and illustrated by fellow ARGO member Mayerovitch) entitled "A Place to Live," where he stressed the link between democracy and modernism in planning and building (fig. 6). At the time of writing, he was both a member of ARGO and an employee of the government-sponsored Film Board. The pamphlet's objectives were thus twofold. On the one hand, it was meant to promote recent government policy, including the new National Housing Act of 1944, which gave Canada's federal government a leading role in housing reform. On the other hand, it reiterated the objectives of a small group of young Canadian architects whose modern vision had been interrupted by the Depression and war years. For these architects, democracy and modernity were inextricable.²⁸ In the past, Sise wrote, "most noteworthy planning was effected under absolutist forms of government with an emphasis on glorification of the ruler." By focusing on grandiose avenues, vistas, and plazas, this "ceremonial approach" to urban design had failed to address the everyday needs of urban

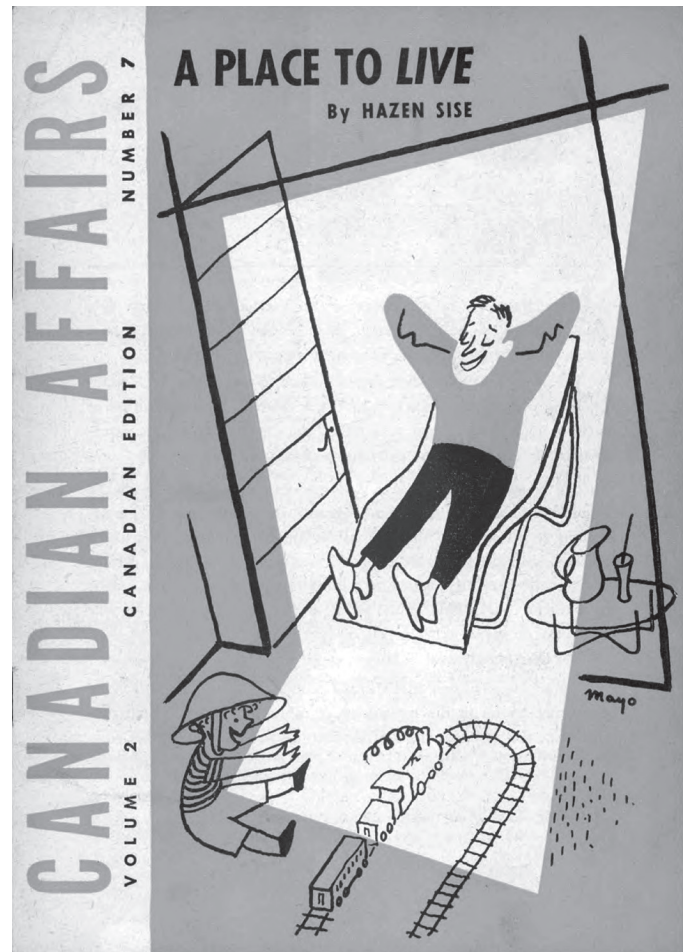


Figure 6: Hazen Sise, "A Place to Live," *Canadian Affairs* 2, no. 7 (1941)
Source: Library and Archives Canada

citizens. In contrast, Sise presented functional city planning as a profoundly democratic activity.²⁹

His views were inspired by José Luis Sert's *Can Our Cities Survive?* Sise's idiom, "A Place to Live," combined all the tenets of Modern planning—recreation, hygiene, high-speed traffic, separation of building uses—with mass-produced housing and modern-style public buildings. Crucial to the success of his vision was a participatory approach to planning and building. "If Canadian architecture were in a healthy condition," he wrote, "there would be no need either for public discussion or government action. Design could safely be left to the experts."³⁰ To become modern, however, a public forum was needed where government, experts, and citizens could all work together to improve Canada's cities. With Neighbourhood Planning Councils forming the basic building block of this participatory approach, Sise believed that functional buildings and cities would be the inevitable result of empowering practically minded citizens instead of bygone artistic elites.³¹



Figure 7: View of Parliament from across the Ottawa River, 1945
Source: Library and Archives Canada

Written in 1945, Sise's—and ARGO's—appeal to democratic sensibilities was also an urgent and calculated piece of criticism. Earlier that year, a significant development in postwar reconstruction had occurred when the government announced it would develop a comprehensive plan for Canada's Capital Region, led by the famous French architect Jacques Gréber. Like most postwar Canadian cities, Ottawa was an excellent candidate for re-planning. The city was ridden with slums, polluting industrial buildings, and criss-crossed by railway tracks with dangerous level crossings (fig. 7). Efforts to remedy these defects were begun much earlier. In 1936 Canada's prime minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, travelled to France, where he toured the future site of the Paris Exposition. His guide for that tour was none other than the fair's chief architect, Jacques Gréber. The prime minister and French architect quickly became friends. In 1937 Gréber was invited to prepare a design for Ottawa, but the development of these plans was soon interrupted by the outbreak of war.³² In 1945, with the war's end in sight, the prime minister invited Gréber to complete a plan for the National Capital. This time, however, the 900-square-mile region was also to serve as a living war memorial and help stimulate urban renewal across the country by providing a model for future planning policy.³³ To help speed the development of the plan and ensure its implementation, a special planning commission was created and placed under Gréber's direct charge.³⁴

Opposition to the federal government's plans was swift, and in Ottawa ARGO led the charge. If the re-planning of the capital was meant to be an example for other Canadian cities and preserve the memory of Canada's war effort, they asked, why was

a foreign architect commissioned to oversee the work? A foreign architect, moreover, who had been invited without the prior approval of the Canadian people, and whose methods—ARGO accused—were old-fashioned.³⁵ Gréber was widely known for his numerous City Beautiful plans executed throughout Europe and America, which he illustrated in the Beaux-Arts manner using pastel and colour washes. ARGO believed this artistic approach to planning was practically anathema to functionalism.³⁶ They bristled further at the suggestion that no Canadians were qualified to oversee the work.³⁷

Just days after Gréber's appointment, an article by ARGO member Frederic Lasserre appeared in a local Ottawa newspaper arguing that people wanted the city "brought up to date, its new buildings modern—not old fashioned." "Beauty should follow function," Lasserre continued, pointing out how a whole generation of young Canadian architects and planners "conditioned to our present day problems" had been waiting for just such an opportunity.³⁸ To prevent further political interference and to check Gréber's influence, ARGO believed that Canadian professionals should propose the administrative machinery under which the new Ottawa plan would be prepared.³⁹ They called for the establishment of an advisory committee made up of independent Canadian professionals to oversee the plan's development and vote on its acceptance prior to submitting the plans for government approval.⁴⁰

A week later Sise took to the airwaves to give a talk on community planning.⁴¹ Reiterating how Ottawa's example would help stimulate a nationwide interest in planning and serve as a model for other Canadian cities, he cautioned listeners that "the primary object is not, and cannot be, mere beautification ... That

would be akin to the ancient and deplorable habit of designing buildings with Queen Anne fronts—and Mary Ann backs.” Unlike this antiquated view of planning, he continued, Modern planning was concerned with the “economic and social well-being of the whole community” and enlisted the participation of the average citizen to achieve this goal. He then issued a blatant provocation: “As so often before in history, the technical means at our disposal have far outstripped our political comprehension of how the task is to be carried out.”⁴²

In an effort to allay these fears Gréber called for greater cooperation. He referred to his own role as that of a “consultant ... independent of any local or political preoccupation” and promised that the work of the planning commission would be done by Canadians.⁴³ However, ARGO’s concerns were soon amplified when Gréber selected his former pupil from the Parisian *École des Beaux-Arts*, Édouard Fiset, and the fifty-three-year-old architect John Kitchen of Ottawa as his associates. Neither of the two came close to embodying ARGO’s modernist ideal. Political interference in the plan also continued. The prime minister followed the planning commission’s activity closely, attended their early meetings, and kept meticulous notes on their progress.⁴⁴ To make matters worse, planning Canada’s National Capital Region would proceed behind closed doors, without public consultation or oversight.

In emphasizing the apparent distance between Gréber’s *Beaux-Arts* inspired approach to city planning and their own, modernist creed, ARGO’s critique acquired a persuasive edge that did little justice to the French planner. In actuality, the *City Beautiful* movement to which he subscribed was highly pragmatic in its approach. It embraced many progressive era ideals, such as efficient circulation, zoning, green space, and the removal of anti-social behaviour through improved living conditions, all of which were reflected in CIAM’s principles. Nor were modernists averse to using infrastructure as an ordering and symbolic element in the layout of cities, as evidenced by Le Corbusier’s *Plan Voisin* of 1925, which projected onto central Paris a rigid pattern of uniform towers in a park-like setting with linear housing blocks beyond. Moreover, by mid-century there were numerous examples of *City Beautiful* plans prepared for major Canadian cities that had been developed in close collaboration with city officials, engineers, business owners, and other social reformers.⁴⁵

Rather than an exercise in erudite criticism, then, ARGO’s critical response should be viewed as a rhetorical strategy—one that aimed to dispossess an older generation of architects and planners whose conservative views—they felt—were an impediment to their own entry into the profession and to obtaining lucrative public commissions. Among these was the Chief Architect’s Branch in Ottawa, a bureaucratic organization consisting of many senior architects and engineers who oversaw the design of federal buildings.⁴⁶ That these anxieties should manifest in Ottawa during the 1940s is hardly surprising, given the prime

minister’s own conservative tastes and his desire to have Gréber transpose a classically inspired, European urbanism to Ottawa. King was equally conservative in his appreciation of architecture. He admired the *Château* style advocated in Edward Bennett’s 1915 plan of Ottawa and was decidedly opposed to the use of Modern architecture in the capital region. In 1938 King had intervened in the design of the new Supreme Court of Canada by the noted Canadian architect Ernst Cormier, insisting that Cormier add a *Château*-inspired roof to his Stripped Classical facade.⁴⁷ In contrast, Gréber had designed several buildings and landscapes, which ranged from classical to modernist in their expression, favoured functionalism in the design of technical buildings, and was critical of the government’s use of “out-moded,” gothic forms in federal buildings.⁴⁸ Under King’s close supervision, however, there could be little doubt of Gréber’s direction in preparing the Ottawa plan.

