

The Other Lawyers

Former Chief Justice Earl Warren observed the other day that the parade of attorneys accused of Watergate-related crimes has weakened confidence in the legal profession. Starting at the top, the President faces possible impeachment and the former Vice President has been disbarred in Maryland.

Such sensational, one-of-a-kind proceedings involving lawyers who are public officials naturally capture both the headlines and prime time. But the other lawyers in public service fields—legal aid, public defender, anti-poverty, consumer, environmental, civil and individual rights—need not be tarred as a group because of the activities of those few who have demeaned the law.

Right now a House-Senate conference is taking place that is designed to ameliorate differences over the creation of a National Legal Services Corporation. It would enable the existing Office of Economic Opportunity Legal Services attorneys to continue to represent indigent persons throughout the country. These dedicated attorneys, 2,200 in 900 offices, are the only lifeline to the courts and administrative agencies for millions of unrepresented clients who cannot afford counsel.

The new corporation's lawyers need both the funds and the powers to perform effectively.

To Protect Yorkville

When a zoning change is proposed that would impose controls in the public and environmental interest, the manipulative arguments against it are as predictable as the real estate opposition.

The Yorkville special zoning district, already approved by the City Planning Commission, is to be voted on by the Board of Estimate today. The stepped-up business protest has been well orchestrated; but not all property owners are against it. Some actively support it. They stand with the community and the local planning board.

Those who want the area left wide open for continued destructive development would kill the plan. Unfortunately, they would also kill what is left of Yorkville's dwindling amenity and livability. The conservation scheme is called a "sham" on the grounds that there is nothing left to preserve. That suggests that the way should be greased for things to go from bad to worse, instead of making constructive efforts to stabilize the community.

The alleged threat to free enterprise actually consists of a proposal that would restrict shop-frontage size to keep and add local variety and color, prohibit large stores and office buildings, lower building heights through setbacks, require holding the street line, and combine small parks with better subway access and circulation. What is at issue is the retention and preservation of a neighborhood.

The community knows what the issues really are. The choice is between continued profiteering and the conservation of a special area of New York life.