

# Self-Reliance

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*St. Paul, Davis Lead the Way*

## Community Controlled Cable Television

Cable television in St. Paul, Minnesota, will, by conservative estimates, generate \$30 million in profits for whoever owns the city's 15-year franchise. Normally, St. Paul would sell this franchise to one of several large corporations now running cable systems. In return, the chosen corporation would pay between three and five percent of its profits into the St. Paul city treasury. An alternative arrangement recently adopted by the St. Paul City Council, however, could keep most of the \$30 million in profits right in the local economy.

The alternative is community ownership. Although the idea of community-owned cable television is not new, St. Paul, with over 100,000 households as potential subscribers, is the first large city to try it. Now that St. Paul has shown that community-owned cable is possible, groups in Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and several smaller cities are also looking into alternatives to private cable ownership.

### Community Cable: Controlling Profits and Programming

Nationally, cable television is adding 250,000 new subscribers a month, with particularly rapid growth in middle and high income urban and suburban areas. Within a year, cable will reach the 30 percent penetration experts say it needs to become a viable mass marketing medium. Profits, then, are a major factor in the push for community control. But community ownership advocates also stress the need for wider access and control of cable programming, as well as public input into how new cable technologies, such as two-way communication, are used.

Community cable advocates cite Atlanta as the mistake they don't want repeated. City officials there thought they had won major concessions when Atlanta Cable promised two state-of-the-art cable trunks, one with 54 channels for homes and another with 41 channels for institutions. The company also promised a studio where community groups could prepare programs, with a full-time staff and budget to assist them. A year and a half later, only 32 of the 54 home channels are operational, while the second institutional system and the community access studio do not exist. Atlanta's mistake: failing to write promises made in the franchise agreement into law.

Atlanta's problems with unfilled promises are not uncommon, and not all of them can be remedied by attempting to negotiate iron-clad contracts. In cities such as San Francisco and New York, cable companies are wiring wealthier and more profitable neighborhoods while dragging their feet in low-income areas. When Boulder, Colorado, attempted to penalize Telecommunications, Inc., for not delivering promised services, the company sued Boulder for \$1 million.

Such are the problems of the cable television "free market." But community ownership of cable has problems as well, notably with specific definitions of what constitutes the community and the nature of the ownership. Private cable companies say that a municipally-owned communications medium like cable may produce First Amendment conflicts. If a city government owns the cable system, what would prevent

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# Notes

**Simplified Energy Design Economics: Principles of Economics Applied to Energy Conversion and Solar Energy Investments in Buildings**, \$3.50, U.S. Government Printing Office, Supt. of Documents, Washington DC 20402, 202/783-3238 (ask for #003-003-02156-3). An excellent summary of life cycle costs, discounted paybacks, rates of return and other arcane terms frequently used when evaluating energy economics. For illustration, a solar energy system is evaluated for cost effectiveness against a conventional energy system using five different cost-benefit approaches. Also includes a glossary of economic terms, discount formulas and discount factors.

**Sproutletter**, \$8/year. Box 10985, Eugene OR 97440. Everything you need to know about growing all kinds of sprouts, both for home consumption and as a small business. This is where we refer people who order our own publication, *Large Scale Sprouting as a Cottage Industry*.

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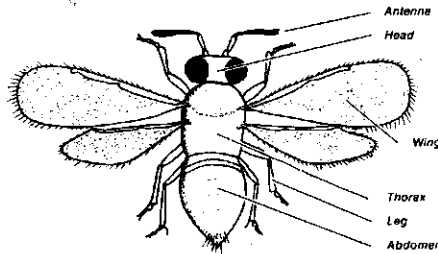


Fig. 2. An aphid parasite, the chalcid wasp (*Aphelinus mali*).

