CHIEF RAPPORTEUR'S ADDRESS

It is my privilege to speak first of all as representative of Mr. Aspesaeter of Norway, President of the International Federation of Landscape Architects, who is at present attending the Federation's General Assembly in Caracas and so cannot be here himself. He has asked me to say how much he regrets being unable to be with us and has requested me to greet you on his behalf and to thank ICOMOS for the interest it is taking in our profession.

There are altogether five thousand of us in the world. This is not very much when one remembers that there are eight thousand building architects in France alone.

Our calling is one which is not widely known. People in general are surprised to see men devote themselves entirely to a specialized type of work which they believe to be so simple. Our generation in the profession has carried on in the teeth of this absence of understanding ; it is a generation of pioneers, and thus a generation which must to some extent be sacrificed.

I shall never forget the occasion when, during my military service, I was questioned by a general on machine-guns. I did not, apparently, give a satisfactory answer, and he asked me what my job was. When I told him I was an architect who designed gardens he very nearly took disciplinary measures because he was convinced I was making fun of him.

Not a week goes by without my receiving at my office a request of this sort from a despairing mother :

"Dear Mr. Péchère,

I have a son - of excellent family - who is not very intelligent and not very strong in health. What could you do to help him become a landscape architect ?..."

For of course anyone knows how to make a garden. Why should we need to call in an expert merely to plant a weeping willow on a lawn ?

And yet, only a few decades ago, there were two quite different classes of people for whom gardens were the object of a special cult. There were, first of all the élite, and I once heard an elderly nobleman declare : "There are three pleasures in this world - women, horses and gardens". A statement such as this is, I agree, certainly somewhat oldfashinoed ; but at the same time unsophisticated people of modest means possess and extraordinary understanding of the genuine garden. I have seen such people profoundly stirred by the majesty of Versailles, the inspired simplicity of Chantilly, or the impressive forcefulness of Beloeil, and infused as it were with a special grace which enabled them to express their astonishment and admiration in a few striking and epigrammatical remarks.

So we see that our profession can succeed in arousing emotion both in those who have knowledge of it and those simply capable of unspoiled feeling.

And now the profession is moving out from behind the hedges which shut it in. The garden is no longer merely the appurtenance of a house, a château, or some other building : the task of the landscape architect is now to transform, protect, save or decorate the landscapes surrounding motorways, canals, quarries and many other things we cannot go into here.

But this does not mean we are at the end of our troubles. We must now revise our own conceptions and our conceptions of our relations with the town-planners and architects.

How often in the past have we been called in once everything was finished to plant geraniums and other flowers and mask the drabness and the eyesores behind a cloak of trees ! At some future stage it will be understood that we are not there merely to furnish the gardens of houses with plants of one sort or another, but that our task is to collaborate from the very outset in the work of finding a satisfactory layout which will make a better use of the existent landscape and its ecology.

But though our profession has so much to do in the future it has unfortunetely not yet progressed as other forms of art have done. One has only to think of the extraordinary development of music and painting to see that we still have a very long way to go.

A recent congress of futurologists held that architecture had scarcely progressed in any true and profound sense since the 18th century. Yet in twenty years from now our profession will probably be one of the foremost in the world, and this is what is causing such anxiety to those in charge of it. The time is more than ripe to prepare our most qualified specialists to live up to expectations. For, come what may, our trade must remain a manual one. You cannot make a garden without planting trees, and all the passing fashions, all the "Japanalia" in the world, with their upturned stones and dead trees, are not gardens but sculptural groups.

As the world progresses and leisure increases, the population of each country will come to need gardens once again. With two days at home each week it is perfectly possible to spend one day sitting on the bed and watching television. If one has only two free days one can quite well spend them driving round and round in a car to show the neighbours one has one. But once we are needing to work only thirty-five hours a week, sometimes crowed into as little as three days - as is already the case in the United States - we shall not be able to spend all our free time watching television or sitting in our cars. We shall have, if only

for reasons of health and physical equilibrium, to exploit our potential for intelligent activities and develop our out-of-door occupations. The place for such occupations must logically be the garden, and it would not be surprising, should labour be too expensive - as it already is now - to meet with some form or other of voluntary garden upkeep and to find the generation of the age of leisure looking after its own new public parks.

Mr. Aspesaeter would have ended by telling you that in a year from now, in Brussels, there is to be held the Federation's XIIIth Congress, the subject of which is expressed in a graceful remark by the French economist - and I really mean an economist - Mr. Bertrand de Jouvenel, who has said : "The gardener of the earth brings amenity to the environment".

"Amenity" ; we have come to it at last. There is a great deal of talk about environment ; the word is in fashion and this is doubtless a good thing. But there is so much said about it that we are no longer very clear as to what it represents. The accent - and rightly so - is on the various forms of pollution by noise and combustion fumes. There is perhaps not sufficient thought about the immense moral pollution from which we suffer in the form of pollution through ugliness.

It may unfortunately be that what is in need of a long and difficult training is taste itself, something which is so very necessary and which should be the basis of the teaching given to those who should be concerning themselves with the pleasurableness of the environment.

