

# Parks to Enjoy

This is the city that can't say no. It is a politically taboo word. Even if the price is Central Park.

It can't say no to peace rallies in the park, ethnic festivals, rock concerts, TV tapings and tightrope demonstrations, night baseball with batteries of huge lights—and the ability to say no gets weaker in proportion to the trampling thousands that such occasions bring. Rather than deny, the city pays up to \$5,000 an outing to clean up litter and garbage, making up the difference between costs and bonds posted out of the munificent, overflowing municipal pocket. That alone is outrageous. But garbage is not all. Lawn damage and erosion are permanent and often beyond the city's means to repair.

Somehow the whole idea of park use seems to have gotten off the rails. Parks are for everyone, at all times, in an indiscriminating pursuit of appropriate pleasures. They are not for special groups for special purposes of a kind inimical to the parks themselves. What started as informal moonlit Shakespeare or just getting people into the park has gotten out of hand. Innocent misuse has turned into mass destruction.

No case can be made for any abusive, overscaled activity in Central Park. Accusations of élitism that follow every attempt to correct the situation are even more off the track; there is nothing very élite about a park ruin.

There is no justification for the Schaefer concerts, with audiences up to 4,000 five nights a week, inflicting maximum ground damage for a minimal return on charged admission; for a San Juan fiesta that leaves mounds of debris and burning remnants of illegal barbecues; for any activity, in fact, no matter how exalted culturally or how popular politically, to inflict this kind of damage on a fragile resource meant for all the people of New York.

These events simply belong in other places. Parks are for people to enjoy—not destroy.