

T. H.: Vale Atque Ave

It is a short mile from the Arsenal to the Metropolitan Museum and it is all through Central Park. When Parks Commissioner Thomas Hoving becomes Museum Director Hoving, he can make the move easily by bicycle on a Sunday morning, a pastoral sport that he has helped to popularize. He can go by way of the Mall (summer echoes of rock 'n' roll), the Lake (beer and bratwurst at the Terrace Cafe), and the Conservatory Pond (mercifully reprieved from Mary Poppins). But the short ride will make a big difference to New York.

Under Commissioner and Cultural Administrator Hoving there has been a firecracker succession of fun and games in the city's parks and recreation programs. Under Museum Director Hoving there will be a noticeable shift in the Cultural Scene. What's happening will be happening inside the museum inside the park; and it is likely that the august treasurehouse will be considerably shook up. Mr. Hoving's new job will require a greater measure of dignity and restraint than antics in the open air. But whatever happens, it is certain that it won't be dull.

What all the fun and games and fireworks have obscured is the fact that Commissioner Hoving has brought to official New York a kind of knowledge, sophistication and expertise that is extremely rare in political circles or appointees. The standards that are the norm in the world he trained in and returns to have created an unaccustomed quality explosion in the city that he has served.

The significance of Mr. Hoving's contribution in this too-short year is not just that people are having a better time in the city's parks. Nor is it a limited "estheticism" based on his understanding of art and architecture and commissioning of top professionals for the city's jobs. It is only partly in his ability to cut red tape to pursue his objectives with a mixture of elegance and exhibitionism. His real achievement is in the deep and sensitive understanding of the role of urban design in the environment.

This is the quality that must be retained, the newly opened door to urban excellence that must not be closed. What has been begun by the Parks Department, with its important tangential effects on social and city planning, hangs in the balance with the new Commissioner. If the present qualities of vision and creative vigor were to become permanent policy, that would be the best Hoving happening of all.