Ironically, ARGO’s ability to sustain their critique of the federal government’s plans was aided by another government-sponsored body, the National Film Board. For these young architects, and for Sise—who remained an employee of the organization—the Film Board’s mandate to promote postwar reconstruction provided them with an important outlet for their modernizing impulse. In 1945 Sise asked the Film Board for a “*carte blanche*” to work on housing and community planning studies.⁴⁹ He worked tirelessly to spread ARGO’s views among the ranks of the Film Board and to other public offices, encouraging his government colleagues to take an interest in Modern architecture and planning, and distributing books and articles to high-ranking public officials. He sent the under-secretary of state for external affairs an article on Soviet architecture and a copy of *Can Our Cities Survive?*, explaining to him that CIAM “represent the very best in modern architecture, I think you will be running across their influence in the future.”⁵⁰ He then circulated the same among his colleagues at the Film Board, including Grierson to whom he wrote that CIAM was “the link between the most vigorous, able and socially conscious planners throughout the world.”⁵¹ He also solicited material from his friends and other young architects for use in the Film Board’s promotional material.⁵²

As a result of his position at the Film Board, Sise also attempted to intervene in the planning of Ottawa directly. Citing their mutual interest in housing and planning, Sise prepared a letter in 1945 on behalf of the Film Board extending an official offer to help Gréber promote the Ottawa plan and later served on a special committee formed to advise the planning commission on the production of promotional material and to oversee a series of films promoting urban planning.⁵³ As a result of these solicitations, Sise was also able to communicate directly with Gréber on several occasions. He arranged for Gréber to meet with members of the government Statistics Bureau, supplied him with photographs and illustrated material for use in his lectures, and—on one occasion—even offered him planning advice.⁵⁴

After visiting Gréber's office in 1946, Sise asked if a topographical model and maquette of the Ottawa and Hull region wouldn't be helpful.⁵⁵ The Film Board was subsequently commissioned to oversee this work.

"Your City and You"

ARGO's promotional efforts were redoubled as events unfolded in Ottawa. With Gréber firmly installed as leader of the committee that would oversee to re-planning of Ottawa, ARGO sought to leverage this occasion as a way to promote their own ideals. Late in 1945 they secured the financial support of several public institutions to research and construct an exhibition on community planning.⁵⁶ Among their sponsors was the Film Board, who believed that the exhibition would serve as precedent for future projects and who allowed ARGO the use of their workshop to design and build the exhibition.⁵⁷ In a letter to his employer, Sise later explained how the primary object of the exhibition was to "give the average person a broad grasp of the *process* of planning." It was, he wrote, a "plea for the participation of the citizen in the planning process" and "places no emphasis on purely aesthetic considerations."⁵⁸ Underlying the exhibition's message, of course, was a barely disguised and unflattering comment on recent events in Ottawa. Unlike Gréber and the secretive planning commission, the exhibition described a collaborative approach to community planning, whose decisions were based on the functional and social needs of everyday citizens, not the grand civic gestures for which Gréber was renowned. ARGO even proposed using a sample neighbourhood in Ottawa to illustrate this approach. Surprisingly, it was only this last point that raised several eyebrows among their sponsors.

Upon learning of ARGO's intentions, the Department of Finance immediately withdrew their support for the exhibition, citing a conflict between its content and the government's own plans.⁵⁹ To mitigate these concerns the Film Board wrote to Gréber, asking for his permission to proceed and describing the project as an experimental foray for future promotions.⁶⁰ Gréber's reply, which came just two days later, enthusiastically endorsed the exhibition.⁶¹ His approval, however, was something of a moot point. Less than a week earlier Sise and nine other ARGO members had hosted an "evening with Mr. Jacques Greber" at the Film Board studios where Gréber was regaled and refreshed by the young architects after previewing the work in progress.⁶²

Entitled "Your City and You: An Approach to Community Planning," the completed exhibition consisted of twenty-one panels, measuring four feet by five feet each, with bold graphics and a montage of images and text⁶³ (fig. 8). Like its predecessor in Montreal, the exhibition presented a visual argument for architectural and urban renewal with overtones of international modernism. Unlike in Montreal, however, the legitimacy of this doctrine was now partially supported through its contrast with actual planning efforts in Ottawa. Ahead of the exhibition opening, hundreds of pamphlets describing its content

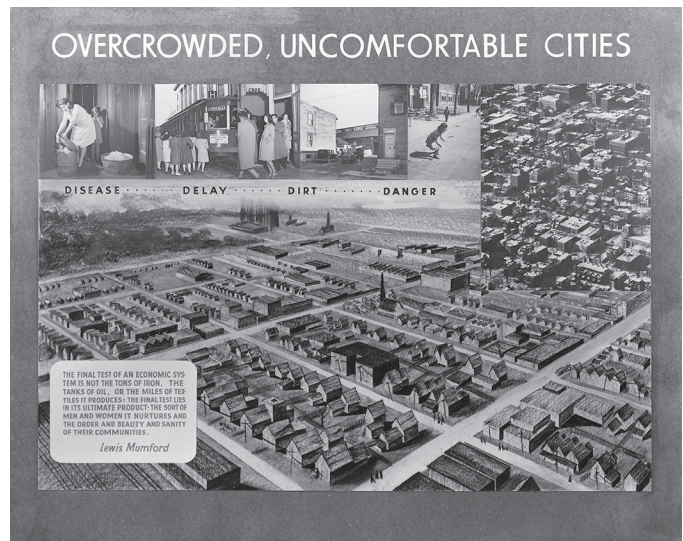


Figure 8: ARGO, "Your City and You" exhibition panel, 1946
Source: Library and Archives Canada

were circulated to groups and individuals in Ottawa, including members of the Ottawa Planning Commission and the Prime Minister's Office.⁶⁴ Citizen participation was a central theme, and ARGO's pamphlet communicated this on no uncertain terms. What was needed, they wrote, was to "get the discussion out of the 'back room'" so that citizens and professionals could share in discussions about the future of the city. Because the people most capable of determining the city's planning needs were the people who lived there, no master plan imposed from above could ever capture the social and functional vitality of a living city.⁶⁵ In a further effort to imbricate the exhibition's message with recent affairs, a press release even explained how Gréber had personally approved the ideas expressed in the show.⁶⁶

The exhibition was divided into four sections. The first half discussed Ottawa's historical growth and explained why it was necessary to reorganize the city through planning. It contrasted the tourists' view of canals, parks, and "swank" houses with that of the social worker who perceived "real city life"—from blighted streets to children playing in the gutter, rush-hour traffic, and soot-strewn laundry. The city's poor planning was blamed on past, superficial attempts at "beautification" conceived without citizen participation. To illustrate this point, a montage of earlier planning proposals was shown, which included Gréber's 1938 scheme.⁶⁷

The two sections that followed described the process of Modern planning by isolating a sample neighbourhood in Ottawa (located between Somerset Street West and Bronson Avenue). Rough sketches "made by neighbours in conversation" were integrated into each display alongside statistics and information about how schools, recreation, housing, and traffic



Figures 9 and 10: ARGO, “Your City and You” exhibition panel, 1946
Source: Library and Archives Canada

needs were each addressed by professional planners. By contrasting poorly sited, dilapidated buildings with spacious, clean, and well-lit ones, Modern architecture became a vital component of Canada’s postwar revitalization (fig. 9). The final section identified all of Ottawa’s neighbourhoods and showed how they were connected by city-wide infrastructure. In order to reconcile these disparate scales, citizens were urged to form neighbourhood councils so that they could communicate their wishes to planning authorities (fig. 10). At the culmination of a participatory planning process was a workable master plan that addressed the everyday needs of modern city dwellers.⁶⁸

The exhibition opened on 19 January 1946 at the National Gallery of Canada.⁶⁹ Five days later, it served as a backdrop at a



Figures 11 and 12: ARGO, “Your City and You” circulated by the National Gallery of Canada, 1945–6. Hudson’s Bay, Calgary, December 1946.
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives

reception for dominion-provincial conference delegates. At the event, the prime minister drew further attention to the exhibition in a speech where, after reiterating his own personal interest in the re-planning of Ottawa, he acted surprised that “such a public-spirited effort” to promote these plans was underway.⁷⁰

In the months that followed, the exhibition embarked on a cross-country tour visiting nine Canadian cities, from Quebec to Vancouver.⁷¹ Organizers gave generally positive reviews of the exhibition, which appeared in a variety of settings for use by numerous different groups. In Quebec City the exhibition was displayed at the Provincial Museum in conjunction with the RAIC’s Annual Meeting. In Hamilton it was installed at the Royal Connaught Hotel for a convention of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees and Motor Transport Workers. In Regina the exhibition was displayed in an automobile showroom where it received over 6000 visitors and “very favourable” comments.⁷² In Calgary the exhibition’s impact was less spectacular. The panels were displayed in a storefront downtown where, during a stretch of cold weather, people were reluctant to stop and read

