

Montreal, at horrific environmental cost, lest so important an artery should dare to by-pass his city. He built a lavish cultural centre at Place des Arts. He even opened a grand restaurant with his own money with full orchestra to give the city's nightlife a bit more class. (A disastrous venture, it soon closed.)

The appearance of the city as I remember it from 12 years ago has changed almost beyond recognition. It was then a city whose historical continuity was still expressed in its buildings. The older streets led through into the newer ones without visual offence. And even in the downtown area, a healthy variety of buildings, activities and people could be found. Montreal was unusual and colourful among North American cities.

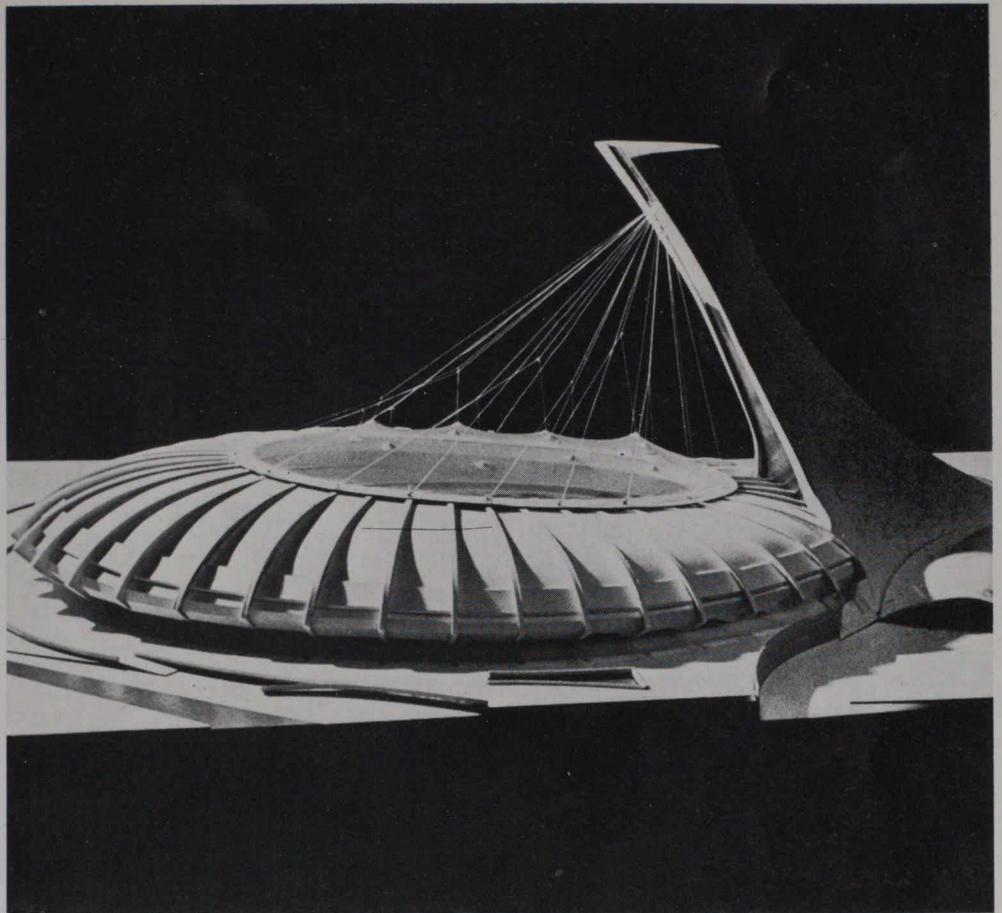
Mayor Drapeau has been hard at it for the past decade putting an end to that sort of nonsense. While other Canadian cities have flowered with citizens groups and "reform politicians," Montreal politics have remained firmly in the ice age. Montrealers vie with one another for Drapeau metaphors: "a rotary club de Gaulle" or "a city planner's nightmare" were just two I heard. He is a bizarre marriage of American big-city boss with old-style French politician. And he rules autocratically over a city council composed 100 per cent of his supporters.

Downtown Montreal is now as uncompromisingly American as any city I have seen. Car parks, freeways, demolition sites and skyscrapers occupy great swathes of land like a monopoly board where half the players have collapsed through overheating. A terrible destruction has been wrought on famous historical streets. And Drapeau has nurtured into the air a Manhattan-style skyline which lies against the ancient hill of Mount Royal as a row of exclamation marks on his time in office. If his Montreal has not perhaps gone from strength to strength, it has certainly gone from gloire to gloire.

But there are now many people who wonder if the '76 Olympics may not be just one extravaganza too much even for this city. The enthusiasm which fuelled Expo '67 evaporated in an economic stagnation afterwards. The current construction boom, fed by huge tax incentives and largely inoperative planning, could well go the same way after '76.

Montreal today has the worst housing problems in Canada, as well as high unemployment and some 120,000 people below the official poverty line. The city continues to live in an eerie schizophrenia between its two-thirds French and one-third English-speaking residents. And it is now facing that most cutting of blows - the fact that its arch-rival, booming Toronto, is about to overtake it as Canada's biggest city.

It is hard not to feel that for all its love of superlatives - and for all the French charm still lingering in those buildings as yet surviving the demolishers' axe - Montreal is soon going to find its priorities changing. It seems a city full of indigestion. ♦



An architects drawing of the main stadium to be built in Montreal for the 1976 Olympics.

Olympic Stadium to be permanent civic asset

The Olympic Park stadium-swimming pool mast complex shown on the cover may appear at first glance to be a single structure, but it is actually made up of three buildings: the mast; the swimming centre and the stadium itself, each designed to serve several purposes.

This soaring mast is a building in itself. Its top reaches a height of 525 feet above street level (equivalent to a building more than 50 storeys high).

The layout of this building makes available 18 floors, covering an area of more than 200,000 square feet, to be used as sports rooms and restaurants.

The area of the 18 stories varies from floor to floor, ranging from 2,000 square feet up to 50,000 square feet without columns; there is also a difference in height from one floor to the other, ranging from 17 feet to 34 feet.

Thus athletes will find on 16 floors for the Olympic Games period and, on a permanent basis once the Games are over, all the space needed for systematic training activities in a variety of sports: judo, wrestling, boxing, fencing, racing, jumping gymnastics, body building, weight-lifting,

and several team sports such as basketball, volleyball, handball, etc.

The two remaining floors at the top of the mast will provide space for restaurants.

Public access to a terrace more than 8,000 square feet in area on the roof of the mast will be provided by outside panoramic elevators.

The mast is also used to house in its top section the covering membrane to be used as a roof, if need be, for the entire playing area of the stadium.

The base of the mast forms the roof of the swimming centre which adjoins the stadium itself.

The Swimming Centre includes regulation Olympic installations:

- one fifty-meter competition pool;
- one fifty-meter training pool;
- one diving pool designed for 1-meter, 3-meter, 5-meter, 7.5 meter and 10-meter diving.

Once the Games are over, this centre will also accommodate a scuba-diving pool and wading pools.

The swimming pool also makes available on five levels, a total area of more than