

are apparently slated for sale by their owners, the Archdiocese of New York and Random House. The \$400 per-square-foot-question is whether, when the land under the Villard houses is worth that much, there is some kind of divine law that they must be sacrificed. At what point, for religious or educational institutions, does such profit on tax-free property become irresistible?

No one denies the importance or necessity of new commercial construction. But it is not, as the builders put it, a simplistic question of priorities—the city's need for offices and taxes above everything else. Nothing is solved by the jungle law of the pressure of a larger, more powerful kind of economics on a smaller kind of economics—the profitable and popular small enterprises that serve the city—or by the abdication of the environment in functional, esthetic, historical and human terms.

One need must be accommodated to another on more than the basis of the profit potential of wildly inflated land values. Somewhere in the equation is the death of a city worth living and working in.

The Blockbusters

Having homogenized the avenues, the commercial developers are now turning to the side streets in the East Fifties and Sixties where much of the remaining color, character and vitality of the city reside. These few square miles that are one of the greatest restaurant and specialty shopping centers in the world are the heart of New York's sophisticated elegance. The former townhouses that accommodate these stores and services are on small streets that still know the sun and are built on a scale inviting to the pedestrian. The new blockbusters will literally earn their names. Slated for demolition right now are the streets between Fifth and Madison, from 52d to 53d and 53d to 54th Street.

On the avenues, nothing is invulnerable. The Villard houses, one of the city's finest examples of a Golden Age in which all that glittered was not money,