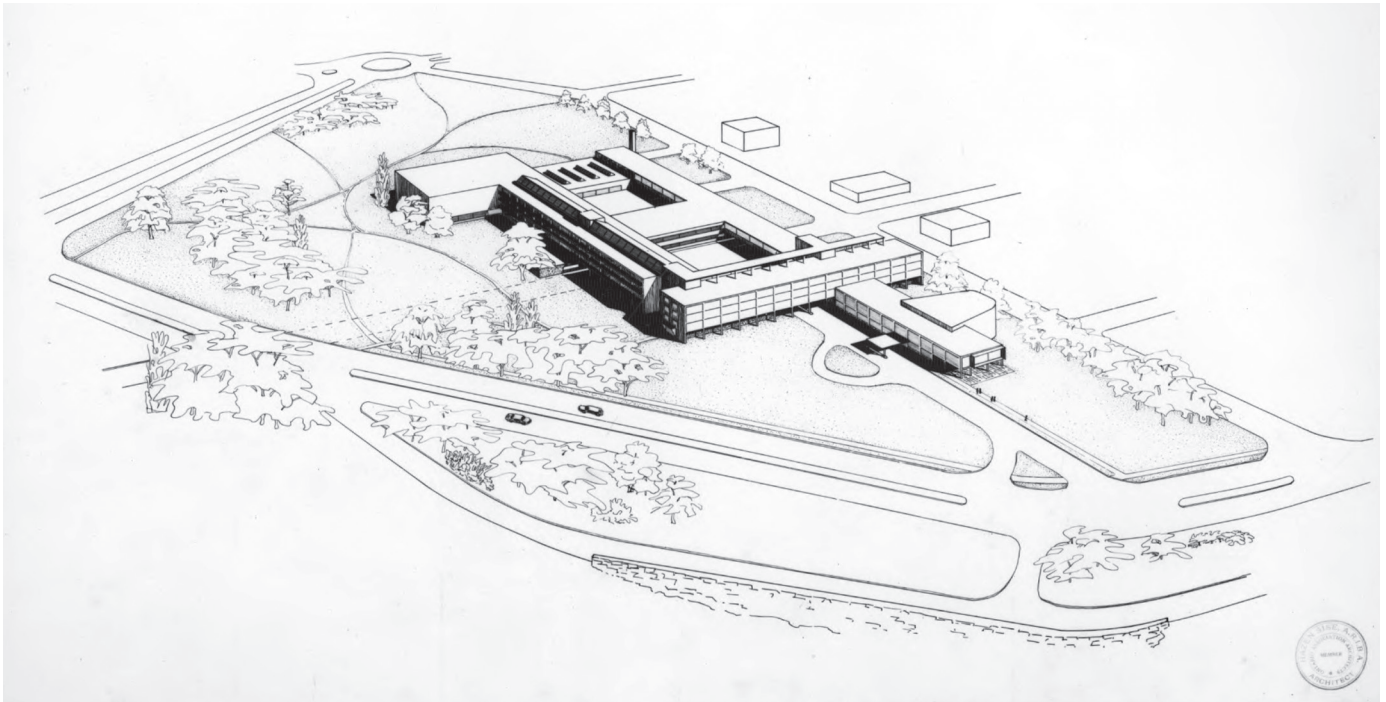


Figure 13: Hazen Sise, design for a new National Film Board building, ca. 1947
Source: Library and Archives Canada

them⁷³ (figs. 11 and 12). In 1948 the exhibition was circulated again, this time to eastern Canada.

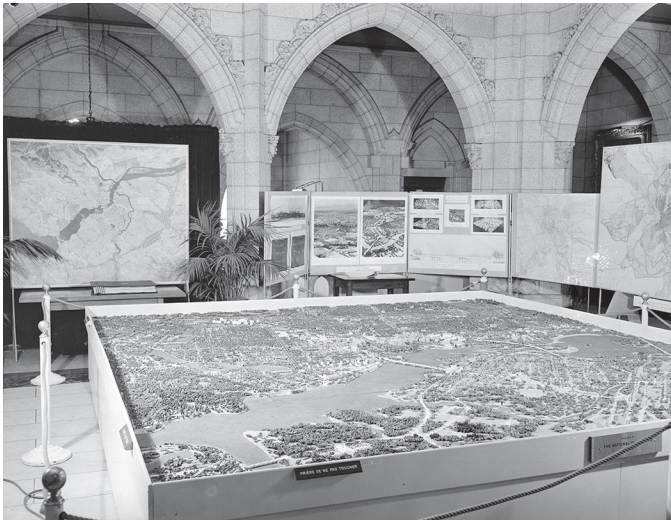
Institutionalizing Modernism

After 1945 ARGO became an increasingly important conduit for transnational ideas, connecting Canadian practitioners to an international group of avant-garde modernist thinkers—and vice-versa. It was with this objective in mind that Sise wrote his former CIAM colleagues in New York, where the group had established a Chapter for Relief and Postwar Planning.⁷⁴ In a letter to Sigfried Giedion he declared that “the time is ripe for the formation of a Canadian branch of the C.I.A.M.”⁷⁵ He believed that ARGO should form the core of this new chapter.⁷⁶ Throughout 1945 Sise continued to act as the group’s unofficial liaison between Ottawa and New York—keeping Giedion and others abreast of Canadian affairs and soliciting other Canadian practitioners to take an interest in CIAM’s cause.⁷⁷

Through these communications ARGO contributed to the postwar restoration of an international discourse on Modern architecture and planning. Inspired by ARGO’s surreptitious use of the Film Board’s resources, Sise impressed on members of the New York chapter how the propagandizing power of media could be used to win public support for CIAM and transform the organization into a more effective educational force. He stressed this point to Giedion ahead of a meeting in 1945, suggesting

further that they hold a special session on the “proper exploitation of visual aids to the dissemination of C.I.A.M. findings,” where Grierson would be invited to speak, and record the proceedings of the meeting to provide source material for future Film Board productions.⁷⁸

In a separate attempt to pre-emptively modernize Ottawa’s architectural landscape, Sise convinced Grierson and other senior members of the Film Board to entrust him with designing a new building for the rapidly growing organization⁷⁹ (fig. 13). After lobbying for a building site that would enable a close working relationship and “constant personal contact” between the government and the Film Board, a site was selected on the Ottawa side nestled into the very heart of Gréber’s evolving plan.⁸⁰ As part of his design, Sise obtained a sketch of the surrounding area from Gréber and prepared detailed studies of the area according to the latest social and functionalist doctrine.⁸¹ He analyzed traffic and circulation patterns, separated buildings by type, and divided the area into three neighbourhood units, each with its own business and shopping centre. By 1947 the proposed building was incorporated into the National Capital Plan and later appeared in the model of Gréber’s plan prepared by the Film Board and exhibited in the foyer of the Parliament Building in 1949 (figs. 14 and 15). The unrealized project included a 750-seat theatre, a large public lobby to display educational material, as well as studios, workshops, and offices.



Figures 14 and 15: View and detail of the model built by the National Film Board for Jacques Gréber on display in the Parliament Building showing proposed new National Film Board building, 1949
Source: Library and Archives Canada

It was also starkly Modern in its conception and appearance. Arranged asymmetrically and in a “low and somewhat rambling ensemble of wings, courts and interconnected pavilions” dominated by a central administration block, the design was—in Sise’s opinion—“the logical architectural consequences of the [Film Board’s] requirements.”⁸² In 1948 Sise sent Gideon images of his proposed design for the Film Board—along with a

copy of the pamphlet “A Place to Live,” which he had written in 1945—remarking that “if it is built without harm from aesthetic censorship, it should constitute a mile-stone in Canadian architecture.”⁸³

At the same time as ARGO was reasserting its commitment to the Modern Movement at an international level, the group’s influence spread rapidly in Canada through a network of members and friends who were placed in several public institutions. Like Sise and the Film Board, young architects vied for influence within and through official public channels created to promote postwar reconstruction and planning. One such institution was the Central (later Canada) Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) created in 1946 to address an acute shortage of housing across the country. Not only was housing urgently needed to accommodate returning veterans and an expanding population, increased building activity was regarded as a form of economic stimulus and a way to help transition Canada’s economy from wartime to domestic production. As early as 1945 the government began promoting mass production and prefabrication as methods to speed the construction of new homes and improve Canada’s stock of low-cost housing. For political leaders, state intervention in planning and building was part of an overall strategy to retain centralized government power by transitioning Canada’s interventionist economic and social policies implemented during wartime to peaceful productivity.⁸⁴ For ARGO the impending housing crisis and the government’s professed interest in issues of construction presented them with another opportunity to promote architectural and urban modernism as a solution to these problems.

Early in 1946 ARGO organized a talk by the Russian-born modernist architect and CIAM member Serge Chermayeff at a special meeting of the Ottawa chapter of the Ontario Association of Architects, where many public officials were also invited to attend, including the mayor of Ottawa, Stanley Lewis, and the chairman of the Federal District Commission, Frederic Bronson.⁸⁵ Ahead of the talk, Sise carefully briefed Chermayeff on the Canadian situation and on the delicate task of instilling modernist values in his audience.⁸⁶ Sise then arranged for Chermayeff to meet with the president of the CMHC, David Mansur, whom he then pressed to consider hiring Chermayeff as an architectural consultant.⁸⁷ Despite Mansur’s reluctance to act on this advice, within a few months ARGO did establish a small foothold within the government organization when their fellow member Alan H. Armstrong was transferred to the CMHC instead.⁸⁸ Armstrong immediately set about writing “Science and the Housing Problem,” which he asked Sise to privately review.⁸⁹

Although CMHC was concerned initially with housing, the organization’s mandate was soon expanded to include planning as well. In 1946 CMHC hosted a Community Planning Conference in Ottawa to promote a coordinated solution to the housing crisis.⁹⁰ Representatives from different professional organizations were invited to give talks on the subject of planning,

including Armstrong who showed a film strip and distributed information about the recent ARGO exhibition.⁹¹

One outcome of the conference was the decision that CMHC should sponsor a new organization to foster public education on the subject of planning across the country. Over the ensuing two days, conference delegates drafted bylaws for a nascent organization that became the Community Planning Association of Canada (CPAC).⁹² At Armstrong's suggestion, CPAC's educational mandate would take the form of a broad propaganda campaign, including print publications, films, radio, and travelling exhibitions.⁹³ ARGO's influence within the new organization was cemented when Armstrong became the first national secretary of CPAC in 1947, and executive director of the organization thereafter. With Armstrong at the helm, CPAC soon became one of the most vocal advocates for community planning in Canada, encouraging the establishment of permanent planning units at the municipal level and the expansion of university-based education for Canadian planners.⁹⁴

Also in attendance at the conference was the English-born architect and planner Humphrey Carver.⁹⁵ Carver lectured to delegates on the importance of the neighbourhood as a stable, social unit, and the "nursery" of citizen participation in public affairs.⁹⁶ Comments like these would have clearly resonated with ARGO's position vis-à-vis the Ottawa Plan. Not long after the conference Carver joined ARGO and began attending their regular meetings. In 1947 Carver was named vice-president of CPAC and became chair of the CMHC's research committee the following year. With the addition of Carver to their group, ARGO's membership quickly spread to numerous government organizations. By 1948 the group's meetings were attended by members of the National Capital Planning Commission, the Film Board, as well as CMHC and CPAC.⁹⁷

For Sise, ARGO's controlling interest in CPAC positioned the institution to play a key role in fostering support for international modernism. He illustrated this point in a curious diagram where he showed how local CPAC branches and CIAM groups were locked in a mutual relationship of influence and action (fig. 16). At the top of the page, Sise showed how Armstrong (A.A.)—in his capacity as both national secretary of CPAC and Canadian delegate to CIAM—was the vital link that connected these local groups to national and international affairs. Through Armstrong, Sise charted a continuous flow of information from Zurich (where CIAM had reconvened) to Canada. Armed with this information, Sise believed that local planning groups would, in turn, promote modern planning at the local level, spurring patrons to hire modern architects who were members of the local research groups and generating financial support for local CIAM initiatives, like the exhibitions created in Montreal and Ottawa, which were exemplary in Sise's mind. In effect, Sise was imagining a hypothetical bureaucracy (Armstrong was never in fact a delegate to CIAM) that would funnel commissions into the hands of young architects while bypassing the established profession.