**A small research group in New England continues to provide nitty-gritty information on solar greenhouses.** The Memphremagog Group has followed last year's *Horticultural Management of Solar Greenhouses* booklet with *Biological Control of Greenhouse Aphids*. Aphids are one of the major causes of low yields in solar greenhouses. In a field swamped with "greenhouses are great" literature, these booklets are much needed. Copies of the aphid control booklet are \$4.50 postpaid from: **Memphremagog Group, Box 456, Newport VT 05855, 802/334-8821.**

**Keys to the Growth of Neighborhood Development Organizations**, \$7.50, Urban Institute Press, 2100 M Street NW, Washington DC 20037, 202/223-1950. An academic survey with rather unsurprising conclusions: neighborhood development organizations need more funding, effective leadership, etc. Written with U.S. Housing and Urban Development funds and with "significant contributions" by HUD neighborhood officials under Carter, this is a classic example of the government study that tells officials what they want to hear. Useful background for students doing research on neighborhood development.

**Two blueprints for national energy policy published this summer illustrate the hard path/soft path choice.** Reagan's *National Energy Plan* emphasizes energy production, nuclear and synthetic fuels, and centralized power plants built by large corporations. A plan prepared by the Northeast-Midwest Congressional Coalition calls for energy conservation, renewable fuels and decentralized community-based energy systems. The Coalition is a bipartisan alliance of more than 200 members of Congress. Copies of Reagan's plan, called *Securing America's Energy Future*, are available from: **NTIS, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield VA 22161. Price: \$5.** For the Coalition's *Building and Energy Consensus: Key Issues for the Eighties*, contact: **Northeast-Midwest Institute, 529 House Annex No. 2, Washington D.C. 20515. Price: \$6.50.** Hundreds of citizens and community groups testified at public hearings this spring on Reagan's plan, but their comments were almost completely ignored. ILSR covered the hearings and prepared a summary of the testimony given by representatives of community-based organizations. Free copies of the summary are available to **Self-Reliance** subscribers.

The Institute recently acquired a limited supply of *Doing a Community Survey with Volunteer Help*, a 32-page booklet that includes a sample survey done for a neighborhood in Portland, Oregon. Information on benefits of surveys, how to design a questionnaire, sampling procedures, training volunteers, analyzing data and using results. Copies are available to *Self-Reliance* subscribers for the price of postage—\$1.

## The March of "Progress"...

**Pray for New York City Gardeners:** A church in New York City has been told that if it continues to use church-owned land for a non-profit community garden, it will have to pay \$11,520 in taxes. But if the church were to pave over the garden and convert its property into a parking lot for church members, the land would be tax exempt. Pastor Purdy of Trinity Lutheran Church on the Lower East Side considers the garden part of the church's efforts to help the largely poor nearby community. But according to Mary Mann, the City Tax Commissioner, gardening does not fit in with the city's narrow definition of a "reasonable relationship" between the use of the land and religion. A parking lot, Mann added, would probably qualify, even though none of Trinity Lutheran's parishioners owns a car.

# A Five Point Program To Promote Self-Help Housing

In *Self-Reliance* #26 housing expert Prentice Bowsher looked at the prospects for neighborhood-based self-help housing programs under Reaganomics and found them—in a word—discouraging. Groups scrambling to stay alive with modest federal support will largely have to exist without it. Those groups that do survive will have to patch together funds and technical assistance from a variety of alternatives—a state or local government program here, a socially-conscious business or professional association there. In short, the ad hoc planning that always characterized self-help housing will continue. It will just be a little harder.

But what if a community planned *ahead* for a self-help housing program? Suppose a local government decided to encourage self-help housing, rather than simply react to or block the efforts of home-grown housing activists. What would such a program look like, and what would a community have to do to promote it?

Of course, no such model program exists. But various communities have dealt with pieces of the problem. In this report, Prentice Bowsher lists five requirements for a healthy self-housing program.

## 1. Acknowledge That Self-Help Housing Works

Neighborhood housing groups have a remarkable record of accomplishments in their brief history, regardless of whether the standard used is actual numbers of housing units or the less identifiable impact on participants and the larger community.

In terms of numbers, New York City's Association of Neighborhood Housing Developers counted 4,688 housing units rehabilitated, newly built, under management, or sold "as-is" among 27 New York City groups. The Chicago Rehab Network found 1,493 units preserved by 10 groups in its city. HUD's Office of Neighborhood Development reported 6,162 housing units rehabilitated or newly built by the 75 groups it assisted, providing direct benefits to an estimated 30,000 persons.

