

## **Knifing the Civic Center Plan**

The city's first official action in connection with its new Civic Center plan has been to sabotage it. The Site Selection Board's decision to put the Police Department headquarters back near the old location instead of where the plan recommends is exactly the kind of short-term, shortsighted decision that has made the present muddle around City Hall.

It is a return to the piecemeal planning by expediency at which New York excels, a process that limps along on the assumption that if there's an empty spot, that's where the building goes. It's cheaper today and exorbitant tomorrow—in terms of future costs and malfunction.

Significantly, the only dissenting vote on the Site Selection Board was voiced by City Planning Commission chairman William F. R. Ballard. Mr. Ballard has been acting consistently like a city planner, and this has obviously been something of a shock to a city which is not used to having its planning done on a professional basis. His stands—notably on preserving the integrity of the new zoning law—have been correct and courageous, based on the long-range view of what is good for the city. He deserves, and is not getting, proper official support.

No one argues the fact that the Police Department needs its new building urgently. New York also needs its Civic Center plan. Some well-meaning critics, pointing out that this is not the greatest plan in the world, argue against it in the belief that New York should settle only for the best. Since the city has generally settled for the worst, the present proposal is nothing less than an astronomical advance. New York at least has a framework for order, something to build on for the future that the city never had before. Take out a few more underpinnings, and it will all come tumbling down.