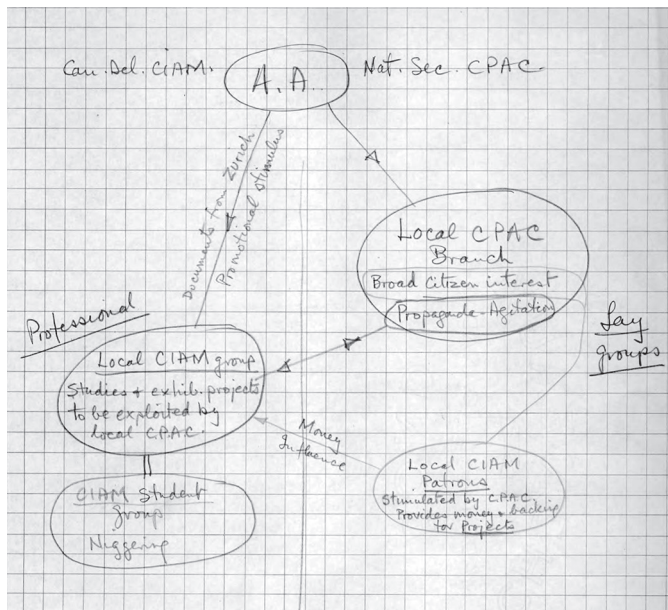


Figure 16: Hazen Sise, diagram of relationship between local CPAC and CIAM chapters, n.d.
Source: Library and Archives Canada

In the important role Sise envisioned for CPAC, he felt the organization should embrace the issues of housing and building in addition to planning. He even went so far as to submit a motion at a local CPAC meeting in Toronto to have the organization change its name to the Housing and Community Planning Association of Canada.⁹⁸ Later he pressed Armstrong to produce a handbook of planning and architectural design, specifying that it include "matters in the sphere of architecture" like the "virtues of simplicity" and the "honest use of materials," as opposed to "stylistic fancy-dress."⁹⁹ He submitted this proposal to Carver at CMHC as well.¹⁰⁰ Sise's position at the Film Board afforded him other opportunities to weigh in on CPAC's affairs. In 1948 he accepted an invitation from Carver to serve as a member of CPAC's Information Committee to oversee the production of print, film, and other promotional media.¹⁰¹ One of the committee's first decisions was to promote a maritime tour of "Your City and You" for use by local CPAC chapters.¹⁰²

Among CPAC's promotional tools was the journal *Layout for Living*, which they began printing in 1947. The journal—edited by Armstrong, with Carver serving as a member of the editorial subcommittee—published the opinions and ideas of a diverse and international field of experts. Public participation in community planning was central to the journal's argument, and it habitually extolled the principles of Modern design.¹⁰³ In 1947 Carver contributed an article on Canada's impending housing crisis, where he argued that increased efficiency and economy in the building industry would necessarily result in "simple, straightforward solutions to problems of design," adding that "efficiency and beauty

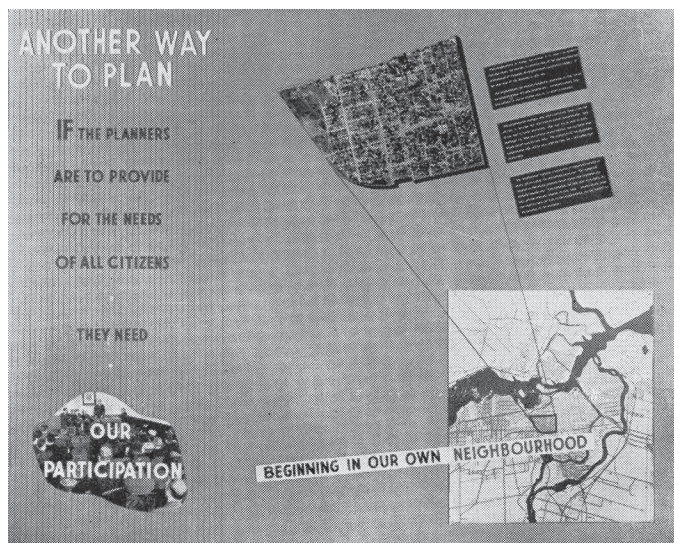


Figure 17, Panel from the exhibition “Your City and You,” Layout for Living, April–May 1947
Source: Library and Archives Canada

have for one another a natural affinity.”¹⁰⁴ The journal often reprinted parts of articles and extracts from books whose authors supported a citizen-led approach to community planning, including authors from Britain, the United States, and occasionally even CIAM.¹⁰⁵ To assist in educating the public about planning and building, the journal advertised graphic aids, radio broadcasts, recently published books, pamphlets, and films for use by local CPAC chapters. Many of these promotional tools were produced by the Film Board, including a 35mm film strip featuring ARGO’s exhibition, which Armstrong promoted in the pages of *Layout for Living*¹⁰⁶ (fig. 17).

Throughout 1947 and 1948 criticism of the ongoing National Capital Plan continued to serve as a clandestine vehicle for the introduction of modernist planning doctrine. For ARGO, the Ottawa planning commission’s opaque proceedings and Gréber’s managerial role remained a sore point that contrasted sharply with their own ambitions for the future of Canadian practice. As ARGO’s influence spread within CMHC and CPAC, these public institutions provided additional outlets to disparage re-planning efforts in Ottawa and to attempt to interfere in its realization. As with ARGO’s earlier efforts, citizen participation was a rhetorical strategy that continued to underpin this attack.¹⁰⁷ The first issue of *Layout for Living* opened with a perfunctory statement: “Community planning does not mean a scheme believed in only by a few experts. Neither does it mean a collection of drawings that can be set aside (or vetoed) by a few people under temporary pressure. Good community planning is orderly development which the citizens of the community have shared in preparing.”¹⁰⁸

To mark CPAC’s first annual meeting, the group organized a three-day National Conference on Community Planning in

Montreal, which was attended by over 300 delegates from across the country.¹⁰⁹ The keynote speaker for the event was the renowned British planner Frederic Osborn from the Town and Country Planning Association in London.¹¹⁰ After the conference Sise arranged to have Osborn visit Ottawa and meet with members of the planning committee, Gréber, and the chairman of the Federal District Commission, Frederic Bronson, at a luncheon hosted by the local Board of Trade.¹¹¹ Sise hoped the event would help catalyze the formation of an Ottawa-based chapter of CPAC. In a separate editorial he complained that the lack of such an organization was “especially to be regretted in a city which is currently undergoing large-scale redesigning and improvement.”¹¹² His real motivation, however, was revealed by his promise that such a group would be ideally situated to “assist unofficially” in the formulation of Gréber’s plan by acting on behalf of local citizens.

ARGO’s position was strengthened in this respect in 1946 by the arrival of Harold Spence-Sales at McGill University, where he established Canada’s first graduate program in planning. In 1947 Sise attended a conference at McGill organized by Bland and Spence-Sales on the education needs of professional planners.¹¹³ In his address to the conference Spence-Sales described how contemporary planning was no longer the domain of individual genius, but required a team of co-ordinated experts—a statement that Sise recorded with obvious approval in his notes.¹¹⁴ Not long after the conference, Spence-Sales began attending ARGO meetings in Ottawa and quickly became a leading voice in the promotion of planning education in Canada.¹¹⁵ In public and university lectures he championed planning as a civic act and its ability to resuscitate urban decay.¹¹⁶ In one radio talk he complained that town planning “is regarded usually as the imposition of regimentation by remote control.”¹¹⁷ “Planning cannot be a secret operation carried on behind the closed doors of officialdom or the rarefied atmosphere of committee rooms . . . nor is it the sole prerogative of highly skilled technicians familiar with abstractions of almost unfathomable complexity . . . It is a matter to be fought and wrangled over, to be discussed and argued about on the street corner, in the press, in the clubs, and in the homes.”¹¹⁸

The unspoken object of these accusations was—in all probability—the Ottawa Planning Commission, and Gréber in particular, to whom Spence-Sales referred jokingly as “Button Boots.”¹¹⁹ As if to underscore this point, in 1949 Spence-Sales produced a scathing review of the preliminary report on the official Ottawa plan, which appeared in *Layout for Living*—a journal produced by CPAC, published by the Film Board, and edited by Armstrong and Carver. The review attacked the “visual beauty” of the scheme, “achieved at the expense of the vigour and vitality of the city,” and compared Gréber’s proposal to an outmoded “citadel with a moat” by which Canada’s capital was to be transformed into a single, urban unit covered with ubiquitous majestic monuments, avenues, and spacious buildings.¹²⁰

“Great government offices in almost every quarter of the capital, cyclopean public buildings at every turn! A vast array of splendour in contrast to which houses and community buildings would no doubt be treated with appropriate touches of architectural meekness!”¹²¹

Especially troubling for Spence-Sales was the lack of quantitative data contained in the report—a fact leading him to suggest that the plan was based on little more than a “superficial examination or intuitive reaction” to Ottawa’s prevailing conditions.¹²² Instead of providing sound plans for the treatment of future commercial areas, a reasonable cost estimate, and effective transportation management, the plan, he charged, was a “heroic” and “bygone” European imposition predestined to failure: “The city as the institution of free men rebels against the impact of autocracy.”¹²³

In addition to gaining an influential voice in Canada, ARGO contributed to a conversation about modernism in planning and building by affiliating themselves with a resurgent CIAM and participating in the group’s international congresses. In 1947 the first postwar meeting of CIAM was held in Bridgewater, England, with a view to restoring communication between disparate modernist groups around the world. In April that year Sise attended a meeting of CIAM delegates in New York to discuss preparations for the upcoming conference, and he reaffirmed Canadians’ commitment to the organization’s cause.¹²⁴ He then arranged to have ARGO member Peter Oberlander attend the meeting in Bridgewater and deliver a statement on behalf of the Canadian group.¹²⁵ In preparation for the meeting, Sise briefed Oberlander on the current Canadian situation, with particular attention to the role of CMHC and CPAC in promoting reform. “From the CIAM point of view,” he cautioned, “Canada hasn’t very much to be proud of, so you mustn’t be disappointed if nothing much seems to be expected from you.”¹²⁶

By 1948 ARGO was already discussing possible contributions for the next CIAM congress.¹²⁷ Oberlander had since returned to Ottawa, where he was installed as secretary of the group, with Watson Balharrie as chairman and Alan Armstrong as acting chairman. Among the items they discussed that year was the possibility of reconstituting the group as an official CIAM chapter and establishing similar groups throughout Canada.¹²⁸ With public institutions like CMHC and CPAC now spearheading the promotion of planning throughout Canada, ARGO reasserted their role as a sponsor for Canadian architectural modernism.¹²⁹

Later that year the Architectural Research Group was relocated back to Montreal after Sise was invited to take up a teaching position at McGill. To distinguish the group from its previous two incarnations, the new research group adopted the moniker ARGOM.¹³⁰ The new group immediately set about preparing a study of Montreal’s recreational needs using the CIAM grid for display at the upcoming congress in Bergamo, Italy, in 1949.¹³¹ ARGOM member Ann Luke attended the conference in place

of Sise and Bland, who were, since 1947, official Canadian delegates to CIAM.¹³² For his own part, Sise sent Giedion an article on the state of modernist architectural education in Canada by former ARGO member Frederic Lasserre as Canada’s contribution to a discussion on architectural education chaired by Walter Gropius.¹³³

Conclusion

ARGOM’s participation at the Bergamo conference represents the fruition of their activity in Montreal. However, in no way was the group’s dissolution a sign of their resignation. As a result of their prolific activity from 1938 to 1949, the group’s modernist vision had become firmly entrenched in the fabric of Canadian practice and its institutions.

