

Landmark Legislation

In connection with today's public hearings on New York's proposed landmarks preservation law, there are several points which should be kept in mind.

If the law is opposed by those who fear a threat to private property rights or a curtailment of investment profits, there are safeguards in the bill to guarantee that these rights and privileges are fully protected. All that the legislation does, basically, is to give a landmark or a historic district a fighting chance to survive.

Without time to find ways and means of saving a building, without the consideration of city purchase, and without adequate owner compensation for any possible losses—all of which are provided in this bill—the future is predictably and dismally sure. Not only the city's landmarks, but to a large extent its character and architectural quality are doomed. The private pillage of the public patrimony has long since ceased to be justifiable; it is now a matter of serious public concern.

This, of course, is the most important point of all. New York has had enough of unrestricted destruction. The political pressure groups and the real estate and business lobbies that show up at these hearings regularly with powerful statements of minority interest must be measured against the unorganized but strong public sentiment in favor of this bill. It should be adopted without debilitating compromise.