I will now askn your permission to cease speaking as IFLA delegate and to speak instead as your chief rapporteur, and hence your own representative and even your police constable.

I have always been struck throughout my career by the failure of

so many people, including even some architects and landscape designers, to understand ancient gardens. I have frequently been told : "The historic garden is to our society what the carriage is to the motor-car" My answer has invariably been : "I do not believe Paul Valéry did not know of Molière, in fact I believe that if Paul Valéry was one of the greatest writers of our time it was precisely because he had read, understood and studied Molière and let him inspire his thought. To be able to forget something one must first have had an opportunity of knowing and studying it". If one is to be truly independent, one must begin by having a basis, or grammar. It is in this sense that we have a mission to fulfil, and it is because I am so deeply convinced of the fact that I so much wish to thank ICOMOS, Mr. Gazzola, Mr. Lemaire, Mrs. Grémont, and the French Committee, who have arranged for us to meet together here to examine how we can save these classic works which represent the Bossuet or the Goethe of the "literature" of gardens.

What, in reality, is a garden ? As Alain pointed out, in no case does "Nature make gardens".

Faced with the dispute, the immense failure to understand, which so often causes a rift between the Germanic and Anglo-Saxon countries on the one hand and the Latins on the other, I personally have always answered that Nature, in fact, does not make gardens. The British will tell you : "A garden, for us, is where man seeks to find his place in Nature". And to this I always reply : "For me, a garden is where man marks out his place in Nature".

Alain also very rightly said : "It is a fortunate artist who works in a difficult medium". What medium, ladies and gentlemen, is more difficult than one which is alive ? What is more exciting than to be the craftsman practising the only art which uses living matter to compose with ? We do not play with artificial colouring, or with sounds, or with ordered gestures, or hand down words to posterity ; we are in contact

with a medium which is alive, and it is precisely because that medium is complicated and difficult that we are happy to have to make allowance for the unforeseeable factors which prevent us from doing as we wish. It is precisely to the extent that our intelligence and our imagination are curbed by Nature that we may intuitively collaborate with something which is life itself.

We are obliged to refrain from any interference with the actual ground or its contours. St. Cloud is St. Cloud by virtue of its hill. Vaux-le-Vicomte is what it is because of the shape of its site. We are obliged, too, to allow for the nature of the soil, for one cannot grow absolutely anything absolutely anywhere.

We must also obey the seasons, watch progress and comply with botanical imperatives, which oblige us to put the tallgrowing trees at the back and the smaller ones at the front.

Once one has begun to plant a garden, one can never do as one likes. A garden is that ideal place where you can succeed in accommodating a crowd, introducing large numbers of people in small groups and creating an extraordinary impression of movement, so that the garden appears to come forward to meet you as you walk, just as a motionless statue may suddenly take on a new aspect and appear to move as we advance towards it. I am reminded here of a little boy I saw playing with his hoop in the Park in Brussels who was suddenly frozen to immobility by the very motionlessness of a statue.

Think of the play of the shadowq on the steps, the beauty of the stone ponds reflecting the ever-moving sky, and of all the other things the landscape architect must leave respectfully alone ; for he is not free as in any other medium, any other form of art.

would now like to go on to some more concrete examples, and to

talk first of all about the Parc de Bruxelles, which was dog-eared five or six years ago when the underground was built. For you are doubtless not unaware that though it was the Belgians who helped build the Paris métro, those same Belgians took sixty years to build a semblance of a métro in their own country.

A commission was duly set up, with foresters as some of its members. The latter were of the opinion that an attempt ought to be made to replant the avenues with the same kinds of trees as in the days of Joseph II. It had to be explained to them that what mattered was not the presence of any particular tree or the choice of species, but the architectural design of the Park with its three avenues radiating from one single point and the trees planted close together to create a vaulted roof of greenery.

When I asked whether the Park was scheduled I was told that it was not, and I was informed later on that it was not certain to whom it belonged. I could not even find out whether it was the property of the State, of the Corporation of Brussels, or of some other body. I then asked the Royal Commission on Monuments and Sites how one set about scheduling a park, and I was told : "Any Belgian citizen is entitled to propose that a park be scheduled".

Ten minutes later three of us turned up at the offices of the Royal Commission and signed a bald and laconic statement which ran : "We, the undersigned, request that the Parc de Bruxelles be scheduled". Three years later, which was last July, the Parc de Bruxelles was scheduled and so saved. I give you these facts as food for your thought.

Which are the historic gardens which we may take as illustrations ? My own personal "garden bible" is in three volumes, namely, Vaux-le-Vicomte, Granada and the Villa Lante.

But even in these gardens, which are perfection itself, the architects and curators meet with difficulties. Granada is overgrown with trees. The Alhambra is overgrown with cypresses and palm-trees, and Mr. Prieto Moreno is having the greatest difficulty in getting the authorities to agree to have the trees which hide the outlines of the buildings removed in order to show it off to the best advantage. So we see that even the landscape architects end up as fellers of trees and as persons denounced as dangerous.

At Chantilly there are plane trees dating from 1820 which have now reached a ripe age and are in danger of falling. But will anyone dare to do the right thing and to cut them down and plant new ones ?