From neighborhood participants, come telling comments. Said one New York City woman, after rebuilding six windows in her building: "Those windows were probably the greatest achievement of my life. I felt absolutely invincible. I could do anything." An emerging neighborhood leader in Philadelphia concluded, "When I sit back and look at my life now, it is like I am a whole different person. It's the best thing that ever happened to me." A Washington business leader, caught up in volunteering with a group agreed: "A whole world's going on—a whole world exists there—that I never even knew existed."

## 2. Build on Groups' Strengths

The great strengths which have supported neighborhood-based efforts in the face of indifference, suspicion, and hos-

tility are their deep roots into the fabric of the community, their ability to draw on available neighborhood resources, their effectiveness in small-scale operations, and their stress on caring for the social needs of neighborhood residents as well as on providing affordable housing.

Neighborhood housing efforts have appeared to do best in communities where abandonment or revitalization made conditions desperate, where neighbors were willing to fight to keep their homes, and where experience had confirmed that outside aid was either unavailable or ineffective. The result was a deeply felt community decision to take the initiative and save what they could themselves.

Some groups developed spontaneously in response to an immediate crisis, such as Baltimore's Concerned Citizens for Butchers Hill, which developed in response to mass eviction notices for scores of long-time renters in a poor but stable ethnic community. Other groups evolved more slowly from ongoing efforts in related areas such as code enforcement (Interfaith Adopt-A-Building in New York City) or housing counseling (St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center in Baltimore). Whether rushed or more studied, the effort was nearly always helped by supportive groups and organizers familiar to and trusted by the community, many of whom in turn had gained their experience in the civil rights and anti-war movements. Together they would set out to hold off the threatening developers or arsonists.

In many cases, they were effective, even though their financial resources and technical skills limited them to small-scale projects. In a block of 100 housing units, for example, a group might work with 20, acquiring them, rehabbing them, and making them available for community owners. Often the result would be that community control of the 20 units would be sufficient to slow down or halt temporarily the adverse development elsewhere on the block, buying time for the community to negotiate a compromise or regroup for a further effort. Faced with higher living densities or a wide-ranging threat, neighbors responded with more groups rather than bigger ones. The South Bronx, for example, has generated numbers of groups, including Banana Kelly Community Improvement Association, the Peoples Development Corporation, and the Southeast Bronx Community Organization.

Keeping the groups small helped sustain the community's feeling that it was in control of the effort, and also permitted nontraditional approaches to some of the community's social problems. In an assessment common to many groups, Concerned Citizens' Mimi Bodell said, "What ultimately gets people involved is that they feel more a part of the community. People began to experience people caring for each other. And as people began to experience others caring for them, they could be more open. People's personal lives began to change. There was something to do."

## 3. Help Them Find Funds and Technical Assistance

Capital and technical assistance are the two most critical  
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# Promoting Self-Help Housing

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resources for most neighborhood groups; and mutual support through networking, although not widely practiced, is a potential resource of great promise. Despite their importance as resources, they have proved highly elusive for many groups because of the scarcity of reliable and adequate low-cost financing, the complexities of rehabilitation, and the psychological (and sometimes physical) isolation of many poor neighborhoods.

One self-help group in Washington, for example, discovered that it could only secure temporary financing for its building at a rate—two percentage points above the prime interest rate—so expensive that it had to take out a second loan to help pay the interest on the first loan. In Minneapolis, a group which had obtained Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) assistance one year suddenly faced a brand new application process the following year, and only barely secured continuing assistance. Even HUD had to turn away nine out of 10 applicants for neighborhood self-help development grants because of inadequate funds.

Local governments have participated in many groups' financial packages, but the local participation often has been passive (as a conduit for federal funds) or secured only after prolonged appeals from neighborhood groups. Under a new strategy, local governments will have to take more active roles.

This doesn't always mean that local governments will somehow have to come up with more money. Many approaches require only encouragement and cooperation from local governments, not funds. These include corporate support for Philadelphia's Allegheny West, below-market mortgages for Denver's Brothers Redevelopment, CDBG funds for Minneapolis' Common Space, church-based support for Washington's Jubilee Housing, and specialized city programs in Chicago and New York.

