

sponsible demolition and thoughtless remodeling that is so effectively eroding New York's quality and reducing its dwindling heritage. The functions of the Municipal Art Commission could and should be extended to include an advisory role for all major streets, and this should be done promptly. New York ought to have the wisdom and the sophistication to value excellence enough to protect the little that we still have from these acts of civic vandalism.

**In the Name of Progress**

It could never happen in Paris. Remodeling of venerable buildings on a major Paris avenue must go on behind the facade, by law, to preserve the city's architectural character and beauty. And this is one of the things that make Paris Paris.

But it does happen in New York. One of the handsomest facades on Fifth Avenue, and in fact one of the most exquisite small business buildings in the city, is being given the standard New York "improvement" treatment: its finely detailed, elegantly proportioned exterior is being destroyed and the building will be refaced with a nondescript, banal and ordinary new "skin." In the name of progress!

The building is the former Black, Starr & Frost store at the southwest corner of Fifth Avenue and 48th Street. It is being remodeled by the Trade Bank and Trust Company. It was built a half-century ago by Carrère & Hastings, the architects of the Public Library.

It is appalling that there is no architectural board of review in New York for important avenues. We have a Municipal Art Commission, but it has jurisdiction only over buildings on city-owned land. Washington's Commission of Fine Arts performs this review function for all critical areas of the capital. It can force no one to follow its decisions, but at the very least there is an informed, civilized appraisal of building and remodeling plans and their effect on the city scene.

We have had more than enough of the irre-