

past five years in the name of an energy crisis that is being successively misinterpreted and misserved by everyone involved. It has become a convenient handle to flout, ignore or even repeal important environmental regulations.

The purposes of every maneuver, from attempts to get rid of environmental impact statements to bulldozers moving in on historic sites, are disturbingly transparent. Often there is only marginal involvement with shortages. Usually there is far more conspicuous involvement with profits. The attitude is in large part a return to business-as-usual in a growing atmosphere of you-can-get-away-with-it-now.

Under the pious guise, or disguise, of energy conservation, air and water pollution standards are being dangerously revised. New York's refusal to extend a variance to Con Edison to permit the burning of coal reverses an action that was questionable in the first place. Development and land-use controls are threatened in the name of energy and jobs. The link is the deliberate flouting of all aspects of environmental welfare in a relaxed climate of concern.

There are difficult decisions to make, genuine energy conservation programs to be developed, long-range objectives to be considered; but right now the action consists chiefly of demolishing hard-won environmental gains. The public interest is being callously reversed while the real issues are yet to be faced.

Losing the War

At the moment the country appears to be winning the gasoline battle and losing the environmental war. There has been a tragic turnabout in values. The temporary price and availability of a gallon of gasoline have become more important than the permanent cost of destroying the country's resources and heritage. And the greater tragedy is that so much of a once-aroused public has apparently ceased to care.

The foes of environmental controls—industry, developers, special interest lobbies and government agencies subject to pressure from these sources—are having a field day. They are trying to undo the progress of the