

¶ Australian architects, being often commended of late by the international architectural magazines for the high standard of achievement in this country (you can imagine one of the dailies, as if they were interested, running the headline AUSSIE ARCHS GET OVERSEAS PRAISE, and some member of the arch'l establishment declaiming "I have no hesitation in saying that architecture in this country is equal to that anywhere in the world"), have been rather shattered by an apparent lack of honour in their own country. Not only are we supposedly not good enough to design the hotel (in Sydney) for "Australia's Own Overseas Airline" but also have been disregarded for the design of the Australian Embassy in Brasilia. This particular job was given to Henrique Mindlin of Brazil, who has previously designed some rather jazzy office buildings and flash houses. Knowledge of the selection of an architect was passed on to a Sydney friend by Alison and Peter Smithson (who are designing the U.K. Embassy in Brazil) in a letter which avowed "there must be some good architects in Australia who are used to the climate, they can do some very nice houses." Our Gov't considered it too far away to send an architect. Export in-action!

¶ Four books that are of interest to architects and others involved in building, are reviewed below.

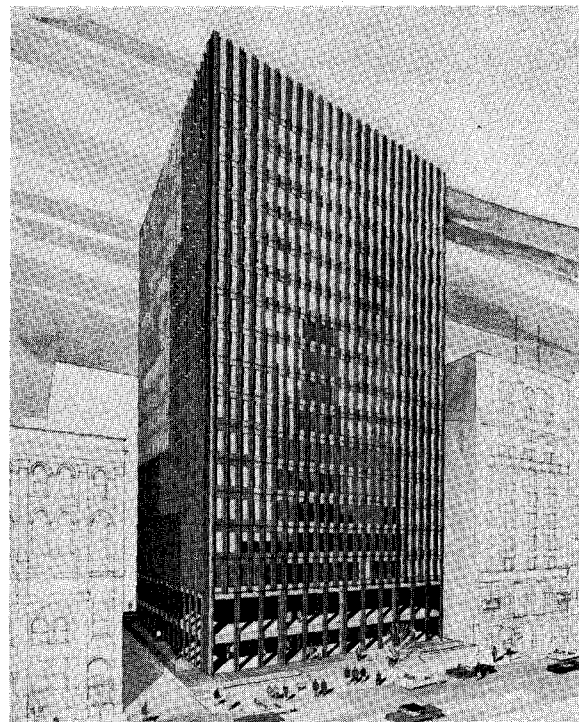
"Your Architect" by Derek Senior (Hodder, in association with the R.I.B.A.) 5 shillings, is a layman's book about the architectural profession which should not only achieve its object of explaining architects to the public, but also help in getting architects to understand themselves. The book is in three parts, "What Is He", "How He Works" and "The Way Ahead", and except for a few items of British practice which do not apply in Australia, would have been an ideal Xmas present for your favourite prospective client. It is an astute book, and although sympathetic to the work and problems of the architect, does not hesitate to give opinions, to criticise, and to suggest remedies in instances where it seems that faults exist in the architect-client-builder relationship, due to the nature of the system or due to a failure of responsibility of any member of the trio.

"Traffic in Towns" the shortened edition of the Buchanan Report. (Penguin Special 17/6) is a quick way to become familiar with the research and recommendations of the most important document on the condition of cities that has been published since Henry Ford started the manufacture of that delightful commodity, the motor car; which has changed our pattern of living more than any other single invention. Only those indifferent to man-made environment could refuse to buy this book. Of course any self-respecting architect will have bought it already in the hardback edition.

"Acoustics and Noise in Buildings", P. H. Parkin and H. R. Humphreys (Faber Paperback, 23 shillings), is one of the best books on the subject. The book moves through preliminary chapters on the nature of sound, the design of rooms for speech, music and studios, speech reinforcement systems and sound insulation, all discussed in a lucid prose, supported where necessary by diagrams and mathematics—although the mathematically inept need not fear a welter of incomprehensible formulae. The book is ideal for architects and architecture students, both as an educational text and an office reference.