Whether ARGO influenced the work of the National Capital Planning Commission is debatable and not within the scope of this article to answer.¹³⁴ That groups like CPAC were more receptive to ARGO’s advocacy for citizen participation is hardly surprising, given CPAC’s mandate to foster widespread support for planning. There is also irony in this, however, as citizen participation failed to materialize in the actual practice of postwar planning. Indeed, centralized decision making continued to empower modernist practitioners throughout the 1950s and 1960s, despite their earlier and virulent criticism of an elitist approach to urban design. Ultimately their attempts to fit urban complexity into a rationalist mould and to combat urban blight through slum clearance would inspire participation of a different kind, as citizens rallied in protest of modernism’s impassive approach.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, ARGO’s advocacy does appear to have paid dividends in other local instances. In the 1950s a national competition was won by John Bland for the design of the new Ottawa City Hall, a hallmark of the international style in Canada. He then served as urban renewal advisor to the City of Ottawa after 1958. Together with Gordon Stephenson and Jean Issalys, Bland prepared a report on reconstruction in 1967, which presented a socio-economic argument for widespread urban renewal and slum clearance in Ottawa.¹³⁶

The Architectural Research Group is also notable for intersecting with Canada’s foremost modernist educators and architects. For example, from 1945 to 1946 James Donahue and Douglas Simpson carried out experiments in the building research division of the National Research Council, where they developed plywood housing panels and moulded plastic furniture. Donahue (who was the first Canadian to graduate from the Harvard School of Design in 1942) left in 1946 to take up a teaching post at the University of Manitoba, while Simpson moved to Vancouver in 1947, where he established a successful practice. Sise continued to teach architectural history at McGill until 1957, then co-founded one of Canada’s largest architectural firms, Architect’s in co-partnership, and executed several prominent modernist buildings across the country.¹³⁷ After teaching briefly at McGill from 1944 to 1945, Frederic Lasserre was made director of the School of

Architecture at the University of British Columbia, where Peter Oberlander was invited to teach, beginning in 1950, and where he founded a new school of Community and Regional Planning in 1956. Humphrey Carver continued to chair the CHMC's research committee until 1955, then chaired the organization's Advisory Group until 1967. Following his 1948 book *Houses for Canadians* in which he presented an argument for the demolition and renewal of Toronto's slum neighbourhoods, Carver produced numerous influential books with an increased focus on humanizing Canada's urban and suburban landscapes.¹³⁸ Harold Spence-Sales and John Bland formed a private practice specializing in town planning, while continuing to modernize architecture and planning education at McGill. Together they prepared plans for many new and existing communities across the country, from Vancouver to St. John's.

The period from 1938 to 1949 represents a turning point for Canadian architecture and planning as the roots of international modernism penetrated deep within Canada's postwar institutions. It also suggests a new vector for the development of Canadian modernism by highlighting the distributed agency of postwar planning and building practices, and the political pretensions of its early practitioners. Rather than a definitive set of practices or a style, modernism's induction was in the form of an overtly political campaign centred on state intervention in building and planning.¹³⁹ Nor was the politicization of building and planning practices a benign process for many young Canadian professionals who sought to legitimize modernist discourse by leveraging new, state-sponsored institutions and their actions. Even as some of the more dogmatic tenets of international modernism became unhinged over the next two decades, the immediate postwar period testifies to the compelling force of this ideology and remains an important precursor to the widespread practice of Modern architecture and urbanism during the 1950s and 1960s.

Organizations like the Architectural Research Group were instrumental in facilitating these knowledge transfers. Crucial to their efforts was the federal government's involvement in the development and promotion of the Ottawa plan. In a rare confessional moment, Sise sent Gideon a description of the ARGO exhibition. "Reading between the lines," he wrote, "you may perceive that we are not entirely happy about the situation so far ... Until recently [Gréber] seemed very appreciative of our efforts for public education, but he now shows signs of turning against the principles we represent."¹⁴⁰ The promotion of citizen participation as part of this education was a strategy that served multiple purposes. By allegedly democratizing planning and building, citizen participation was meant as a challenge to the government's system of public patronage.¹⁴¹ At the same time, it provided a rhetorical screen for modernist social and functional doctrine. By enlisting public support for modern architecture and planning, young architects sought to mitigate the influence of an older generation of architects and planners who were

averse to these views. By contrasting the "dictatorial" approach taken by Canada's government in the re-planning of Ottawa with their own "democratic" aspirations, young architects exploited postwar sensitivities to the maximum. Moreover, these disruptions occurred and at a critical moment when community planning was being institutionalized in cities and at universities across the country. Through their simultaneous commitment to urban renewal and their patrimonial approach to instituting a plan for the National Capital, Canada's federal government fuelled modernist sentiment across the country by unifying Gréber's opponents and lending a new sense of urgency to their modernist project.

Acknowledgements

Research for this article was supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada in the form of a Canada Graduate Scholarship, and by Heritage Ottawa in the form of a Gordon Cullingham Research and Publication Grant. I would like to thank the reviewers for their substantial contribution to the development of this article, as well as David Theodore and Annmarie Adams for commenting on earlier drafts.

Notes

- 1 Leon Whiteson, *Modern Canadian Architecture* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1983); Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, "Modes of Modernizing: The Acquisition of Modernist Design in Canada," *Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin* 19, no. 3 (1994), 60–74; Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2:779–97; Marie-Josée Therrien and France Vanlaethem, "Modern Architecture in Canada 1940–1967," *Back from Utopia: The Challenge of the Modern Movement*, ed. Hubert-Jan Henket and Hilde Heynen, 126–37 (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002); Bureau of Architecture and Urbanism, *Toronto Modern Architecture, 1945–1965*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2002); Serena Keshavjee, ed., *Winnipeg Modern: Architecture, 1945–1975* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006); George T. Kapelos, *Competing Modernisms: Toronto's New City Hall* (Halifax: Dalhousie Architectural Press, 2015), 14–16.
- 2 John Sewell, *The Shape of the City: Toronto Struggles with Modern Planning* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Robert M. Stamp, *Suburban Modern: Postwar Dreams in Calgary* (Calgary: TouchWood Editions, 2004); André Lortie, ed., *The 60s: Montréal Thinks Big* (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2004); Stephen Bocking, "Constructing Urban Expertise: Professional and Political Authority in Toronto, 1940–1970," *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 1 (2006), 51–76; Gerald Hodge and David Gordon, *Planning Canadian Communities*, 5th ed. (Toronto: Nelson Thomson Learning, 2008); Richard White, *Planning Toronto: The Planners, the Plans, Their Legacies, 1940–80* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2016).
- 3 Two notable exceptions are Rhodri Liscombe's and Christopher Armstrong's examination of modern architecture and planning in Vancouver and Toronto, respectively, which include thorough discussions about the influences and debates circulating among students and professionals, and in architectural periodicals during the 1930s and 1940s. Rhodri W. Liscombe, *The New Spirit: Modern Architecture in Vancouver, 1938–1963* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); Christopher Armstrong, *Making Toronto Modern: Architecture and Design, 1895–1975* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014); see also Rhodri W. Liscombe and Michelangelo Sabatino, *Canada: Modern Architectures in History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2016).