In Philadelphia, the Tasty Baking Company has taken advantage of Pennsylvania's Neighborhood Assistance Program and contributed more than \$1 million in helping to revitalize the Allegheny West neighborhood, which has been the Company's North Philadelphia home for 60 years. The state program provides tax credits for corporate gifts to neighborhood groups,\* and Tasty Baking's funds and other contributions help hold down prices for neighborhood residents on rehabilitated row houses.

In Denver, Brothers Redevelopment has used its connections with local banks, developed in the course of its non-profit construction business, to secure a steady access to low-cost mortgages financed by tax-exempt bonds from Colorado's Housing Finance Authority. Together with other funds which help to lower rehab costs, the below-market mortgages have helped BRI convert renters to homeowners in numbers of Denver's neighborhoods.

In Minneapolis, Common Space has survived city efforts to freeze out neighborhood groups from CDBG funds and has used them for a number of years in helping tenant groups develop low-yield housing cooperatives. In one project, for example, block grant funds were used to lower unit costs by \$6,500, and thus keeping them within reach of

the building's low-income residents.

In Washington, Jubilee Housing has used its close relationship with the widely known Church of the Saviour to obtain a continuing stream of private contributions from grass roots admirers of the Church. Jubilee began its multi-family rehab and tenant management effort as a Church mission group, and has maintained a close church relationship as it grew into a separately incorporated developer. Additional funds have been acquired for the group's projects, but Jubilee's fund raising emphasis has remained in the private sector.

In Chicago, neighborhood groups have persuaded the city's Housing Court to appoint them as receivers of occupied buildings from which the landlords have walked away. Taking over a role as receivers previously reserved as political patronage by Housing Court judges, the neighborhood groups have obtained management control of buildings, and gained a chance of saving them from demolition. Groups then must seek other funds for repairs and rehabilitation.

In New York, where an accelerated real estate tax foreclosure process created an unmanageable deluge of city-owned buildings, tenant groups were given opportunities under a number of programs to gain management control of their buildings. If tenant management was successful, residents could buy their units for \$250. Rehab and repair funds were to come from other sources.

Other approaches have included limited partnerships and syndications, in which favorable tax treatment for investors has attracted participation in some projects by developers and wealthy individuals; creation of for-profit subsidiaries income from which is used to aid a related nonprofit effort; and owner-builder sweat equity (often combined with job-training assistance), in which a buyer's contributed labor is used to hold down the price of her unit. Usually, the community is most comfortable with the simplest and most straight-forward effective approach.

## Helping Groups Find Technical Assistance

Even a simple and sensitive approach to technical assistance can fail sometimes to win the confidence and support of a particularly skeptical community. Yet some technical assistance is essential in all but the simplest efforts, because few poor communities possess at the outset all of the real estate, construction, organizing, and property management skills associated with a housing effort.

The initial projects of most groups are small enough that on-the-job training and volunteer advisors can steer a course through most of the risks. The risks, nevertheless, are present; some of them can be great; and the inevitable mistakes can be costly and sometimes fatal to the effort. One sweat-equity group on New York's Lower East Side, for example, virtually rehabbed their building twice because of thefts of inadequately protected supplies, incorrect work, and improper sequencing of tasks.

Occasionally, specialized groups like Brothers Redevelopment of Denver Project for Pride in Living of Minneapolis, both of which provide nonprofit construction services, have skilled professionals on staff; but such groups are rare exceptions. Instead, when most groups encounter a technical road-block, they turn to universities, trade groups, or community development assistance centers such as New York's

\*Five other states have Neighborhood Assistance Programs similar to Pennsylvania's. A detailed description of the concept, including the major provisions of each state law, appears in "It Pays to Revitalize" by David Jones in the July-August 1981 issue of Gransmanship Center News, 1031 S. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles CA 90015, 213/ 749-4721.



Urban Homesteading Assistance Board, Atlanta's Community Design Center, or Chicago's Rehab Network.

New York's U-HAB, sponsored by the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, offers a wide range of advocacy, resource development, and technical assistance services geared to the various tenant management and co-op development programs of the city. Among its services, for example, are accounting and financial record-keeping courses for self-managed co-ops.

