

There are two other points which round out this disappointing period in the history of architecture of Montreal: one is that a large input of homogeneously mediocre architecture at any one time in a city can be a serious detriment to the quality of life in that city. We know how Calgary has suffered. Must we tolerate the same level of ignorance of concepts of urbanism in our own city? Finally, how has the City of Montreal managed to neglect its responsibility to its citizenry and health by allowing such ignorant schemes to be built, and by lacking direction in city planning? Movements being made in the United States, other cities in Canada, and those in Europe are returning to an awareness of urbanism that is seemingly being moved away from in Montreal. The conscientious work and writings of Rob and Leon Krier and Colin Rowe contrast sharply to the rusty mechanics of municipal government, the mind for money of the local developer, and the dull-witted sensitivities of our architects.

We must learn through others' successes rather than our own repeated failures.

The second issue of 'The Fifth Column' derives its theme from Italy and its influence on architecture and our perceptive attitudes. Our traditional sense of a city that works well comes from Europe, and particularly from the Italian demarkations of via and piazza. The great urbanistic endeavours of Italian architects such as Sansovino, Michelangelo and Bernini has seen continuation even through the fascist period and the work of Brazini and Terragni to today, and the Rationalist work of Botta, Aymonino and Rossi.

This issue will attempt to deal with the workings of these urbanistics and find clues to their allure through more emotive analyses. Finally, a profile of Italy's presently most published architect/urbanist/artist, Aldo Rossi, will conclude our look at 'The Old Country Influence'. □

by William Mark Pimlott

The Column.

The scale and character of Sherbrooke Street has changed drastically over the past two decades. The mansions of the 19th century economic elite of Montreal have virtually disappeared, swept away by a torrent of faceless corporate structures. The wanton destruction of the street's identity mobilized countless citizens to lobby for a preservationist stance with regards to future development. The climax of this battle occurred in 1975 with the demolition of the Van Horne House. Its loss, strangely enough, signalled a victory for the forces of preservation. Surely such a tragedy could never happen again?

1980... McGill University, after four years of discussion, finally sold its property holdings on Sherbrooke Street, directly opposite the campus. Hiding behind the banner of preservation, McGill approved the construction of a 24 story office tower by Devencore Realities Ltd. The 'incorporation' of four greystone facades into this reflective glass clad behemoth constitutes the lowest possible form of tokenism. This lack of integrity is not characterized merely by the retention of only the facades, for upon the project's completion, these facades will have been cut down by half a story and set further back from their present building line. Preservation indeed.

McGill University has a very consistent recent record of architectural self immolation. Some of its most recent buildings attain an unparalleled level of sheer ugliness, for instance: Burnside Hall, Physical Plant and the Rutherford Physics Building. By now approving the development of a building that will forever ensure the disappearance of early morning sunshine from its campus, will encourage an empty and sterile eight hour environment, and constitutes yet another example of a bland and unimaginative architecture, McGill University has done itself and the community a great disservice. □

by Orest Humennyj.