- 4 José Luis Sert, *Can Our Cities Survive?: An ABC of Urban Problems, Their Analysis, Their Solutions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942); Le Corbusier, *La Charte d'Athènes* (Paris: La Librairie Plon, 1943); John R. Gold, "Creating the Charter of Athens: CIAM and the Functional City, 1933–43," *Town Planning Review* 69, no. 3 (1998): 225–47.
- 5 John R. Gold, *The Experience of Modernism: Modern Architects and the Future City, 1928–1953* (London: E&FN Spon, 1997); Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).
- 6 Alan Mabin and Mark Oranje, "The 1938 Johannesburg 'Town Planning Exhibition and Congress': Testament, Monument and Indictment," *Exhibitions and the Development of Modern Planning Culture*, ed. Robert Freestone and Marco Amati, 97–110 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Robert Freestone, "Post-war Reconstruction, Planning Promotion and the Australian Government 1944–45," *ibid.*, 209–24.
- 7 Judith LeMaire, *Lieux, Biens, Liens Communs: Émergence d'une Grammaire Participative en Architecture et Urbanisme, 1904–1969* (Brussels: Éditions de L'Université de Bruxelles, 2014), 93–156.
- 8 Ward defines undiluted borrowing as what encourages the appropriation of foreign ideas and practices in an uncritical manner and with deference to their country of origin. Stephen V. Ward, *Planning the Twentieth-Century City: The Advanced Capitalist World* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 403.
- 9 Stephen V. Ward, "The International Diffusion of Planning: A Review and a Canadian Case Study," *International Planning Studies* 4, no. 1 (1999), 53–77.
- 10 The original members of ARG were Campbell Merrett (the group's first and only president), Harry Mayerovitch, Richard E. Bolton, and Richard Eve. Their first act was to send an open letter to McGill University, criticizing the organization of the architectural program there and giving suggestions on how to reform its curriculum of study. They were later joined by John Bland, Chloethiel Woodard, Pierre Morency, and Roland Gariépy. Personal diary of John Campbell Merrett, Private Collection.
- 11 Throughout the 1940s planning was championed by many civic-minded reformers as a tool to improve the living conditions in Canadian cities. Calls for political intervention mounted as the war drew to a close and as professionals recognized that a major rebuilding effort was needed to remedy nearly two decades of underfunding city infrastructure. These views were summarized in the Curtis Report of 1944, which was followed by the passage of the National Housing Act that same year. Dennis T. Guest, *The Emergence of Social Security in Canada*, 3rd ed. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 120–1.
- 12 John Bland became director of McGill's School of Architecture in 1941 after establishing a successful architecture and planning practice in England. He remained director of the school until 1972, during which time the school was modernized through the addition of new courses and faculty members. Norbert Schoenauer, "McGill's School of Architecture: A Retrospection," *McGill Schools of Architecture and Urban Planning*, prospectus, ed. Ellen Leibovich (Montreal: McGill Schools of Architecture and Urban Planning, 1987), 14–15; Anne McDougall, "John Bland and the McGill School of Architecture," *Canadian Architect* (March 1988): 33–7.
- 13 ARG, "There Are Three Arts," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* (hereafter *JRAIC*) 17, no. 8 (August 1940): 148.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 149.
- 15 Campbell Merrett quoted in "Value of Planning in City Emphasized," *Montreal Gazette*, 12 May 1941. The exhibition was funded by the Province of Quebec Association of Architects, the City Improvement League, and the Montreal Citizens Commission. ARG, "City for Living: An Exhibit by the Architectural Research Group," *JRAIC* 18, no. 9 (September 1941): 149–53.
- 16 Chloethiel Woodard Smith was an American architect who studied architecture at the University of Oregon and at Washington University in St. Louis. In 1940 she married Bromley K. Smith, a Foreign Service officer who was subsequently posted in Montreal. It was probably during this time that she met John Bland and other members of ARG. Woodard Smith would go on to become an influential architect and planner in the United States, completing several notable projects in Washington, DC, including a redevelopment plan with Louis Justment for Washington's Southwest quadrant in 1952. Thomas E. Luebke, ed., *Civic Art: A Centennial History of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts* (Washington, DC: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2013), appendix B, 555.
- 17 The new City Planning Commission consisted of fifteen members and was meant to replace the independent Town Planning Commission created in 1934. "Planning Becomes Civic Department," *Montreal Gazette*, 13 May 1941.
- 18 The exhibition opened on 12 May at the Art Gallery, 1379 Sherbrooke Street West. It was later exhibited at Montreal City Hall and at the annual Exhibition of Handicrafts. "Exhibit Envisions 'City for Living,'" *Montreal Gazette*, 13 May 1941; Alphonse Loiselle, "La Première Exposition Circulante d'Urbanisme," *La Patrie*, 10 May 1941.
- 19 Personal diary of John Campbell Merrett, Private Collection.
- 20 Although Sise was not affiliated with ARG, he was a member of CIAM and their British counterpart the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS). He was the only representative from North America to attend the CIAM congress in 1933, where the delegation formulated the Athens Charter. Earlier in 1938, Sise had encouraged ARG to align their views with these international organizations. Richard E. Bolton to Hazen Sise, 6 June 1938, file 12, vol. 21, Hazen Edward Sise fonds (hereafter HESF), MG 30, D187, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).
- 21 In 1934–5 Sise had also participated in the design and organization of two separate exhibitions on housing and modern architecture for MARS. The exhibitions were created in collaboration with Maxwell Fry, Eugene Kaufmann, Godfrey Samuel, László Moholy-Nagy, and Misha Black. Gold, *Experience of Modernism*, 120–7.
- 22 In 1937 the Museum of Modern Art in New York had commissioned a film from László Moholy-Nagy and Sise on the work of Tecton architects and Berthold Lubetkin at the London Zoo. It was probably this credit that earned him a position at the Film Board. The Museum of Modern Art, "Exhibit of Modern English Architecture," press release, 2 February 1937, Press Release Archives, MOMA.
- 23 Hazen Sise, "City for Living: ARG Goes to Bat," unpublished manuscript, n.d., file 12, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 The National Film Board was established in 1939 and grew rapidly in order support Canada's war effort at home and abroad. Gary Evans, *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949 to 1989* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 3–6.
- 26 Another architectural research group was formed in Toronto in 1942 but was disbanded shortly thereafter. Members of the Toronto group included Eugenio G. Faludi, Kent Barker, John Layng, and James A. Murray. John Layng, "Tomorrow's Work," *JRAIC* 19, no. 1 (1942): 12; Armstrong, *Making Toronto Modern*, 135–6.
- 27 ARGO's first chairman was Donald Reay, who was then serving with the Royal Canadian Air Force. The second chairman was Swiss-born architect Frederic Lasserre, whom Sise had met in London during the 1930s when both were members of MARS. Lasserre, who had worked with the Tecton group in London from 1936 to 1940, was working in Ottawa as a member of the Royal Canadian Navy's Directorate of Works and Buildings. A list of past and present ARGO members prepared in 1945 included Alan Armstrong, Watson Balharrie, Evan Boston, James Donahue, Hans Eckers, Edward Elliott, Robert Fairfield, Charles Gillan, William Gilleland, Samuel Gitterman, William Goulding, Patrick Keenleyside, Frederic Lasserre, Phyllis Lee, Sydney Lithwick, Harry Mayerovitch, Campbell Merrett, Peter Oberlander, Donald

Politicking for Postwar Modernism

- Reay, Sylvia Reay, Carl Rieder, Cuthbert Salmon, Douglas Simpson, Hazen Sise, Arthur Taylor, Peter Thorton, and Arnold Tucker.
- 28 Sise was also a stalwart socialist with strong political views. In 1937 he served as a volunteer member of the Canadian Blood Transfusion Service in Spain during the civil war. He later became a member of the Canadian Communist Party and, after 1943, was the subject of an ongoing FBI investigation for his accidental ties to a Soviet spy ring. David Levy, *Stalin's Man in Canada: Fred Rose and Soviet Espionage* (New York: Enigma Books, 2011), 59.
- 29 Hazen Sise, "A Place to Live," *Canadian Affairs*, Canadian ed., 2, no. 7 (April 1945): 12–13.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 32 His design for a plaza and memorial located at the foot of Elgin Street was partially executed. However, a plan for the greater Ottawa region was never completed.
- 33 On the origin, development, and implementation of the Ottawa plan, see Nancy Pollock-Ellwand, "Gréber's Plan and the 'Washington of the North': Finding a Canadian Capital in the Face of Republican Dreams," *Landscape Journal* 20, no. 1 (2001): 48–61; David Gordon, "Weaving a Modern Plan for Canada's Capital: Jacques Gréber and the 1950 Plan for the National Capital Region," *Urban History Review* (hereafter *UHR*) 29, no. 2 (2001): 43–61; Kenza Benali and Caroline Ramirez, "Le Plan de Jacques Gréber pour La Capitale Nationale: Un Héritage Urbanistique Décrit," *Cahiers de géographie du Québec* 56, no. 157 (2012): 51–80; David Gordon, "From Noblesse Oblige to Nationalism: Elite Involvement in Planning Canada's Capital," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 3 (2001): 3–34.
- 34 The National Capital Planning Commission was formed by order of the Privy Council on 15 August 1945. It operated under the supervision of the Federal District Commission.
- 35 Gréber probably added to ARGO's frustration when, at a presentation to the Senate and House of Commons in October 1945, he showed forty-five lantern slides of many City Beautiful conceptions, including his own plan for Philadelphia's Fairmont Parkway and Pierre L'Enfant's plan for Washington, DC, then compared the "monumental compositions" of Paris, Philadelphia, Versailles, and Washington. Jacques Gréber, *The Planning of a National Capital* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1945).
- 36 Added to these concerns were speculations about Gréber's wartime employment in Vichy France, where many modern architects had been denied the right to practise. Unlike ARGO's modernist heroes, including Auguste Perret and Le Corbusier, Gréber had used his position and influence to create a state-supported planning apparatus and was named *inspecteur général* in northern France under the auspices of Nazi officials. Gréber's fate seemed to be implied by the reversal of fortunes after liberation when Le Corbusier and Perret were enlisted to help reconstruct France's devastated cities. Anonymous, "News," *Architectural Forum* 83, no. 2 (August 1945): 10, 12; Roger M. Picton, "Selling National Urban Renewal: The National Film Board, the National Capital Commission, and Postwar Planning in Ottawa, Canada," *Urban History* 37, no. 2 (2010): 305–10.
- 37 A series of letters to this effect appeared in 1945 and 1946 in *Canadian Art*, a journal printed and produced by the Film Board; see *Canadian Art* 3, no. 1 (November 1945): 41–3; *Canadian Art* 3, no. 3 (April–May 1946): 133–4.
- 38 Frederic Lasserre, "On Planning the Capital," *Evening Citizen* (Ottawa), 31 August 1945; Lasserre was living in Montreal at the time. In 1944 Sise had recommended Lasserre for a position at McGill's School of Architecture, where he taught briefly until 1945.
- 39 Letter to the Council of the RAIC, 1 November 1945, file 13, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 40 Watson Balharrie, "The Profession and the Planning of the Capital," *JRAIC* 22, no. 12 (December 1945): 271.
- 41 Sise proposed four related talks on the subject of community planning to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The first lecture aired on 7 September 1945, but the following three were cancelled. Hazen Sise to Elizabeth Chisholm, 18, 31 August 1945, file 1, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Elizabeth Chisholm to Hazen Sise, 21, 28 August 1945, file 1, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 42 Hazen Sise, "Our Communities in Crisis," unpublished manuscript, n.d., file 1, vol. 27, HESF, MG30, D187, LAC.
- 43 He even invited the RAIC to submit the names of competent architects for inclusion on the planning commission. On the subject of architectural expression, he recommended that public competitions be held to design these buildings in order to benefit "the development of Canadian architecture and the encouragement of young Canadian architects." Jacques Gréber to Forsey Page, *JRAIC* 22, no. 12 (December 1945): 271, 273.
- 44 Gordon, "Weaving a Modern Plan for Canada's Capital," 46.
- 45 On the development of the City Beautiful movement in Canada, see William J. Brennan, "Visions of a 'City Beautiful': The Origin and Impact of the Mawson Plans for Regina," *Saskatchewan History* 46, no. 2 (1994): 19–33; Geoffrey Simmins, "Competing Visions for Redesigning the Canadian City: Architecture, Urban Planning, and Landscape Architecture, 1893–1918," *Artists, Architects and Artisans: Canadian Art 1890–1918*, ed. Charles Hill, 240–71 (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013); Gilbert A. Stelter, "Rethinking the Significance of the City Beautiful Idea," *Urban Planning in a Changing World: The Twentieth Century Experience*, ed. Robert Freestone, 98–117 (London: E & FN Spon, 2000).
- 46 Janet Wright, *Crown Assets: The Architecture of the Department of Public Works, 1867–1967* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 162–3; Sise voiced this concern in an editorial where he encouraged the government to appoint a young architect "cradled in the new architectural movement" to the recently vacated post of chief architect. Hazen Sise, "Wanted: A Chief Architect," *Evening Citizen*, 30 June 1947.
- 47 Wright, *Crown Assets*, 133–6, 289n66.
- 48 Quoted in *ibid.*, 216; see also André Lortie, "Jacques Gréber (1882–1962) et l'Urbanisme: Le Temps et l'Espace de la Ville" (PhD diss., Université Paris, 1997), 207–16.
- 49 He was ordered to help prepare a report on sponsorship and the arts instead. Hazen Sise to Donald Buchanan, 11 April 1945, file 2, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 50 Hazen Sise to Terry MacDermot, 17 August 1945, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 51 Hazen Sise to John Grierson, 29 August 1945, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 52 He asked John Bland to send him drawings of the recently completed townsite at Chalk River, where Bland had served as a town planning consultant, and wrote to Campbell Merrett in Saint John, New Brunswick, to ask for a copy of that city's recently completed report on town planning. Hazen Sise to John Bland, 16 April 1946, file 22, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Campbell Merrett, 3 April 1946, file 22, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 53 Ross McLean to Jacques Gréber, 30 October 1945, file 8, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Ross McLean to Hazen Sise, 20 January 1948, file 8, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; see also Picton, "Selling National Urban Renewal," 311–15.
- 54 Hazen Sise to Herbert Marshall, 26 October 1945, file 8, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Jacques Gréber, 9 October 1948, file 11, vol. 23, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; in 1946 he informed Gréber that he had discovered legal precedent for preventing construction on sites where "city