Further, a garden may very well be famous and of historical interest without being endowed with every perfection. In Italy an extraordinary garden with stone monsters and other animals was doubtless "improved" by a 19th-century gardener who believed he was right in introducing red prunus pissardii and silver acer negundo.

In France, a cascade has been restored without any allowance for the need for optical corrections. Where there are horizontal sheets of water on a slope - and a sheet of water is necessarily horizontal - the slopes must come below the horizontal outline, or else all the basins will give the impression of rising heavenwards. In France, again, some copper beeches have just been planted at 5-metre intervals in one of the loveliest of classical gardens : it is as though a tailor had suggested that a red tie be worn with full evening dress.

At Charlottenburg the curator is up against criticism from the authorities if he wishes to put up a mere balustrade to create a transition between the still-existent French geometrical garden and the part beyond, which is now romantic in conception. Ought he to have restored the part of the vista garden of which no trace at all it left ?

One must not be so completely attached to the past as to make imitations of it.

The main importance of the past is to shed light on the future, and it is in this spirit that I am hoping you will conduct your proceedings and your discussions.

A few weeks ago, Europa Nostra held a congress in Brussels, and Mr. Duncan Sandys succeeded in having the Grand'Place emptied of the cars normally parked there. It was during this Congress - whose work, it is to be hoped, will continue in Ghent that a group of young people declared : "A monument is not a monument for its own sake. A monument, in the last analysis, is a monument for man".

So I venture to hope that during our discussions we are not going to dwell for hours on what the historic garden has to offer us from the archaeological point of view. Its chief value is that it contributes, better, perhaps, than other monuments, to the formation of taste and to the cultural promotion of the masses. This was among the subjects broached by ICOMOS at Oxford.

It was not easy to persuade the representatives of the tourist industry that one may learn to enjoy culture and beauty only at the cost of some effort. However, one may contemplate, know and keep up a garden only through effort and through minor hardships. The contribution in human toil is something which can arouse emotion. Quite near Fontainebleau I know an admirably kept garden where there is never one leaf unpruned, where the yew hedges are as trimly out as pieces of stonework, and where the cotoneasters have so long been pruned and trained in artificial directions that they now naturally follow the lines of the carved volutes over the doorway. Every year I have the opportunity of showing it to a party of students from the American Schools of Art in Fontainebleau and so witnessing the astonishment of thirty literally

open-douthed young people. The effort which went into the creation of the garden and the effort made by all concerned to keep it in order are a source of emotion for the visitor and of pride for the owner. It is a pride similar to that of the housewife who polishes her parquet floors in honour of her guests

Our historic gardens must also become once more a place for enjoyment. People in the 17th century amused themselves, knew how to laugh and how to smile. Do we really still laugh much nowadays ? Cannot the garden become an ideal place where the population can amuse itself in an intelligent and worthy manner, without damaging it ?

I am doubtless a Westerner and a Latin. And doubtless, during our discussions, we shall be reflecting trends which are unlike. I am looking forward to the pleasure of hearing the remarks of those who have come so far, some of them even from as far away as Eastern Europe, and whom we are so pleased to welcome here. I am also much looking forward to the pleasure of comparing our points of view once we have heard what everyone has to say.

I cannot conclude, ladies and gentlemen, without a tribute to the memory of the men who helped me and a tribute to one living man whom I much admire. When I began to work in my profession I had the good fortune to know Count Ernest de Ganay, who was a writer on gardens, and Achille Duchesne, whose strong personality quite certainly made a lively impression on me. Mr. de Ganay helped me to build up one of the finest libraries in existence on the art of gardens, and I owe him an infinite debt of gratitude. And thirdly, among those I admire in the world of the French garden there is one who is so very modest that I must apologize in advance for mentioning him by name. I see before me Mr. Alfred Marie who has done us the honour of coming here and whose age no one has been able to ascertain. He was in any case older than I was when I know him as a young man, yet I know he is quicker nowadays than I am at going

upstairs

We must thank France for arranging this first sympsium in Fontainebleau. It was Péguy who wrote : "All the wild places in the world are not worth a fine French garden, and you who are the designer of the King's gardens will one day be designer of the gardens of Paradise".

In closing, I would like to address myself to the President, Mr. Gazzola, who said to me a few months ago : "I am asking you to be our chief rapporteur and to speak on the philosophical significance of the symposuum". I believe I have the philosophy of the symposium here in eight lines. It is a passage by Paul Valéry, taken from the letter to M. Teste, and I would like to read it to you slowly so that you may appreciate its subtely and wit to the full :

"We finally turn our steps to that place where you would like to go if you were here, that antique garden to which all those given to thought, to cares or to soliloquising go down towards evening, as water runs down into the river, and where all necessarily meet. They are scholars, lovers, old men, disillusioned people, and priests. All conceivable absent beings and of every type. They appear to be deliberately seeking to remain mutually far distant. They must enjoy seeing and not knowing each other, and their separate bitternesses are accustomed to meeting. One trails his disease, another is hastened on by his anxiety. They are shadows which fly each other, but there is no other place in which to escape the others than this to which the same idea of solitude invincibly attracts each one of these wrapt beings."