

## Topics

# Mies to Kissinger to Torre

## High Design

One good thing that has come out of the nocturnal horsetrading over the city's capital budget is the Board of Estimate's reversal of its stand on the convention center. The board has decided, after all, to support the \$6.5 million item for planning and preliminary work, which gives the city the chance to choose the most advantageous site and the optimum design. The initial outlay is no bagatelle, particularly for this strapped city. Moreover, it represents a commitment to spend approximately \$180 million for a completed center. It must therefore also be a commitment to do the best job, most expeditiously. Studies analyzing location and cost, pollution, support services and neighborhood revitalization, are commendable. So is the spirit of those professionals who contributed a substantial amount of work to adapt the Mies van der Rohe convention center design, without charge.

While present circumstances indicate an early agreement on the 44th Street site, there is less easy agreement about the kind of building for it. The Mies model, surely one of the finest examples of convention center design in this century, must not become the victim of wrangling. Nothing gets lost faster in the political process than architectural excellence, as so much of New York's official construction demonstrates. The convention center promises to be a monumentally

conspicuous, four-block building along the river. That could also be an appalling lot of mediocrity. Unaccustomed as it is to doing so, New York should try to reach for the best.

## Holier Than Henry

The teachers and students at Columbia University who found Henry Kissinger lacking in moral standards and unworthy of a teaching position can rejoice; he is going to Georgetown instead. They have been spared the presence of a former Harvard professor, formidable Secretary of State, controversial Nobel Prize winner and provocative analyst and historian. His decision to accept appointment as University Professor of Diplomacy in Georgetown's School of Foreign Service is attributed simply to a desire to remain in Washington. But the pious posturings on Morningside Heights have left an unfortunate smog over its intellectual community. The impression lingers that commitment to unpopular and disputed policy renders a public official unfit for campus robes. Today that unpopularity attaches to one particular war but in other times there has been equally pious outrage against advocates of nonviolence and peace. Georgetown's gain is Columbia's loss, but the loss will be even greater if Columbia fails to reassert an academic standard that rises above the clamor of Mr. Kissinger's demonstrative judges.

## Sunshine or Shadow at Shea

Walter O'Malley, Ed Barrow, Bob Howsam, George Weiss, Branch Rickey and even Charlie Finley have something in common. And so do Alvin Dark, Joe Frazier, Yogi Berra, Chuck Tanner, Herman Franks, Darrell Johnson and Johnny Kêane. The men on the first list are front-office baseball men who knew enough about the game to assemble powerhouse teams for their managers to manage. (Mr. Finley proved himself equally adroit at pulling one apart.) And the men on the second list are among the legion of managers who were fired by a front office because their teams failed to win.

Notice that M. Donald Grant's name is missing from the first list and that Joe Torre's is not on the second. But while Mr. Grant, the Mets' board chairman, has no chance of making the first list, Mr. Torre, the Mets' new manager, stands an excellent chance of making the second—as long as Mr. Grant insists on running Met affairs himself. He obviously does not know the first rule of baseball and politics: You can't beat somebody with nobody. So, despite the Mets' amazing initial spurt under Torre's leadership, unless there is someone else in the front office who is prepared to give him a good deal more talent to manage, cold times will probably continue in the dugout at Shea. It couldn't happen to a nicer guy—and it shouldn't.