"The Dot and the Line", sub-titled a "Romance in Lower Mathematics", is a charming trifle, written by an architect, Norton Juster, on the eternal subject of the eternal triangle. The factors in the drama are a flirtatious dot, a smitten straight line and a cavalier squiggle. The wooing of the dot by both courtesans is succinctly illustrated and the fable ends with a moral which it would be churlish to disclose. Worth leaving on the table in the reception area, but if you do, may need frequent replacing (Thomas Nelson & Son Ltd, Publishers).

¶ Proposals are in hand for the re-siting of Perth's interstate rail terminal, in conjunction with development of the standard gauge track. The estimated cost of £1½ million is a substantial reduction on original proposals for combined narrow and standard gauge terminals. The 1955 Metropolitan Regional Plan allowed for the latter, but the new scheme retains the present terminal site (it is to be earnestly hoped that the structure will be refashioned) for narrow gauge traffic. The standard gauge terminal to be on existing railway land, is sited further N.E. of the city than originally planned. We reported in these columns (C-S No. 139) that remodelling of Perth's rail facilities is tardy—as yet no retraction is necessary, as the foregoing relates to work which will **probably** start in May 1966 and be completed by mid-1968.



Perspective: Royal Insurance

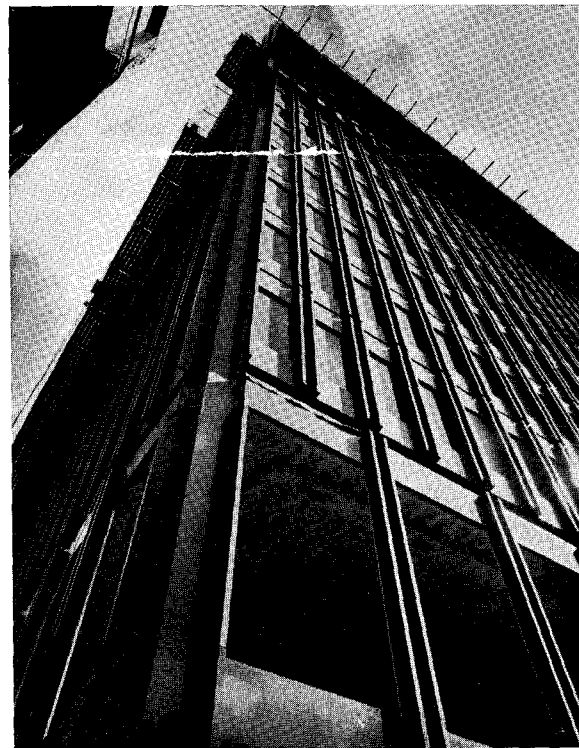


Photo: Wolfgang Sievers

This is the 18-storey Australian headquarters for the Royal Insurance Group, in Collins Street, Melbourne. The building is noticeable for its complete cladding in reconstructed black granite panels, preglazed before erection with dark-tinted thermal glass. As the building rose there was some apprehension that this large dark shaft could turn out to be rather grim-looking. But now, almost complete, the Royal is realised as an architecture playing it so cool that it makes every other city building in Melbourne look like an over-dressed juke-box. Yuncen Freeman, archts; Frank C. Dixon, str. engr; Roderick Ross & Associates, mech. engr; Lincolne Demaine & Scott, elec. & lifts; Rider Hunt & Partners, q. surveyors; E. A. Watts, bldr. Cost £3 million.

At an auction sale of leases for residential flat sites in Hackett, Canberra, the Department of the Interior issued, amongst other instructions, a note that "Building proposals for these four blocks must conform generally to the site layout plan and architectural control drawings distributed with this statement." The drawings are shown below. Although few architects would question the reasonableness of the principle that site planning and even, to some extent, elevational proportions should be controlled in Canberra, to the ultimate good of the community environment; this kind of dictatorial suggestion of an anaemic and niggardly architecture can only defeat the ideals it is supposed to protect. One Canberra architect writes, "The reason for forcing private enterprise into such ugliness escapes me; but I cannot excuse or accept the open and gratuitous insult to architecture and architects contained in such drawings."



