

# Vanderbilt and Tweed

New York City's announcement that it will appeal the recent State Supreme Court ruling on Grand Central Terminal in which the building's landmark designation was overturned is welcome news. Even better news is Mayor Beame's statement of belief in the significance of the case for the future of preservation in New York and in the United States.

If the city administration's conviction is sincere, this could be the signal for some badly needed, constructive work in the Corporation Counsel's office to strengthen the city's landmarks law. Leading members of the private legal community stand ready to assist the Landmarks Preservation Commission (which currently has no counsel) and the city's own staff in this matter.

At this point, however, the good news runs out. It is unofficially reported that the Mayor's Task Force on the Civic Center has advised itself to demolish the Tweed Courthouse as a measure of beauty, practicality and economy, with the additional objective of making a nice, neat, Tweedless City Hall Park for the Bicentennial.

That there is some inconsistency here has apparently not occurred to anyone at City Hall. There will be many curious ways to celebrate the Bicentennial, but the destruction of a part of the city's heritage may be the oddest yet. And if preservation is properly understood as the retention of a community's full historic and stylistic range, Tweed's Anglo-Italian scandal has equal place with Commodore Vanderbilt's Beaux Arts monument.

Each, in the Mayor's words about Grand Central, is a "symbol of life," and the loss of either diminishes the vitality the past gives to the present. Someone downtown needs to get it all together.