

## **Stable in the Park**

Parkland in the city is too precious to permit complacency about any intrusion. Central Park is a scarred battlefield now, dotted with structural and memorial atrocities in the name of misplaced good intentions so that a walk becomes an obstacle race among the trees.

Strong as are our objections to such encroachments, we do not believe that the proposed stables and police headquarters can be dismissed as this kind of violation. Both the preservation and continued public use of Frederick Law Olmsted's handsome bridle paths and the safety of those who increasingly enjoy this superb and vulnerable oasis are proper park functions.

Even these appropriate uses would be all wrong if they were to be housed in blockbuster facilities of the type that has been all too common in the past. But the sensitivity and sultability of this prize-winning scheme are extraordinary, and it has been much improved by the elimination in the present revised version of genuinely controversial elements, such as the large spectator or polo ring and separate stables for private horses.

The sympathetic imagination with which the complex has been worked out as largely as possible underground and treated as a landscaped hill above, taking advantage of the 86th Street transverse grade, shows the greatest understanding of the park's pastoral uses. Unlike existing swimming pools and skating rinks which stand like concrete wounds in the grass, this design is a park asset rather than a park-eater.

The rational position of the Park Association, one of the firmest Central Park watchdogs, makes the project's merits clear. The association finds the design "extremely handsome"; it also approves the stabling of police and public horses and the retention of the 22d Precinct police headquarters. However, it questions the inclusion of the Remount Academy and mounted police administration offices and the number of police horses. It urges the ring be made smaller and that it be open for public instruction as well as police use. It is against stabling any private horses.

To this list we would add as a disturbing possibility the danger of increased traffic and servicing from the transverse road. Such problems must still be matters for discussion. But park lovers, instead of fighting the entire project, should save their heavy ammunition for those solid horrors and senseless monuments that come to Central Park as surely as the seasons.