

# New London's Heritage

Although the local redevelopment authority claims that 90 per cent of the people of New London neither know nor care about the city's H. H. Richardson railroad station, this is hardly conclusive proof that the registered landmark should be torn down. The test does not lie in New London's understanding of its place in art and history, nor its awareness of how skillful urban design can tie new and old to a richer environment. And local resentment of "meddling outsiders" is hardly a proper incentive to destruction. That the plight of the New London station has received national attention proves that public concern is rising about the loss of landmarks and about the sterilization programs that have gone under the name of urban renewal.

The New London renewal authority has apparently not budged in its bulldozer determination in the last ten years, when the rest of the country has been chalking up preservation conversions against equally great odds. Architecturally, New London is no garden of roses. It needs that Richardson building, as every city needs its architectural heritage, and it also needs the kind of creative design that will link the structure to new development. New London not only wants to demolish by using Federal funds—forbidden by law for a registered landmark; it has dug in its heels against the possibilities of financial aid to preservation, including a potential developer, and has sent city officials scurrying to Washington to try to keep the building off the National Register. It is a bad scene.

In Buffalo, there is talk of tearing down another Richardson building, the Buffalo State Hospital. Richardson ranks, with Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, as one of this country's three greatest architects. The way to lose a heritage completely is ~~one~~ building at a time.