MADISON STREET ELEVATION

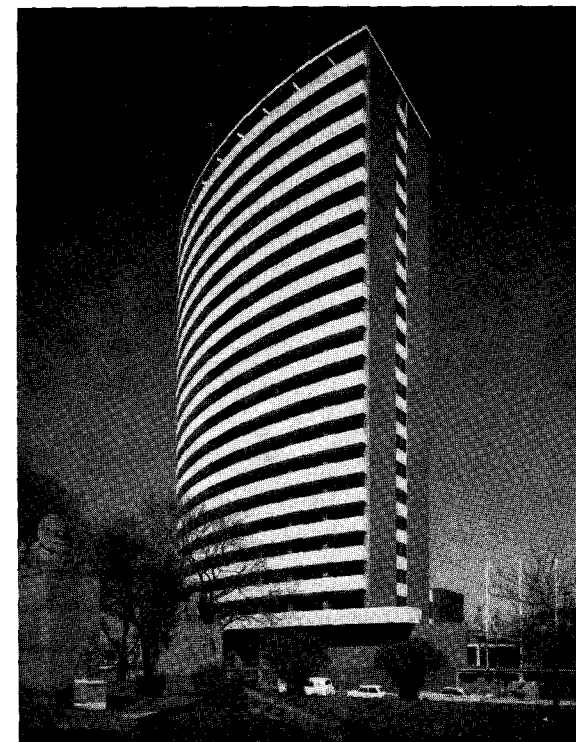


Photo: Commercial Photographic

B.P. House in Albert Road, Melbourne, happily completes the vista at the point where several streets meet at St. Kilda Road. Its sweeping shape derives from the curved site frontage. Nineteen office floors above the ground, plus two further plant room floors and two basements. The horizontal emphasis of external precast concrete panels faced with white quartz chippings suits the swerving facade. The panels carry a linear motif which is essentially rather trite, but the device works, for at a distance it is unnoticeable and close up adds a surface pattern which, though slight, holds the eye just long enough to prevent it sweeping off to the building's edge. The narrow ends of the tall slab are less successful (the treatment here is routine—a single glass and panel slit between two brick panels) because they lack the generous simplicity of the main facade. A relief mural in fibreglass electroplated with copper, by Stanislaw Ostoja-Kotkowski (Adelaide) enriches the main entrance and the bronze mural in the theatre foyer is by the Melbourne sculptress Norma Redpath. R. S. Demaine, Russell, Trundle, Armstrong & Orton, archts; Clive Steele & Associates, str. eng.; W. E. Bassett & Partners, mech. engs; Crooks Michell Peacock & Stewart, elec. and lifts; Wolferston Trower and Partners, q. surveyors; Costain (Aust.) Pty. Ltd, bldrs. Cost £2.75 million, excluding furnishings.

¶ The competition for the Design of a Group of Five Houses, held by the Realty Development Corporation (S.A.) Pty. Ltd., resulted in awards being made to Guy Moran (Syd.) first prize; Clarke Gazzard & Ptners (Sydney) second prize; Dickson & Platten archts (Adelaide), third prize; Baird & Bracero (Melb.) and D. Dalrymple (Melb.) special commendations.



The National Mutual Centre, Collins Street, Melbourne, was opened late last year. Work is still in progress on the N.M.C. plaza which spreads before the north facade. The emphasis is predominantly horizontal with entire perimeter balconies of white marble at each floor, but over these run vertical strips of gold anodised aluminium. These do add sparkle to the crisp white series of slabs, but to some observers, they register as an unnecessary confection. As different from the Royal Insurance bldg which it faces, as chalk from cheese, these two, opposite in location, colour and design, are mature works of a high standard of professional achievement. National Mutual Centre archts: Godfrey Spowers Hughes Mewton & Lobb and Leith & Bartlett. W. E. Bassett, mech. engr; Lincolne Demaine & Scott, elec. & lifts; Rider Hunt & Partners, q. surveyors; E. A. Watts, bldr.

