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THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HENRI LAUGIER, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS
SPEAKS AT DINNER GIVEN BY MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO LAUNCH
INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE COMPETITION--PRIZES AND AWARDS TOTALING
\$50,000 TO BE GIVEN

At a dinner given by the Museum of Modern Art in the Rainbow Room last night (Thursday, October 23), Nelson A. Rockefeller, President of the Museum, announced an International Competition for the Design of Low-Cost Furniture, the largest of its kind ever held. The competition will open approximately one month from now with announcement of the formal terms and conditions, and will close eight months later with the award of prizes and grants totaling \$50,000.

Addresses were given at the dinner by Dr. Henri Laugier, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations in charge of Social Affairs, Ira A. Hirschmann, Trustee of the New York City Board of Higher Education and former Vice-President of Bloomingdale's, and Wallace K. Harrison, Director of Planning for the Permanent Headquarters of the United Nations. Nelson A. Rockefeller presided at the dinner.

Dr. Laugier said in part:

"This is a project in harmony with the broader aims of the Secretariat of the United Nations in the problem of raising the standards of living everywhere. The Department of Social Affairs has examined the resources of the world and organized surveys of the best methods to solve the housing situation in the world.

"This project, as I see it, shows a realization on the part of its initiators that in a rehabilitated world the machine must become a means to an end---a means to help make life more liveable and more pleasant for the greatest possible number of men and women everywhere."

The dinner was attended by leaders of the furniture industry from many parts of the country, most of them cooperating members

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of Museum Design Project, Inc. composed of a national group of retail furniture stores. Its Executive Committee is composed of

- Harry Fish, Chairman, of New York City
- Louis Cohen of Peoria, Ill.
- Harry Coplan of Baltimore, Md.
- David D. Eanes of Richmond, Va.
- Harry M. Epstine of Pittsburg, Pa.
- Arthur C. Field of Detroit, Mich
- Robert Glick of Columbus, Ohio
- Irvin Hartman of Chicago, Ill.
- Robert Mehornay, Jr. of Kansas City, Mo.
- Abe Pilsk of Nashville, Tenn.
- Charles Rosenthal of Binghamton, N. Y.
- Nathan S. Sachs of New York City
- William P. Sheidy of Reading, Pa.
- Harry I. Stern of Philadelphia, Pa.

For more than a year the Museum of Modern Art and this group of leading furniture manufacturers have been greatly concerned over the fact that although governments and industries throughout the world are at work on the housing problem, scant attention is being given to the design and production of good, inexpensive and attractive furniture.

To serve the vast majority of people there is need for adaptable furniture for small apartments and houses, well-designed yet moderate in price, comfortable but not bulky, and that can be easily moved, stored and cared for; in other words, mass-produced furniture planned and executed to fit the needs of modern living, production and merchandising.

To accomplish this, the Museum Design Project, Inc., a non-profit organization, was founded by a group of prominent retail merchants. Representing other leading merchants throughout the country, Museum Design Project took the problem to the Museum of Modern Art, and both organizations began working toward a means of improving low-cost furniture through encouragement of design talent and research activities. After further study, they became convinced that resources for a solution of the problem were already available. The spectacular advances of technology in recent years have provided new materials, tools, and production methods that have already been successfully applied to other branches of manufacture. Individual progressive furniture designers in many countries have done brilliant experimental work but have found it difficult to find ways to translate their ideas into reality.

To break the deadlock and provide a powerful stimulus to designers and technicians to increase their efforts, Museum Design Project has signed an agreement with the Museum of Modern Art under which the Museum will organize and carry out an international competition for low-cost furniture design. During the past ten years the Museum has

been extremely active in the field of industrial design and it brings to this task a broad experience in conducting national and international competitions.

This competition will be open to individual designers of all countries and to selected research teams consisting of technological laboratories working in collaboration with outstanding designers. The sponsors of this program believe that this competition will draw the attention of technicians and designers from all over the world to this important problem and that it will produce new and fresh designs leading to the manufacture and wide distribution of a new type of furniture for the homes of today and tomorrow.

Excerpts from Addresses

Mr. Hirschmann said in part: "The best brains and ideas are being put to work to create houses which will provide the maximum in living comfort from the minimum of space. Little advance thought and planning have applied to what will go into these houses. It is a truism that the cheaper the furniture, the larger it is.

"It has been amply demonstrated that good furniture need not be bulky or expensive. The living quarters of the hundreds of thousands of new homes now going up in the momentum of home building will mean more sun, light, health and actual living area in less physical space. Unless there is coordination between furniture and architecture, obsolete furniture will counteract every progressive step on the part of architects of homes.

"During the war, because the life of our nation was at stake, America pulled together the best brains available to meet certain practical technical problems. These were related to the destruction of life. There is no reason why this competition should not bring together the same best brains to prolong life and make it happier."

Mr. Harrison said in part: "I hope this competition will initiate many advances in the art of furniture manufacturing. This should not be just a competition to select a few good designs but a means of discovering a new approach to the entire problem of making homes more beautiful and liveable.

"You have chosen the Museum of Modern Art to conduct this competition. You can be certain that the Museum will assure you a standard of quality found in few other places. Furthermore, with the satisfaction of producing good things, you will have the added pleasure of knowing that to the average human being you will offer for his home possibilities which have heretofore been reserved only for the privileged few."