

# Some Objections Taken To New Look Given London

By DOUG MARSHALL  
LONDON (CP) — Londoners have been walking and peering about beneath the feet of huge construction cranes for the last five years.

The giant structures are visible at nearly every turn. By day they pierce the skyline like Martian war machines bobbing and swiveling above the city's low-level roofs.

At night they are immobile. But on their arms the contractor's neon-like name gleams like a beacon heralding architectural things to come.

Of European cities, London was embarrassingly late in covering up its war wounds. Suburban houses and council flats were first on the government's list.

But in the mid-1950s the office-building boom in the central areas really got going. Now, with some of the more elaborate plans completed, many people wish the concrete properly had stayed around the corner.

**FEAR CROWDING**

The objections to the new buildings are both sociological and aesthetic. Critics complain

that the office blocks are ugly, functional orange - crates that disfigure pre-war London's eclectic architectural harmony.

They also warn that the vast increase in office floor-space, now 25,000,000 square feet more than it was in 1939, will produce an over-concentration of employment in the city and destroy London's atmosphere as a place to live as well as work.

The London of old impresses by its horizontal sprawl and not by its vertical grandeur. Its built-up mass, broken only by parks and the half-munched green belt, sprawls across 4,900 square miles from Windsor to the North Sea, from the Weald of Kent to St. Albans.

The city as such had no skyline except confined outlines from the Thames bridges and of St. Paul's Cathedral, floating serenely above the bomb-shattered financial district. Nelson's proud column and the soft Gothic lines of the Houses of Parliament were the only landmarks.

**SUBROUND ST. PAUL'S**

Today Big Ben is dwarfed by

the monolithic cliffs of the St. Paul's Building on the South Bank described by one newspaper as a structure that "is not merely lacking in human appeal but aggressively emphasizes the insignificance of the individual."

Also nearby, and visible from Kew in the west to Cannon Town in the east, is the 24-storey, 385-foot Vickers Building.

This great glass-and-graphic-paper skyscraper is for the moment the tallest building in Britain.

Down river St. Paul's dome is being slowly swallowed up by new office blocks, some part of a county council plan and some not. A total of 275,000,000 has been spent on buildings in the city's square mile since the war and current blueprints call for 235,000,000 more.

In the West End the victor of the Nile, Copenhagen and Trafalgar no longer gaze majestically out across the city saved from Napoleon's armies by New Zealand House roofs. Nelson's shoulder, Nelson's face with insurance clerks on the 14th floor.

**CRITICIZE COUNCIL**

Most criticism of the new

buildings is directed at the London county council which planned the 1930s but now appears to have succumbed to the demands of big business.

Sometimes the building jobs are filled. As the LCC approved scheme to turn Piccadilly Circus into a carnival of overpasses, thoroughways and blunt business blocks was abandoned after emotional protests.

Similar protests are being heard concerning the latest projects. An American architect Lewis Mumford has lamented the defacing of "a precious city" and poet John Betjeman declares the ruthless materialism that mars Wordsworth's "light so touching in its majesty."

In a pamphlet called *The Paper Metropolis* the Independent Town and Country Planning Association calls for positive and far-reaching planning controls to halt London's "concrete growth."

**REVIEW URGED**

Twice recently a peer in the House of Lords has urged the government to set up a committee

to review the prevalence of placing high buildings in the central area.

Government spokesmen argue that the LCC in consultation with the Royal Fine Arts Commission and in the light of past experience, is constantly improving its building policies.

Says a council spokesman: "The LCC considers that tall buildings, properly sited, may be a very good thing."

But, says the unconvinced Sunday Times, "unless something happens soon London is in danger of becoming completely square."

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**YORK**

Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Watts and son Lane, Dartmouth, N.S., spent the holiday weekend with Mr. Watts' parents, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Watts in York.

Mrs. Horace Vessey, Charlottetown, was the weekend guest of her niece, Miss Frances Vessey in York.

Mr. William Watts has returned to his home in York after being a patient in the Prince Edward Island Hospital.

Mr. B.A. Mallist, York, is a patient in the Prince Edward Island Hospital.

Mr. and Mrs. R. MacDonald and daughter, Sandra and Jean Cameron, all of Charlottetown, were Sunday visitors at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest

Mr. Whiteaway's parents, Mr. and Mrs. George Whiteaway in York recently.

Mrs. W.D. Cooke, teacher at Stashope School, was the guest of her sister, Mrs. Elmer Brown in York on Monday.

Mrs. E.J. Vessey, Charlottetown, is spending some time at her home in York.

**The Guardian, Charlottetown, Fri. May 25, 1962.**

## LIBERAL MEETING

**Paul Hellyer**

M. P. for Toronto Trinity and former Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of National Defence

will speak at

**YEO THEATRE MONTAGUE**

On Friday, May 25th at 8.30 p.m.

Other Speakers:

Mr. Thomas J. Kickham and Dr. M. L. Bonnell



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