

Atrocity at Union Square

New York has many eyesores, but it does not yet have a glittering eighteen-story glass and stainless steel tower flanked by two massive, funereal five-story black granite wings with inscriptions, statues, steps and a full complement of flags. It will have this within two years, however, if the plans materialize for a \$7,000,000 memorial for the north end of Union Square sponsored by a joint committee of veterans' organizations.

No one questions the goodwill or the excellent intentions of the veterans' groups. But, quite apart from its appearance, the proposed memorial is questionable on other counts as well. The memorial would cover the entire north end of the park, on a plot to be donated by the City's Department of Parks. The rest of the park would serve as its forecourt and be relentlessly dominated by it. What New York needs, of course, is more open park space, not less, with structures kept out, not put in, as far as possible.

But the most serious question raised by the memorial is a much larger one. Do private groups, no matter how worthy, have the right freely to propose and carry through public or quasi-public structures of this scale and importance? Surely this one, planned for city land, must receive esthetic review from the City Art Commission, which should veto it immediately on grounds of esthetic quality and unsuitability of site. Good intentions are no justification for bad art.