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PLANNING THE McLAUGHLIN PLANETARIUM

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THE announcement last November that Col. R. S. McLaughlin would provide a planetarium for Toronto was received with widespread enthusiasm. With the population of this metropolitan area soon to pass the two million mark, a planetarium was already overdue, and it was therefore particularly gratifying when we learned that Mr. McLaughlin had a major installation in mind. The projection instrument was to be the most modern and effective one available, the star-theatre was to have a capacity of 500 persons, and the building was to include generous space for exhibits and for supporting activities.

With the announcement by the University of Toronto that the McLaughlin Planetarium would form a division of the Royal Ontario Museum, we were assured that Toronto's planetarium would be operated in the best interests of astronomy by professionals in the art of presenting science to the general public. Dr. V. B. Meen, Chief Mineralogist at the Museum, is currently responsible for the planetarium but he looks forward to the appointment of a permanent planetarium staff.

The most frequent question I have been asked has been where on the campus will the planetarium be located. The University had to consider the availability as well as the adequacy of sites, and plans and future needs of many divisions had to be taken into account. We were anxious to have the planetarium prominently displayed without interfering with existing University buildings. A welcome solution has just been found and the University has announced that to house it, a new wing will be built on the south side of the present Museum, closing off the unsightly inner courtyard. In addition, the mansion at 86 Queen's Park, at one time the residence of the President, will be torn down to make way for the planetarium dome.

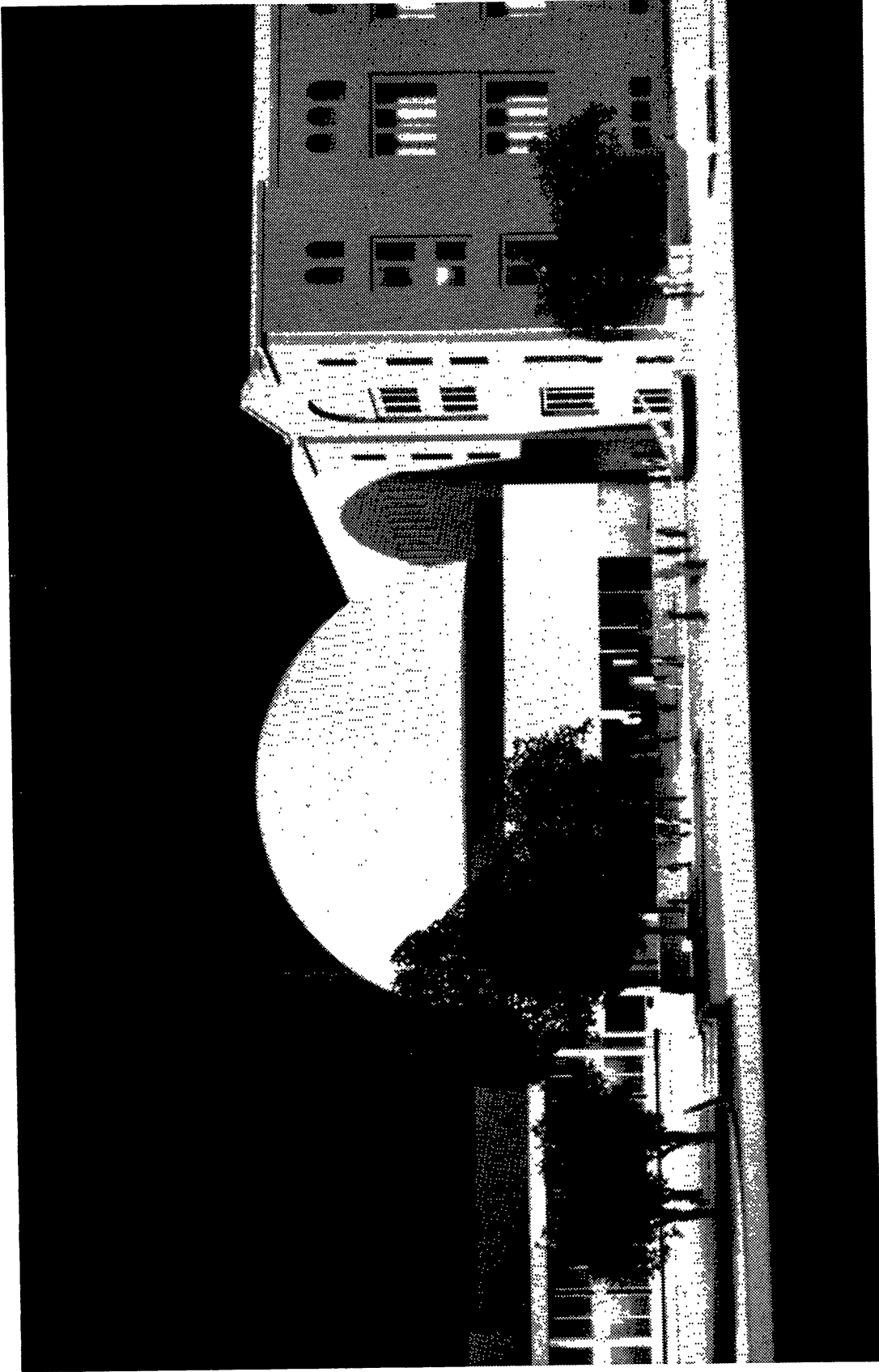


FIG. 1—Model of the McLaughlin Planetarium seen from the east. The shadow of the dome is falling on the new wing. At the right is the existing Royal Ontario Museum, and at the left in the background is the Edward Johnson Building of the Royal Conservatory of Music. (Photograph by Thompson and Waring, Toronto). The latitude is $43^{\circ} 40'N$.

