

## As the Wrecker's Ball Swings

In the intervals between swings of the wrecker's iron ball we have been wondering whatever became of the Landmarks Preservation Bill to save historic buildings in New York City. A brief chronology:

On June 19, 1961, Mayor Wagner appointed a Committee for the Preservation of Historic and Esthetic Structures. On April 21, 1962, he replaced it with a twelve-member Landmarks Preservation Commission. This commission studied the way things were done in such exemplary cities as Charleston and New Orleans and drafted a proposed law, which reached Mayor Wagner's desk in May 1964. After circulating among department heads it finally reached the City Council and received a public hearing last December.

This bill now rests in the Council's Committee on Codification under the chairmanship of Seymour Boyers. The committee has had numerous meetings. It has studied the bill's effect on the city's tax yield, on the construction industry, on employment, on the question of fair rate of return to owners for saved buildings, on the penal provisions. It thinks it might get a revised bill to the floor by March 31.

We suppose that, with luck, there might be a law by mid-June, four years after the Mayor recognized this problem with appointment of a committee. Is this par for the course on urgent city problems? We regret to say that it frequently is. In all fairness, however, the law on landmark preservation is complex and criticism for the long delay must be dispersed, not aimed only at the Council.

But this whole job has taken a dreadfully long time and is not finished yet. Treasured old buildings have steadily hit the dust, and more of them probably will, before a rescue law is on the books. This bill is on the way to becoming an antique itself, and it had better be good when it finally does emerge from City Council.