

TAILS WE LOSE

(Illustration: the 'head' and 'tails' sides of the decimal coins.)

Among the helpful hints and tips in the preliminary pages of the new telephone books is a sad example of the kind of honour a prophet can expect in his own country - especially when that happens to be Australia.

In a double spread of advice inserted by the Decimal Currency Board, next year's decimal coins are illustrated. The head side, a new profile of the Queen is shown. Dollar Bill's caption correctly and with proper Colonial deference informs us that the designer was Mr. Arnold Machin, R. A. , of London.

The business side of the coins, the six 'tails' - those highly stylised native animals - are also illustrated. The designer of these was Australian. Dollar Bill does not see fit to record his name.

He was in fact Stuart Devlin, aged 33, and his career is worth a moment's consideration. He was a country boy, from Wangaratta, Victoria. He gravitated to Melbourne, and studied design at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. On completing his course he went to London. He took a diploma at the Royal College of Art in 1958 in engineering, and another as a silversmith. Then he won a Harkness Fellowship, one of those richly endowed American rewards for talent, entitling him to six months travel and study in the U. S. A. He exhibited his abstract sculpture (his real passion) several times in New York. He returned to Australia in 1963 and hung up his shingle as an industrial designer.

He is - it is evident from the record - a designer of the highest international quality, and just the kind of man Australia needs at this time, when our

industrialists are beginning to raise their sights, and their products are going out to compete in the cold, hard, sophisticated world market.

"Devlin is an extremely industrious, exploratory designer", says Mr. Colin Barrie, Director of the Industrial Design Council of Australia. "He has just the capacities we could use now."

But Stuart Devlin, having experienced a little of the size of the honour and rewards likely to come his way here, and having measured them against others he has experienced, left Australia. Late last year he joined the Australian expatriates in London.

This is a free country. If they've got to go they've got to go. But, if we are serious about exporting manufactured goods, one day we will have to open opportunities that will absorb local talent here. At present, as Mr. Barrie says, "we are not even exploring ways of holding on to our talent."