

more than 30 delegates can sit round an oval table, surrounded by supporting staff and aided by four-language translation and such facilities as television coverage. And, finally, from the central foyer, foreign visitors will be escorted to the protocol reception area under the main tower of the building. All this has been contrived for some theatrical effect: the stepped gardens leading up to the bronze entrance doors, the high-ceilinged central hall and the vistas into the surrounding floor-spaces and courtyards. The activities arising out of Canada's relations with the rest of the world are thus grouped round this central square, which should be a lively and interesting place. It is to be hoped that the Department will not be too security-conscious and that the general public will be encouraged to come in and catch the spirit and openness of this central place.

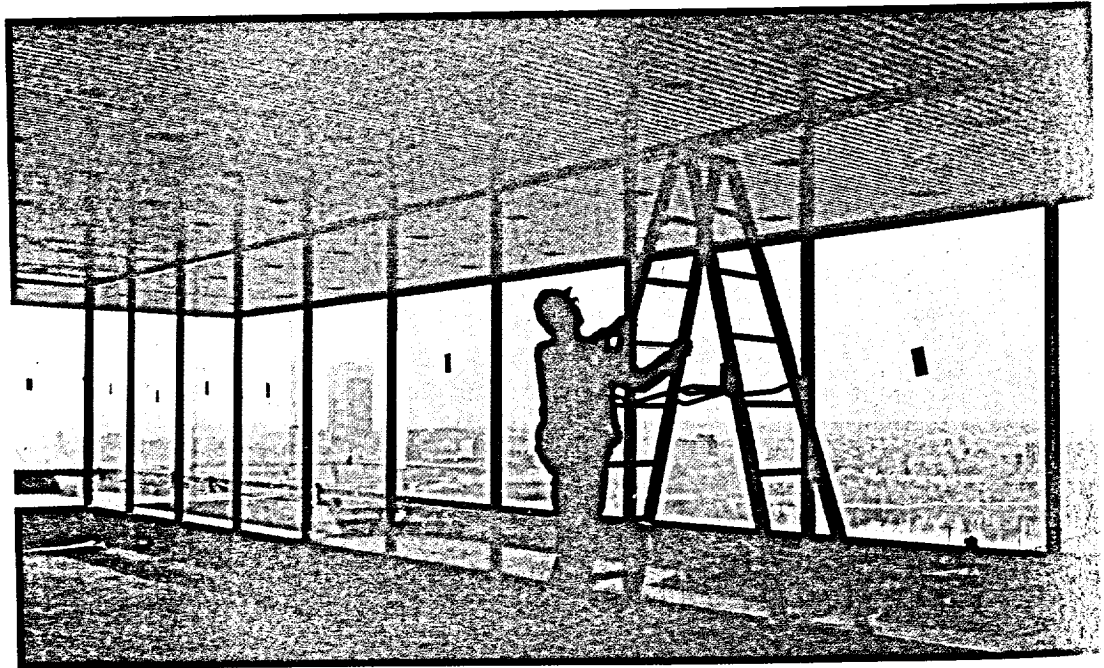
*Should encourage general public to catch spirit of central square*

(When I walked through the interiors of the buildings in late September, the floors and wall-surfaces were not yet finished and the ceiling frameworks were still festooned with cables, ducts, pipes and all kinds of apparatus for climate-control and intercommunication. I cannot comment, therefore, on the atmosphere and mood, which will depend so much on the colour, the furnishings and the works of art that are to be installed.)

The outward appearance of the buildings in the cluster, the strong horizontal layers of window-strips and the pre-cast

stonecladding, come simply from the acceptance of a normal arrangement of working-office floors, each planned around a service core and lit by continuous windows that do not obstruct a flexible partitioning system. In its outward appearance, the whole composition could be thought of as an enormous stratified sculpture with interesting and unexpected projections and overlappings and layers of garden terraces. If this terraced and layered effect is, at first sight, a bit exotic (some people have suggested that it looks like some Aztec temple or Babylonian ziggurat), it is in fact a quite natural extension of the common office-floor plan. It should also be noted that the building will unavoidably look rather barren until it has been clothed with the landscape texture that will be as important to the character of the exterior as the furnishings will be to the interior.

Ottawa has not been blessed with many fine pieces of architecture since the original Gothic Revival composition on Parliament Hill. The new National Arts Centre is perhaps the only other architectural work of first rank, and its design has an obvious relation to the new External Affairs buildings. They are not only built of the same rugged pre-cast slabs but are alike in being sculptural three-dimensional compositions, not just street architecture or rectangular boxes. They are each whole city-scapes, with terraces



—Information Canada Photo

*William Rankin, Public Works Department project manager for construction of the External Affairs Department building, clambers up a ladder to get an overall view of the ninth-floor diplomatic*

*reception area. This area, overlooking the Ottawa River and the Gatineau Hills beyond, is located in Block A, highest of the four towers that make up the four-block complex. Block A rises ten stories.*