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Could you tell me, once and for all, what this Habitat business is all about?

Certainly, what is your problem?

Well, basically, what does the whole fandango signify? Why are all these people intruding upon my tennis season?

Nice to see you are so tolerant. Congratulations, sir, you are a typical Vancouverite. The idea is to take the world's problems out to the world and to get away from United Nations' cocktail parties in New York. There was the Stockholm conference on the environment in 1972. Since then there have been the Rome food conference, the Bucharest conference on world population, the Mexico City conference on the status of women — which ended up with the women arguing. In essence, you move the cocktail parties around.

Keep your editorial comments to yourself, please. What has this got to do with Vancouver?

Well, Habitat, alias the UN conference on human settlements, is a continuation of the Stockholm conference — once it was realized there that the whole subject of quality of urban life was too great to lump into an environmental gathering.

Peachy keen. But what can a conference full of talking do about world problems?

My dear naive boy. Jaw, jaw, jaw, as Mr. Churchill said, is better than war.

war. The essential point of Habitat is to focus world attention on the problems of habitation. The most elusive butterfly in creation is public opinion. If you can capture that elusive beast for a tiny fraction of time — say two weeks — you have a chance of doing something about the problem.

What if it rains for two weeks?

By George, I think you've got it. The entire success of Habitat rests on the weather. If God in Her Heaven turns on Vancouver's best, the whole town and the delegates will jingle with the proper vibrations.

And if it rains for two weeks?

Self-destruct, baby. We may have enough canapes left over to build another Aswan Dam.

I still don't understand this confusion between Habitat and Habitat Forum.

No confusion at all, sir. Habitat is the formal UN sessions downtown, where delegates come with mistresses disguised as stenographers. Terribly structured and all that. An absolute must for those freaked out on Roberts' Rules or Order. Card-carrying Liberal party members will love it.

But what is Habitat Forum?

Glad you asked. In the spirit of publicly supported dissent, Habitat Forum down on Jericho Beach will bring together some

250 free-thinking organizations that are not formally connected with the UN but have something to say. The gurus of world imagination — Barbara Ward, Margaret Mead, Buckminster Fuller — will be down there socking it to the double-breasted downtown delegates. It's the yeast in the batter.

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This is this intellectual Woodstock that this chap Al Clapp has built?

Well, yes, but Clapp, a modest fellow, has been getting rather too much ink over the feat. The image of a miracle created by rejects from the doss house has been overdone. What have been neglected are the young architects and artists and craftsmen who have created a thing of beauty and a joy not quite forever.

Right. But I lost Mayor Phillips somewhere in all this. Wasn't he against Habitat?

Correct. However Trendy Art somehow mistook his parochial powers for something important. What he didn't realize is that the United Nations is somewhat more important than city council. Regional Habitat workshops had been held in Mexico City, Addis Ababa, Bangkok and Geneva. The Habitat preparatory committee had regional meetings in 1975 in Tehran, Cairo, Geneva and Caracas. Was a petulant mayor to stop all this? Ottawa explained things to the boy.

Very impressive. But what is the mayor doing now?

He was seen down at the Habitat clean-up last week, conveniently in front of the TV cameras, sheepishly doing penance with a manual tool. Some Habitat heavies spent an hour with him yesterday, at-

tempting to arrange a diplomatic re-incarnation for him. It's the greatest re-entry problem since the moon landing.

Swell. We'll watch for him on the tube. But isn't all this a boondoggle for high-class layabouts and out-of-work flacks?

True, public relations officers who haven't worked since the Depression are infesting the works. But you must realize, since all judges have now acquired unlisted phone numbers, the flackery business is the only avenue of patronage left to the federal Liberals. The shills are the growth industry of Vancouver at the moment.

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Enough of your inspirational philosophy. What's the point of it all?

The point of it all is one of Vancouver's few chances to enter the big leagues. There is a faint chance this city might mature during the process of hosting the largest UN conference ever held — in fact the only UN conference ever held outside a national capital.

But what's the point in having a conference on human settlement problems in perhaps the most lucky, prodigiously-endowed city on the horizon?

That's the whole point, old man. A rare chance to demonstrate that the selfish citizens of this selfish land might extend some slight interest in the solution of problems inflicting those less lucky.

Okay. What else?

Well, the Drapeau Follies will cost a cool \$1 billion to facilitate the celebration of the muscle. This show, with 140 countries, with rather more vital priorities, comes in at a bargain \$20 million. What else can you buy these days for \$20 million?

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