The wing will house offices, work-shops, and class-rooms on the upper floors and on the intermediate floors there will be a theatre for science films and lectures as well as additional display areas. Plans call for a room to be set aside for the telescope makers of the Toronto Centre of the R.A.S.C. The planetarium dome, set back somewhat from the street, will be a distinctive feature of Queen's Park. Here will be located the main entrance and the principal display halls. Its surroundings will be landscaped and terraced in keeping with the use of this corner of the campus as a meeting place and a cultural centre. A subway entrance is at the door.

Colonel McLaughlin celebrated his ninety-fourth birthday on September 8. At a birthday party in the Royal Ontario Museum a week later, Dr. W. E. Swinton, Museum director, invited Mr. McLaughlin to unveil the model of his planetarium. In doing so, Mr. McLaughlin recalled his early association with Charles Hayden, and his long-cherished wish, now fulfilled, to do for Toronto what his friend had done for New York. He said again that it was his desire that the building and its equipment should be "of the highest order and first class in every way". People who know him well have assured me that this attitude is characteristic of "Mr. Sam".

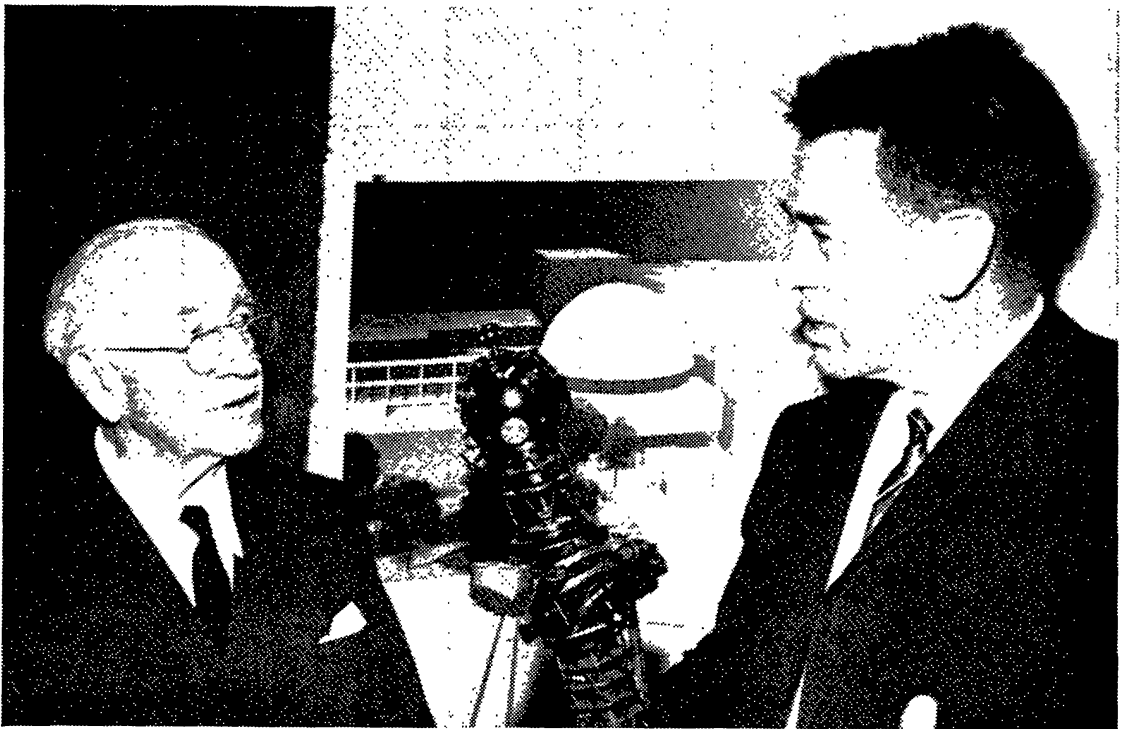


FIG. 2—Col. McLaughlin and Dr. MacRae look at a model of the planetarium projector. (Photograph by *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto).

The planetarium instrument will be manufactured by Zeiss, Jena, and will be of an advanced design. Careful attention will be given on every hand to produce a realistic and pleasing representation of the heavens. The projector, with its accessories, will be capable of many special effects. One of these will be the ability to provide an apparent rotation of the sky about any axis, simulating the view from an artificial satellite or from our own moon. The brightnesses and colours of the planets and the brighter stars will match their counterparts in the real sky, and the planets will vary in brightness as they move among the stars. Projection of light and sound inside the dome will also be carefully engineered, and special attention is to be given to the kind of seating to be installed in both the auditorium and the theatre.

All those concerned with the project are anxious to speed the opening day of the McLaughlin Planetarium. Dr. Meen hopes to see it by March 1967, and the architects and engineers are hard at work with this target date in mind.