

Saving Fine Architecture

New York Times (1923-Current file); Aug 11, 1962; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times

pg. 11

insist on strict standards of design superiority for all structures on city-owned land—unfortunately, the only kind that it controls.

Progress and change involve more than profit and loss. The city's investors and planners have esthetic as well as economic responsibilities. New Yorkers do not lack civic pride. If AGBANY springs to the barricades the public will not be far behind.

Saving Fine Architecture

One of the city's strangest and most heartening picket lines appeared in New York recently. It wound its way around Pennsylvania Station led by upper-echelon architectural professionals carrying signs of protest against the impending destruction of McKim, Mead & White's classic monument to make way for a \$90-million-dollar redevelopment scheme of dubious grandeur.

The marchers were members of Action Group for Better Architecture in New York, local counterpart of Britain's Anti-Uglies. They call themselves AGBANY, which sounds something like agony, the state of mind of many over current changes on the New York scene.

The public demonstration was joined by about two hundred leaders in the architectural field, including the designers of some of the city's best new buildings. What they were protesting at the moment was the increasing, irreplaceable loss of New York's architectural past through irresponsible speculative building. What they plan to protest in the future is the inferior quality of much new work.

If professionals find the situation serious enough for this kind of action, something is very wrong. With minimum controls New York's builders are well on the way to turning the city into a bottomless—and topless—morass of mediocrity. Something should be done, and it can be done, in certain areas. The newly appointed Landmarks Preservation Commission must take clear and immediate positions on threatened buildings of historic or artistic value. The responsibility rests on the City Art Commission to