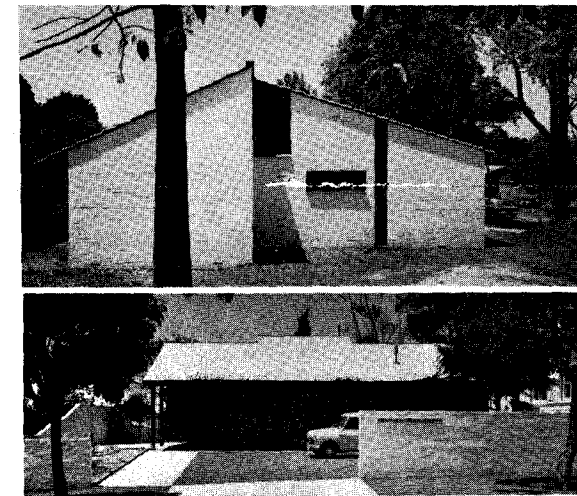
¶ Returning from the 27th World Housing Congress held in Israel last year, the Chairman of the Housing Commission of Victoria, Mr. V. J. Bradley, and the H.C.'s. Planning Architect, Mr. Grahame Shaw, have made recommendations to the Housing Commission which, if acted upon, could place the H.C. in the position of being not merely a body desperately trying to catch up with the ever-present housing shortage, but of being an initiator of progressive building procedures that would also vitalise the private home-building industry. The recommendations include "that the Commission proceed forthwith in the building of a new type apartment high rise building, so that each family flat will incorporate an extra workroom or hobby room within the tenement, to be provided with a private balcony . . . to erect a prototype 3-bedroom home constructed with modular components utilising plastics, metal and timber . . . will also submit a new design of row house to be incorporated in some of our slum reclamation development."

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¶ From Astragal's column in the Architect's Journal, 18 Nov. 1964. "Astragal's eye has been taken more than once by Architecture in Australia, the lively journal of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. Like many journals of its kind it was once a dreary affair: now it is a model of what a good professional journal should be. The June issue, just arrived by pigeon post, contains a couple of erudite articles — one on the functions of the schools of architecture, the other on cost control in building — a report of the 'Outrage' exhibition organised by the New South Wales Chapter of the RAI, and a review of the Buchanan report.

Astragal's Australian spy, just returned from a visit to Sydney, tells him that the present high standard has undoubtedly been achieved mainly through the efforts of the small, dedicated band of young architects who, hitherto, have comprised the editorial committee, the executive arm of an honorary publication board. It is disquieting to hear, however, that the Council of the RAI was unhappy about plans by the committee to publish critical appraisals of the buildings illustrated and has decided to disband both board and committee in its present form. Criticisms of members' work in an official journal is of course a vexed question. It is not unreasonable, however, to expect to publish rational criticism, based on technical issues, with the right of reply by the architect."



Photos: David Moore

Two Baby Health Centres — Clarke Gazzard & Partners, archts. West Pennant Hills (top photo). With strong forms and for the most part emphatically handled voids and a fine sense of scale, this little building is sheltered from the main road by a high hedge and presents a calm reassuring domestic front to anxious mothers. The rear gable (shown) is more restless, the scale becoming confused by the whimsical window pattern, changes of material and roof pitches. W. & D. Houston, builder. Cost £6,500.

Hornsby. This is a little bigger, a little earlier and less ambitious but equally strong yet tranquil, with a white painted garden wall using bricks from the existing cottage, clinkers and asbestos tile roof for the building. Single boarded partitions and widely-spaced studs hark back to established country practice and detailing is seldom complicated, although an occasional false rafter has crept in and the quarry tile sill seems visually thin and liable to damage near the floor. A. C. McDowell, bldr. Cost £7,500.