- planning changes are contemplated, but not yet studied in detail." He suggested Gréber give a list of sensitive areas to the city along with instructions to withhold issuing building permits for these sites. Hazen Sise to Jacques Gréber, 27 March 1946, file 8, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 55 Hazen Sise to Jacques Gréber, 22 February 1946, file 8, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 56 The exhibition was financed by the National Gallery of Canada, the CMHC, and the Film Board.
- 57 They also provided ARGO with a graphic designer. Donald Buchanan to P. Guibert, 24 August 1945, file 13, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 58 Hazen Sise to Donald Buchanan, 17 October 1945, file 13, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 59 Donald Buchanan to M.W. Sharp, 23 August 1945, file 5.5A, box 174, National Gallery of Canada fonds (hereafter NGCF), National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives (hereafter NGCLA).
- 60 The letter was drafted by Sise. Ross McLean to Jacques Gréber, 29 October 1945, file 13, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 61 Jacques Gréber to Ross McLean, 31 October 1945, file 5.5A, box 174, NGCF, NGCLA.
- 62 Memorandum by Hazen Sise, 20 October 1945, file 13, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Ross McLean, 27 October 1945, file 13, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 63 ARGO members who were responsible for the exhibition included Alan Armstrong, Watson Balharrie, Evan Boston, James Donahue, William Gilleland, William Goulding, Phyllis Lee, Douglas Simpson, and Hazen Sise.
- 64 The pamphlets were made from reprints of an article that had appeared in *Canadian Art*; see Alan Armstrong, "Your City and You," *Canadian Art* 3, no. 3 (April–May 1946): 120–21, 136.
- 65 Architectural Research Group of Ottawa, *Your City and You* (Ottawa: Architectural Research Group of Ottawa, 1946), n.p.
- 66 Press release, 19 January 1946, file 5.5A, box 174, NGCF, NGCLA.
- 67 The display also incorporated portions of Edward Bennett's 1915 plan, as well as documents by Thomas Adams, who had completed a proposal for a government centre in 1918 and served as a member of the Commission of Conservation from 1914 to 1923.
- 68 Hazen Sise to Jessica Allan, 23 February 1946, file 14, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 69 "Exhibition Will Open Today in National Gallery," *Evening Citizen*, 19 January 1946.
- 70 "PM Points Out Argo Exhibit," *Evening Citizen*, 30 January 1946; spurred by this publicity, Sise wrote letters to the minister of national health and welfare and Frederic Bronson at the Federal District Commission reiterating ARGO's earlier plea for an advisory committee to oversee Gréber and his staff. He even suggested John Bland and Eric Arthur as possible committee members. Hazen Sise to Brooke Claxton, 6 February 1946, file 8, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Frederic E. Bronson, 5 March 1946, file 8, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 71 From Ottawa, the exhibition was sent to Quebec City, Hamilton, Toronto, Granby, Val D'Or, Regina, and Calgary, where the exhibition ran until November 1946. In 1947 the exhibition was sent to Vancouver for display at the University of British Columbia, then to Quebec City again, where it was used by a local chapter of the Community Planning Association of Canada. Exhibition Itinerary, n.d., file 5.5A, box 174, NGCF, NGCLA.
- 72 Charles D. Kent to Harry O. McCurry, 21 October 1946, file 5.5A, box 174, NGCF, NGCLA.
- 73 J.A. Lamb to H.O. McCurry, 13 March 1947, file 5.5A, box 174, NGCF, NGCLA.
- 74 The Chapter for Relief and Postwar Planning was formed in 1943 to carry out wartime work. The group comprised mainly European émigrés and emerging American modern architects. Although the chapter's primary focus was on postwar reconstruction in Europe, they also sought to re-establish contact between modernist groups in unoccupied and liberated countries, and sought commissions to assist with planning and rebuilding efforts. Mumford, *CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, 142–9.
- 75 Hazen Sise to Sigfried Giedion, 17 December 1944, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 76 Hazen Sise, "Proposal for the Formation of a Canadian Group of Modern Architects [and] Community Planners to Affiliate with the International Congress for Modern Architecture, Otherwise Known as C.I.A.M.," unpublished manuscript, n.d., file 16, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; in 1945 Frederic Lasserre travelled to New York on behalf of ARGO to discuss the formation of Canadian chapter with Giedion and others. Whilst in New York he visited the General Panel Corporation and retrieved a list of photos of buildings and industrial design from the Museum of Modern Art.
- 77 Hazen Sise to Siegfried Giedion, 10 November 1945, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to John Layng, 29 August 1945, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 78 Hazen Sise to Sigfried Giedion, 20 August 1945, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to John Grierson, 21 August 1945, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Siegfried Giedion, 1 October 1945, file 15, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 79 He commenced this work in 1942 with Grierson's permission and with instructions to find a suitable site in collaboration with the Chief Architect's Office. Work on the building was temporarily interrupted in 1943 when Sise was dispatched to Washington, DC, as a film officer attached to the Canadian Embassy. Memorandum by Hazen Sise, 7 January 1946, file 7, vol. 13, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 80 Ibid.; fifteen different sites were considered throughout the Ottawa and Hull region. The selected site was located across from the National Research Council's building near the intersection of Sussex Drive and King Edwards Avenue.
- 81 Édouard Fiset to Hazen Sise, 14 August 1947, file 8, vol. 13, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 82 Memorandum by Hazen Sise, 7 January 1946, file 7, vol. 13, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 83 Hazen Sise to Sigfried Giedion, 22 January 1948, file 16, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; the images were for inclusion in a proposed publication to mark the twentieth anniversary of CIAM. However, the publication was later abandoned at Le Corbusier's request. Catherine de Smet, *Le Corbusier: Un Architecte et ses Livres* (Baden, Switzerland: Lars Müller, 2005), 62.
- 84 An issue of *Canadian Affairs* produced on behalf of the Wartime Information Board effectively summarized this position and highlighted the need to update Canada's construction industry; see *Canadian Affairs*, Reconstruction Supplement, no. 3 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1945); see also Peter S. McInnis, "Planning Prosperity: Canadians Debate Postwar Reconstruction," in *Uncertain Horizons: Canadians and Their World in 1945*, ed. Greg Donaghy, 231–59 (Ottawa: Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1997).
- 85 Hazen Sise to Serge Chermayeff, 2 January [1946], file 8, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 86 Sise sent Chermayeff a copy of the Acts of Parliament governing the creation of the CMHC, warning him further that any brash treatment of modern architecture could be fatal to the design of the new film board building and other

