

# COMETH THE QUINCY

## Skyscrapers with new shapes will soon grace two capitals

**DESPITE** exaggerated rumors of their death, and despite rational forecasts of a glut of city office space, Australia's bigger city centres continue to grow bigger.

The most spectacular of all building types, the skyscrapers, climb higher.

Even those many people who have no interest in architecture with some pride and mingling the growth of jagged skylines, as blunt towers of offices rise between and above the cathedral spires of last century and the insurance companies' minarets of the Depression era.

It is only the height of the office blocks that causes the pride. Their bluntness causes the misgivings.

Not one, but two Government-Generalists have now solicited Australian architects at public meetings for the soulless monotony of their grey-green glass boxes.

Many less distinguished critics have added abuse of the

Unquestionably, the public as a whole is on the side of any critic who would prefer, instead, more permanence, more color, beauty or romance in city buildings.

For this reason two big uncompleted city buildings are in Sydney and one in Melbourne.

are assured already of their unpopularity.

Neither is a glass box of the new classic kind, like the ICI Houses of Melbourne or Sydney, but both are indisputably box-like.

The glass box tradition is only 13 years old. It began in 1951 with the United Nations Secretariat in New York, designed by an international team of architects.

It was greatly encouraged by Miss Van der Rohe, the world's most influential architect in the 1950's, who sought and taught an austere beauty of steel and glass.

Monotony

Mies van der Rohe built poetry although he used the language of the mass-production in the hands of others who lacked his sense of relative proportions and coherence, and his sensitivity in detail, sometimes degenerated into a monotonous kind of copy-writing.

Glass boxes of crashing dullness appeared in every corner of the globe.

After that a reaction came: a

ginning, to make offices that are attractive to work in and appropriately appropriate about dignified to behold.

Both buildings contribute solutions of some world-wide value to the old problem.

The Melbourne one is the Royal Insurance Building, by Yuenken Freeman, Architects, near the north end of Collins Street on the top of the western hill.

It is nearly square in plan and rises straight without niche or projection for 18 floors.

Each of the four sides is made of panels of what is known as "reconstructed granite", a mixture of granite and cement, and black as the ace of spades. Each panel is "one" story in height and about four feet wide.

On the three sides which face the open space the panels are fitted with single panes of fixed dark glass.

The panels are clearly separated so that the block-like technique of erecting a wall from the street and the incidents between panels, vertically and horizontally, reduce to the tension of the otherwise sternly sombre walls.

Not to live in

The tower is set back some 25 feet from the street, and will be fairly open and welcoming at the ground level.

None of this can be appreciated at present, however, because the building is still obscured by the base. All that can be seen from the street is the square black tower with its minor indentations.

It promises to be unpopular because some people on viewing it will decide that they would not care to live in a house looking like that.

And some others will picture a whole city block, or the whole of Melbourne, made this way, and will shudder. Indeed, either prospect is hideous.

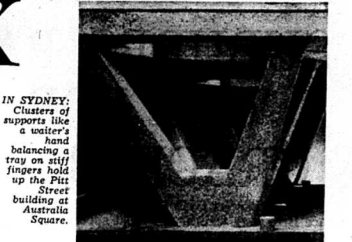
But the essence of the architectural art is still, at it ever was, to be appropriate to the occasion. The Royal Insurance Building is not intended to be repeated. And it shouldn't be viewed as if in an open paddock.

It may be viewed in context. It stands between a rather pompous old Victorian building with yellowed, fruitily-bronzed terra-cotta of indeterminate style.

A hundred other styles and fashions of a century crowded its neighborhood, arguing and chattering a meaningless architectural babble.

In such company this building is welcome. Its clear definition, restraint and repose. Certainly its astringent darkness would be unacceptable if repeated several times along a street, as has an exclusive caviar is not to be recommended.

The new potentially-unpopular skyscraper is the first unit project of the Pitt Street building.



## GREAT DAY WITH THE BEATLES



JOHN, says Paul, it's John who's married — and John Lennon owns up in answer to a question at a Press conference in America.

### From JAMES BRESLIN in New York

**THE RUNWAY** was a barren stretch of concrete set into tall marshy grass that waved when big jetliners came over it for landings.

There was almost nobody around. Just nine yellow port authority police cars, three detectives cars, a police van and a limousine.

It was great.

The Beatles had fooled everybody. They weren't going to land at the main terminal of Kennedy Airport, where thousands waited.

They were coming right to this spot, and all you had to do to see them was stand and wait and maybe jump up and down once in a while just as the two girls were seen.

**Ringo first**

Far up the runway a yellow car, its red roof light twirling, came along leading the parade. The car was a red and white airliner and it came roaring up with the Beatles' suit and the windows and waving and everybody started jumping up and down.

Big airline mechanics in their worksheds, two cargo handlers, a photographer, two girls, everybody was jumping up and down to see the Beatles in the windows.

George was next. He came out first. He was great. His hair blew like a flag. He wore a tight blue denim suit and a blue shirt that had collar white polka dots and a collar that went up to his ears.

You could tell that because Ringo's ears show through his hair sometimes.

The black came out. He had this hair blown out. He was great. His structural frame made him look great. Just like a stroppe.

His hair blew out just as much as Ringo's did.

George was next. He had on a grey suit with pinpoints on it. Then Paul in olive drab. He gave a big smile. It was great to see the Beatles close up.

The Beatles were great. The old adults who keep their heads locked in dressing rooms when they'd rather run out and have fun in the street, piled into a helicopter after them.

The helicopter took off and right away the Beatles started having fun. They all lit cigarettes the minute they saw the "no smoking" sign blink on in the helicopter.

