

VICTORIA "VICTORIA CENTRE" (POWER STATION)

# Changing face of Victoria

VICTORIAN, APR. 18, 1975

What was one of Victoria's prestige buildings 46 years ago is to become a block of prestige offices, when city developer Jim Mace gets through with it sometime this fall.

The building is the ornamental cement pile at the corner of Government and Bay St., at one time the main electrical sub-station and control centre for the B.C. Electric Company.

Since 1964, it has sat empty, the target of uncounted rock throwers who reduced its massive glass windows to gaping jagged holes.

About 1967, Mace purchased the structure from what had become B.C. Hydro and Power Corporation with a view to developing it into something — anything but what it was.

By this fall, he hopes to have completed the first phase of a master plan for the whole block, by converting the cavernous interior of the old sub-station into three floors of prestige offices.

When it was first erected, in 1929, it was one of the most imposing, modern buildings in the city.

It was also something of a milestone in the development of the B.C. Electric Company. It was the control centre for power distribution for the southern end of

electrical distribution family of what by then has become B.C. Hydro, and in about 1967, it was purchased by Mace.

Since then, Mace has cast around looking for

It is to be known as Victoria Centre, and when completed, sometime this September or October, will be the first phase of an overall development plan that may include a new hotel.

Present work going on in the building is in preparation for the remodelled interior. Also planned is a face lift for the exterior plus extensive landscaping of the remaining two acres.

A land-use contract has been awarded to the developer, and a building permit is expected to be approved within a couple of weeks.

Spokesmen for Mace Development will only hazard a guess at the estimated cost, and indicates it could be anywhere from \$750,000 on up.

Long regarded as a white elephant, occupying a valuable piece of commercial property on the downtown fringe, Victoria Centre may soon once again take its place as one of Victoria's prestige buildings.

## THE VICTORIAN Real Estate

Vancouver Island.

Its huge generators could be heard humming for blocks away from the building, and its outdoor yard, fenced with wire, was jammed with electrical equipment that gave the whole place the appearance of a science fiction movie set.

But, by 1959, its days were numbered.

BCE had built and opened its Horsey sub-station which gradually took over as control centre, and the phasing out of Bay St. began.

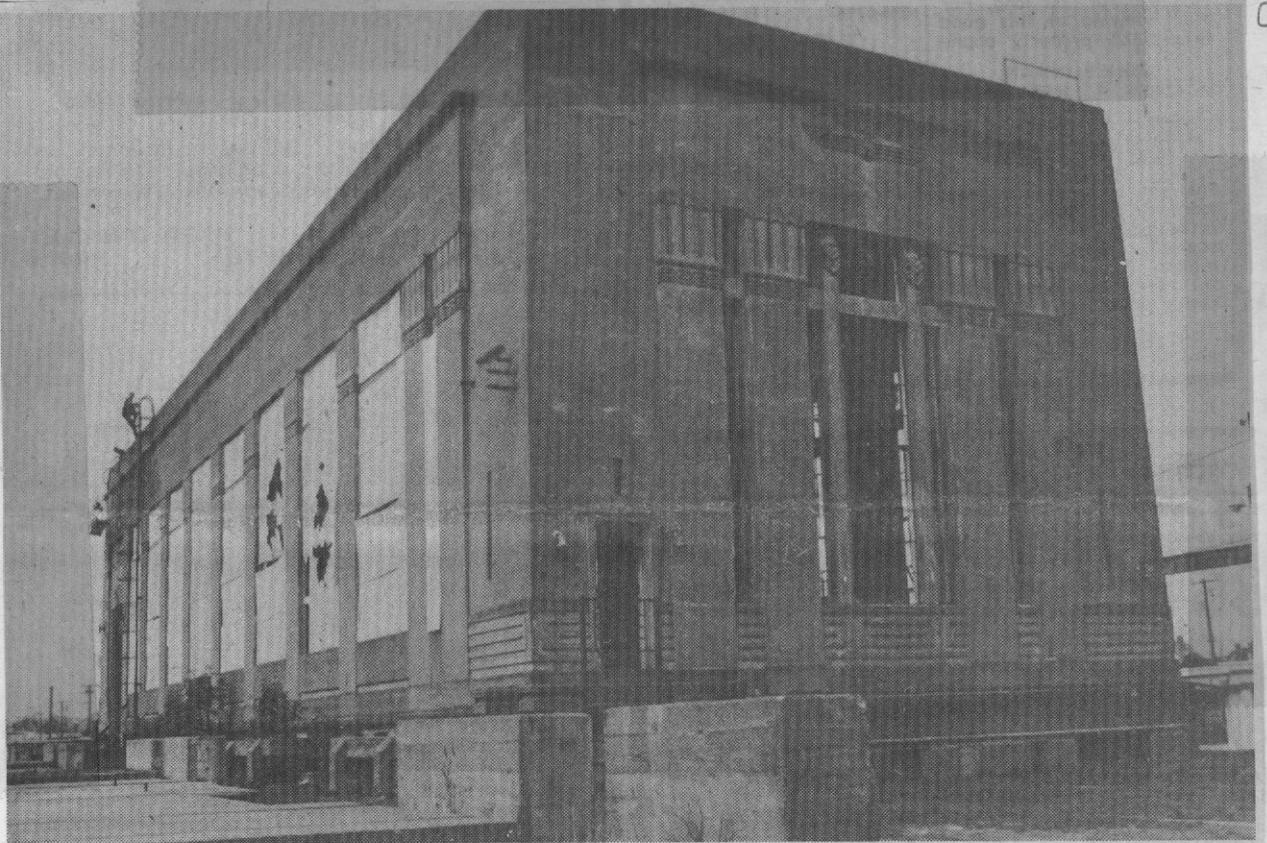
By 1964, it was an outdated member of the

a way of renovating and developing the building along with the adjoining property.

He proposed it as a convention centre to Victoria city council, but was given the cold shoulder on that one.

Present plans call for the interior to become three floors of office space, covering more than 20,000 square feet.

Number of offices will depend on the size and layout proposed by the firm's architects, who currently have the plans on the drawing board.



**TARGET OF VANDALS** since 1964, former hydro sub-station at Bay and Government — soon to become prestige office building. — Barry Casson photos



**OUT OF RUBBLE** and broken glass, city developer Jim Mace plans three floors of prestige offices inside old hydro sub station at Bay and Government. Ken White, general foreman for G.H. Wheaton construction is on job preparing interior for the big renovation job.