Politicking for Postwar Modernism

- similar projects. Hazen Sise to Serge Chermayeff, 11, 23 January 1946, file 8, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 87 Hazen Sise to Serge Chermayeff, 23 January 1946, file 8, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Mitchell Sharp, 2 January 1946, file 8, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Serge Chermayeff, 7 January 1946, file 8, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; it had been CIAM member Arnold Tucker's suggestion that Sise arrange a meeting between Chermayeff and Mansur. Arnold Tucker to Hazen Sise, 26 December 1945, file 8, vol. 36, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 88 Armstrong joined CMHC in the spring of 1946. Before that, he was a lieutenant in the Canadian Information Service and Wartime Information Board. He had been a member of ARGO since at least 1944 and played a crucial part in promoting the group's exhibition.
- 89 The article presented a broad argument for further study of housing to reduce costs and deliver housing more quickly. It identified leading problems in the housing industry such as real estate speculation, wasteful timber practices, outmoded craftsmen building techniques, the inability to coordinate and deliver efficient municipal services, and problems with municipal financing. Alan H. Armstrong, "Science and the Housing Problem," unpublished manuscript, 14 June 1946, file 14, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 90 The conference was held on 25 and 26 June 25 at the Chateau Laurier and was attended by provincial, institutional, and federal representatives. Directory of Members of Community Planning Conference, Ottawa, 25–6 June 1946, file 11, vol. 23, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 91 Other speakers included representatives from the RAIC, the Engineering Institute of Canada, the Town Planning Institute of Canada, and the Canadian Welfare Council. Fiset was also invited to give a talk on the Ottawa plan, and Gréber gave concluding remarks.
- 92 By-laws of the Community Planning Association of Canada, 31 July 1946, file 11, vol. 23, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 93 Proceedings of the Community Planning Conference, 25–6 June 1946, 17–18, file 11, vol. 23, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 94 Alan H. Armstrong, "Planning in Canada," *Daily Commercial News: Review and Forecast, 1948–49*, Community Planning Association of Canada, 1948.
- 95 Carver emigrated from England to Canada in 1930 after graduating from the Architectural Association in 1929, where he preceded John Bland and Harold Spence-Sales. Whilst a member of the teaching staff at the University of Toronto's School of Architecture, Carver helped organize two national housing conferences in 1938 and 1939, which provided the impetus for future legislation, including revisions to the National Housing Act. He also taught Alan Armstrong, who was a student of architecture in Toronto at the time. Carver later reflected that his views on modernism were shaped by visionaries like Le Corbusier, whose work he had encountered while studying architecture in London. Humphrey Carver, *Compassionate Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 21, 55–7, 88–9.
- 96 Proceedings of the Community Planning Conference, 25–6 June 1946, 10.
- 97 Regular ARGO members in 1948 included Watson Balharrie (chairman), Alan Armstrong (acting chairman), Peter Oberlander (secretary), Humphrey Carver, Hazen Sise, Jean Taylor, Phyllis Lee, Guy Desbarats, William Gilleland, Don Blair, Douglas MacDonald, and A. Beaver. ARGO Membership List, 1 October 1948, file 14, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D198, LAC.
- 98 He presented the motion at a meeting of the Ontario division of CPAC in March 1948, where it was defeated. Draft resolution by Hazen Sise, n.d., file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 99 Hazen Sise to Alan H. Armstrong, 8 October 1948, file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 100 Hazen Sise to Humphrey Carver, 8 October 1948, file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 101 Carver was vice-president of the committee, which had been established after the first meeting of the CPAC council in December 1948. Humphrey Carver to Hazen Sise, 19 January 1948, file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to Humphrey Carver, 31 January 1948, file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 102 The exhibition was sent to Quebec City and to Halifax for use by local CPAC chapters. Minutes of a Meeting of the Information Committee, 13 March 1948, file 11, vol. 23, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 103 Alan Armstrong, "Housing and Community Planning Are Indivisible," *Layout for Living* 1, no. 1 (February 1947): 2; Armstrong, "Who Are the Community Planning Association of Canada?," in *ibid.*, 3–5.
- 104 Humphrey Carver, "Planning for Half a Million Houses," *Layout for Living* 1, no. 2 (March 1947): 6.
- 105 Max Lock, "Town Planning and Public Relations," *Layout for Living* 1, no. 8 (October 1947): 2–3; "Lewis Mumford on UNHQ," *Layout for Living* 1, no. 11 (January 1948): 4–5. In its ninth issue the journal quoted Walter Gropius who, at the sixth congress of CIAM in Bridgewater, had called for "drastic steps to stimulate the community interest of every citizen by letting him participate actively." Walter Gropius, "Planning Is the People's Affair," *Layout for Living* 1, no. 9 (November 1947): 3.
- 106 *Layout for Living* 1, no. 3–4 (April–May 1947): 7, 10.
- 107 Although CMHC's principal area of concern remained housing and construction, they joined CPAC in promoting a citizen-led approach to community planning. In May 1947 an editorial appeared in an Ottawa newspaper enumerating CPAC's objectives and describing how both the CMHC and CPAC believed that citizen participation was absolutely necessary to execute and realize these planning efforts. "The Citizen as Planner," *Evening Citizen*, 19 May 1947.
- 108 Alan Armstrong, "What Is Community Planning to You?," *Layout for Living* 1, no. 1 (February 1947): 1.
- 109 The conference was held 2–4 October 1947. One outcome of the conference was a series of resolutions to guide the organization's future promotions. Members identified the need to update provincial building codes to permit the modernization of building construction, to establish demonstration neighbourhoods, and to promote the construction of low-cost rental housing. Members also reaffirmed their support for the NFB and its ongoing role in production of educational films. "Three Hundred Came to Montreal," *Layout for Living* 1, no. 9 (November 1947): 1, 4–5.
- 110 "City Will Be Host to Town Planners," *Montreal Gazette*, 27 September 1947. Osborn was a supporter of the Garden City movement founded by Ebenezer Howard in Britain after the turn of the century. Howard and Osborn had collaborated on the founding of Welwyn Garden City in 1920, where Osborn lived until 1936. Frederic J. Osborn, *The Genesis of Welwyn Garden City: Some Jubilee Memories* (London: Town and Country Planning Association, 1970).
- 111 Hazen Sise to W.J. Cairns, 22 September 1947, file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to C.E. Pickering, 26 September 1947, file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Hazen Sise to L.A. Vincent, 29 September 1947, file 10, vol. 24, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 112 "The Citizen as Planner," *Evening Citizen*, 10 October 1947.
- 113 Spence-Sales was educated in New Zealand and studied planning at the Architectural Association in London. He had also spent time at the British Ministry of Town and Country Planning. The Community Planning Conference and the Education of the Planning Technician was held 24–6 January 1947.

Politicking for Postwar Modernism

- 114 Hazen Sise, "McGill Conference on Planning and Education of Planning Technicians," unpublished notes, n.d., file 4, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 115 Alan H. Armstrong to Hazen Sise, 15 April 1947, file 16, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 116 From February to March 1947 Spence-Sales delivered a course of six lectures at the McGill University School of Architecture on town and country planning. Lecture Program, "New Ways for Old in Town and Country Planning," n.d., file 4, vol. 37, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 117 "City Planning Aim Define in Talk," *Montreal Gazette*, 24 February 1947.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Harold Spence-Sales, interview by Jim Donaldson, 17 April 1996, Alumni Interviews, School of Architecture, McGill University.
- 120 Harold Spence-Sales, "The Preliminary Report on the Plan for the National Capital," *Layout for Living* (June–July 1949): 2–3.
- 121 Ibid., 6.
- 122 Ibid., 3.
- 123 Ibid., 7.
- 124 At the meeting, Sise drafted a list of possible Canadian CIAM candidates, listing Frederic Lasserre, John Bland, Peter Thornton, Gordon Adamson, Alan Armstrong, John Parkin, Douglas Simpson, Charles Van Norman, and Harold Spence-Sales. Hazen Sise, "CIAM Meeting at [Paul] Weiner's N.Y.," unpublished notes, n.d., file 16, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 125 Oberlander, a recent McGill graduate, was already living in London, where he was employed by the British Ministry of Town and Country Planning. Oberlander had graduated from McGill in 1945 before studying architecture at Harvard under Walter Gropius from 1946 to 1947. He was joined at the conference by his former classmate Blanche Lemco and later reported on the proceedings in an article printed in the journal of the RAIC. Alan H. Armstrong to Hazen Sise, 7 August 1947, file 16, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Peter Oberlander, "Twenty Years of Architectural Growth, 1928–1948," *JRAIC* 25, no. 6 (1948): 199–201.
- 126 Hazen Sise to Peter Oberlander, 14 August 1947, file 16, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 127 Minutes of ARGO meeting, 28 September 1948, file 14, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; minutes of ARGO meeting, 7 October 1948, file 14, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 128 Ibid.; meeting agenda, n.d., file 14, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 129 Minutes of ARGO meeting, 27 October 1948, file 14, vol. 21, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 130 Memorandum by Hazen Sise, 15 May 1949, file 17, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; members of ARGOM included James H. Acland, Raymond Affleck, John Bland, Nora Johnstone, Ann Luke, Rudy Papnek, Vincent Rother, Hazen Sise, Harold Spence-Sales, Charles Trudeau, Brahm Wiesman, and Edwin B. Youldon.
- 131 The CIAM grid was developed by Le Corbusier and the French group Assemblée de Constructeurs pour une Rénovation Architecturale (ASCORAL) and was presented at the first postwar CIAM conference in 1947. The grid was developed to graphically organize information about town planning for comparative purposes by enumerating the functional, ethical, and aesthetic elements of a city. Mumford, *CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, 180–2.
- 132 Hazen Sise to J.J. Honegger, 2 July 1949, file 17, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 133 Hazen Sise to Sigfried Giedion, 24 June 1949, file 17, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC; Frederic Lasserre, "On Architectural Education," *JRAIC* 26, no. 5 (May 1949): 133–5, 172.
- 134 In reading the 1950 plan, David Gordon remarks that Gréber "cloaked his modernity in Beaux Arts representations." In addition to incorporating many of the suggestions made by earlier planners and laying out formal civic spaces, Gréber's plan evidences many modernist principles, including CIAM land-use planning conventions and an urban renewal strategy. David Gordon, *Town and Crown: An Illustrated History of Canada's Capital* (Ottawa: Invenire, 2015), 199–203.
- 135 See, for example, Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- 136 City of Ottawa, Department of Planning and Works, *Urban Renewal, Ottawa, Canada* (Ottawa: Department of Planning and Works, 1967). Gordon Stephenson was another pupil of Le Corbusier during the 1930s.
- 137 Dustin Valen, "Hazen Edward Sise and the History of Modern Architecture at McGill, 1949–1957," *Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 40, no. 2 (2015): 27–41.
- 138 Humphrey Carver, *Houses for Canadians: A Study on Housing Problems in the Toronto Area* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1948); Carver, *Cities in the Suburbs* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); Carver, *Compassionate Landscape* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975); Carver, *Decades: A Personal Report on the Past Century* (Ottawa: Humphrey Carver, 1994).
- 139 Although not a member of ARGO, Eric Arthur was also explicit in this regard when he emphasized to the Massey Royal Commission in 1949 that the federal government should lead in promoting architectural reform by constructing innovative and demonstrative public projects. *Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences, 1949–1951* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951), 216–21.
- 140 Hazen Sise to Siegfried Giedion, 7 April 1947, file 16, vol. 26, HESF, MG 30, D187, LAC.
- 141 Kevin Brushett documents a similar case of participatory planning in late 1940s Toronto, where democratic participation through local community councils was encouraged as a way to manufacture consent and promote civic consciousness among Toronto's many publics. He credits this development to many politically minded social reformers whose leftist views were shaped by the Depression and war years, including Humphrey Carver, as well as to the influence of national organizations like CPAC. Kevin Brushett, "People and Government Travelling Together: Community Organization, Urban Planning and the Politics of Postwar Reconstruction in Toronto, 1943–1953," *UHR* 27, no. 2 (1999): 44–58.