

## Religious builders may be fastest

The quickest and most cost-effective builder in the construction industry may be the Jehovah's Witnesses. Using what they call "Quick-Build," the Witnesses can construct a commercial building over a weekend for half the cost of normal construction. The catch is that there may be as many as 1,500 workers on the job and they work for free.

Quick-Build took Waterbury, Conn., by storm over the Columbus Day weekend when a cast of thousands stick-built the largest Kingdom Hall meeting center in North America, a 16,000-sq-ft multipurpose structure with two auditoriums and three apartments. It was completed, with lawns and shrubbery, by Monday night.

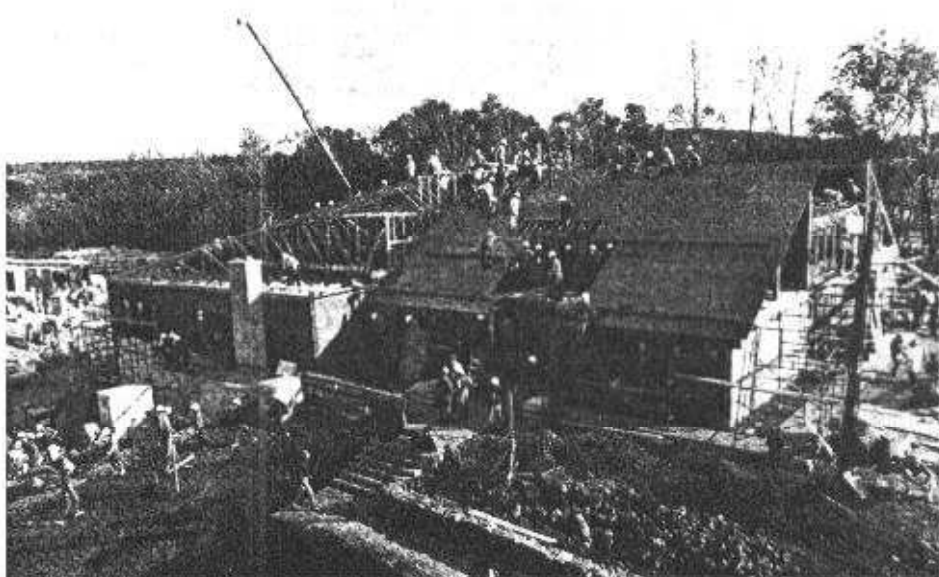
"That is a remarkable piece of work," says Anthony Scionti, assistant building inspector in Waterbury, who kept an eye on the structure while it was going up. "If I wasn't there I would not have believed it." Adds Carl Pelletier, the other building inspector on site, "A lot of people can learn from it. [The job] was well organized. They had a plan."

At the heart of the project was the Witnesses' New England Building Committee, chaired by Jerry Montopoli, president of the Needham, Mass., construction firm that bears his name. The committee is one of about 50 throughout the U.S. and it oversees construction on one hall a month from April through November. Most are about 5,000 sq ft and take less than two days to build. All have different designs.

**Organization.** Montopoli says the committee has a file of members in the construction trades and alerts them by mail when a project is scheduled. He selects about 30 foremen, one for each key phase of the job. Foremen meet with their crews the night before work begins. "It's all in the organization," says Montopoli. "We have everyone trained to worry only about their job."

At the Waterbury site, double the normal crew of 600 volunteers was used and there was a total of about 3,000 people on site, including support crews and spectators. Quick-Build portable kitchens capable of cranking out 3,100 meals in 12 minutes were also on hand.

According to the building inspectors, the work went smoothly. "Nobody needed even a Band-Aid," says Scionti.



By noon on the first day, Jehovah's Witnesses already were well into the project.



Forty-eight hours later, the 16,000-sq-ft Kingdom Hall in Waterbury, Conn., was almost complete.

Pelletier points out that the crews worked round the clock in eight-hour shifts. As each room was framed, the mechanical crews moved in "right behind." Work was speeded by fast-drying compounds and roof sections that were constructed on the ground and hoisted by crane, he adds.

"You're looking at half the cost," says Watertown architect Milton G. Grew, who designed the structure along with Codespoti Design Group, Meriden. He says the project cost \$700,000, including acquisition of the 30-acre site. "It's sort of like the colonial days when they had barn raisings," says Grew. ■