This was good. Just like in their movie where George cuts off an adult's tie. "This is the last ride," Paul started shouting.

### Shrieking

Ringo kept waving at the girls from the limousine window, and this made the girls run even faster than the old cops.

They came up to Eighth Avenue and the Beatles in the car, the girls and the old cops, were running at full speed alongside, and this became great because there were thousands at Eighth Avenue.

Everybody was shrieking and shouting. "Would you please let them not to look out the window when they're running the stairs?" he asked. "We get up about got this thing controlled and if they look out it might start a riot or something."

Ringo got off the elevator and to the window and stick his head out. He died on 44th Street. The kids jumped up and down and the elevator and the East River started out and the old cops had to keep them under control and it was great.

### A GREAT DEBATE SWEEPS THE COUNTRY: HOW TO MODERNISE A SOCIALIST ECONOMY?

# Russia's planners gear for affluence

From STEPHEN ROSENFELD in Washington

FOR THE FIRST time in 40 years a great debate is going on in the Soviet Union, in which not just a closed circle of politicians but an expanding part of the country's elite is taking part.

The debate is about how to modernise the Soviet economy, how to get it to perform the many and sophisticated tasks demanded by the country's needs and ambitions: to build rockets, state grocery stores, make mouse traps, turn out machine tools, finance foreign aid, provide pensions, and so on.

It is a debate from strength, not weakness. Behind it is the fact that the Soviet economy has grown too big and complex to be served adequately by the old, crude, haphazardly planned and produced.

The problem is somewhat like that of a bartender who is asked to serve a martini by one man and a whisky sour by the third.

### Complicated

But how will it run a financially complicated modern economy, when it becomes progressively harder to undo errors and limit their damage, when needs no longer yield either to exhortation or crash programmes, when popular expectations and national requirements demand an even bigger and better economy?

The debate, recently stirred from an enforced slumber, has centred on two possibilities: farming out decisions to the factories where local conditions are best known, and consolidating decision-making at the centre by use of advanced mathematical techniques.

The first avenue has been tried most conspicuously by a Kharlov economist named Liberman, who two years ago was authorised to float a trial balloon, which is still on the rise.

Liberman did two things. First he proposed that the central planners tell factories only what, how much and when to produce, leaving the factories to decide the myriad downs, such as wages, technical innovations, pensions, hours and inventory.

The purpose was to free managers from the choking oversight of bureaucrats too distant in location and outlook to give sensible instructions, and to encourage local initiative.

Yet, in keeping hold of the key levers of what, how much and when, the centre would stay in control and might even be rescued from trivia and detail.

All this implied a great shift, not the slightest sign that suggestion that raised, various, hickies and eye-brows, the chief economic yardstick and install "profit."

### No capitalists

To some communists and many westerners, this sounded as though the Soviet Union was about to topple Marx and endorse capitalism in the Kremlin.

This was not the case. There was no return to free enterprise. Russia intends to retain ownership of factories to private hands, to let profit allow politics aside as the force directing the overall flow of resources.

These are fundamental considerations.

Liberman in fact was, and is, merely suggesting that the Soviet economy run more efficiently and rationally and to perform a waste of people and resources and chalking up its agency to the "class war" or "capitalist encirclement" or some other devil of doctrine or diabolism.

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FASHION, Russian-style: Soviet fashion parades are just one expression of the diversified production that is testing Russia's economic planners.

awesome than those Russia has already known.

This revolution may never take place. All of the economic improvements which it offers may be gained by other means or defeated by party meddling or international crisis.

An aroused apparatus may defeat the challenges to Communist Party arbitrariness and control; indeed, cybernetics may afford the party new and tighter controls.

### Raised clear

It is a modest enough project by today's standards, retrofitting 14 stories of a brick building on the long streets with windows on the long streets. The whole raised clear of the ground so that you can look down on the excavations out of which will rise shortly the much publicised 60-story cylindrical tower.

The architect of the whole development is Harry Seidler and his firm, which is in the hands of writing. Its structural frame can be seen clearly. Windows and masonry are the only things between with assurance and no shadows.

One innovation is the sets of curved, slatted, bronzed sunshades, some fixed and some adjustable, over all windows. This is the gathering of the columns in the open ground floor area.

The building rides, not on a forest of vertical columns, but on casters of four angled supports brought together at pavement level. Each is rather like a waiter's tray balancing a tray on straight fingers.

The object, apart from the drama of the form, was to clear the space as much as possible in anticipation of the big building that will rise behind it.

Melbourne's Royal Insurance Building can be compared to a martini, this Australia Square block is neat spirit, although I am not quite sure what the recipe is.

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### Daily volume

The sheer volume of daily decisions made has been one of the stumbling blocks.

But an even more profound problem, for the politicians, is that the planners had their improved information and economic power might seek to extend, rationally beyond the how-to-do-it area, in which the politicians would like to confine it, into the what-to-do area.

Suppose the dozen top planners, economist and computer experts decided that the Kremlin was ill-advised in, say, choosing for the moon or starting agriculture? Anyone who believes that this prospect is a fantasy may ponder the American reluctance of many American scientists to work on nuclear weapons. The point is that, something along the line as an industrial society grows, the politicians lose that full finger control which they had in simpler days.

What is in front of us, then, is the inability of another revolution in Russia, quiet and bloodless but perhaps no less

### What's up?

"We're going to down. We're going to fall. This is the last ride," Paul started shouting.

"Yeah, the ship crashes," "Yeah, yeah."

"Did you do any horseback riding down there, John?" some "Oh, yes," George said, "horses, they all said, 'ride down the horses.'"

The helicopter circled the Wall Street. It bumped when it