Charming buildings of a character and quality welcome in what C-S hopes is a continuing series.

¶ Bill Weedon, A.R.A.I.A., an associate with Cameron Chisholm & Nicol, archts, of Perth, received a Harkness Fellowship of \$ (U.S.) 7,000 for 2 years' study in the U.S.A. At one time the W.A. correspondent for C-S, we wish him personal congratulations.



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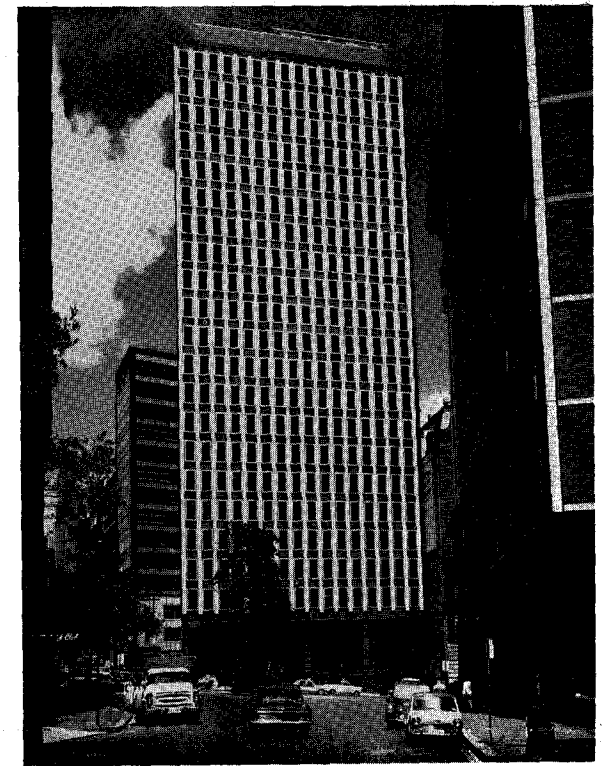
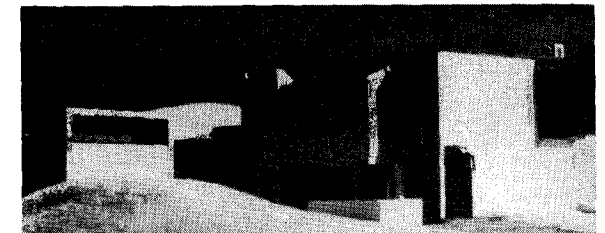


Photo: Douglass Baglin

Pearl Assurance Company Ltd., new 22-storey office bldg, corner Castlereagh and Hunter Streets, Sydney. Designed on an alternating module of 4 ft. and 2 ft. Street elevation, reversible alum. windows and marble panels. A neat facade, topped by a gargantuan illuminated sign. Stephenson & Turner, archts.



As the ultimate core of a civic centre, the Shire of Esperance on W.A.'s south coast is proceeding with the erection of new council chambers and offices (photo of model above) at a cost of £38,000 (archts: Peter Grigg & Ptners). In spite of local proposals to produce a level site with the aid of the ubiquitous bulldozer, the architects' scheme for adherence to existing contours, and thereby securing shelter and protecting flora, has prevailed — fortunately.

¶ The Ten Best Buildings (in Australia) for 1964, according to "Architecture and Arts" were the Reid Library, U. of W.A., Cameron Chisholm & Nicol archts; Mosman Deaf School, Hawkins & Sands, archts; War Veterans' Home, McConnell Smith & Johnson, archts; Goldstein Hall, U. of N.S.W., N.S.W. Govt. Archt; St. Andrew's Presbyterian Agricultural College, Ian McKay & Philip Cox, archts in association; Arkaba Court Motel, and the Red Wine Grill Restaurant, both by Dickson & Platten, archts (Adelaide); house at Ivanhoe (Melb.), Charles Duncan, archt; house at Templestowe (Melb.), John Reid, archt; and the C. of E. Church at Blackall, N. Q'land, Roy Gibson, archt.