Atlanta's Community Design Center is one of the better known of the 60 such centers around the country, providing architectural, planning, and community development assistance to low-income community-based groups. In addition to serving its own communities, the Atlanta center also coordinates a southern regional network of CDCs.

Chicago's Rehab Network is a coalition of neighborhood

groups in the city which serves as a citywide information clearinghouse as well as a source of TA on financing and construction through its Rehab Center.

Unfortunately, neighborhood housing groups' need for technical assistance of various kinds far outstrips the capacity of available TA providers, most of whom also are struggling for recognition and funding. Tentative conclusions from an ongoing study of TA providers by the Center for Community Change found that the available pool of providers was overworked, underfunded, isolated professionally, and maldistributed geographically.

Lack of effective networking has been a major stumbling block also for neighborhood housing groups. While no clear reason exists for the absence of more networking, one possible factor is community reaction against outsiders, and an-

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## Sources of Technical Information

It used to be that hands-on experience was the only and probably the best source of technical information about neighborhood-based housing efforts. The purchase of a building for community control and low-income occupancy soon produced enough ad hoc crises to season even the greenest novices. Some were overwhelmed in the process, but the survivors became instant practical experts.

The development of scores of neighborhood groups over a decade and a half has not necessarily eliminated this approach, but it has produced some less frightening alternatives through publications, training courses, and supportive organizations. Even so, the uniqueness of each community's people, housing, and resources requires the handcrafting of a group's approach. Thus while general information may be helpful, hands-on experience remains essential.

## Publications

Although now somewhat dated, and limited in their scope to New York's unique conditions, two of the best sources remain *The Neighborhood Housing Movement*, by Robert Schur and Virginia Sherry (Association of Neighborhood Housing Developers, 424 West 33rd St., NYC 10001) and *Self-Help in the Inner City*, by Robert Kolodny (United Neighborhood Houses, 101 East 15th St., NYC 10003).

More recent and wider ranging are *People Who Care*, by Prentice Bowsher (Prentice Bowsher Associates, 1522 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036); *Funding Sources for Neighborhood Groups* (HUD, Washington, D.C. 20410); *People Power* (U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs); and *The Neighborhood Directory: A Catalog of Local Neighborhood Revitalization Programs* (FNMA, 3900 Wisconsin Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016).

## Training Courses

No known training program encompasses all the technical fields involved in neighborhood housing. The nearest thing might be an apprenticeship as a volunteer with an ongoing group. In a particular community, some locally appropriate courses may be offered by technical assistance providers (see below, for examples). Experienced housing rehabilitation specialists

can take brush-up courses in a certification program offered this winter by the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (2800 Virginia Avenue NW, Suite 404, Washington, DC 20037, 202/333-2020. Entry level courses in housing rehabilitation may be offered later.

Three helpful approaches in community organizing, neighborhood revitalization, and cooperative development and management are available nationally. The September/October 1980 *Self-Reliance* reviewed community organizing courses offered by 11 groups across the country ("Teaching Skills in Community Organizing"). The National Trust for Historic Preservation (1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036) periodically offers a Conserve Neighborhoods Short Course on revitalization and the needs of low-income and minority residents. Sessions so far have been held in Memphis, Tenn., and Tucson, Ariz. Finally, the National Association of Housing Cooperatives (1012 14th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005) offers a series of courses around the country on co-op development and management.

## Supportive Organizations

No national organization exists of neighborhood-based housing groups. Three helpful groups which do have nationwide organizations are the Center for Community Change (1000 Wisconsin Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007) which supports neighborhood-based efforts in housing and community development; the Community Design Center Directors' Association (918 16th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006) which serves as a clearinghouse for the architectural and other technical services of community design centers around the country; and the Neighborhood Information Sharing Exchange (1725 K St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006), an information clearinghouse for neighborhood development efforts.

In addition, local networking groups such as the Association of Neighborhood Housing Developers and the Chicago Rehab Network (53 West Jackson, Chicago 60604), or local technical assistance providers such as the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (1047 Amsterdam Ave. N.Y.C. 10025), may be helpful if their location is appropriate. UHAB provides a wide range of services, for example, including accounting and financial record-keeping courses for self-managed co-ops.

—Prentice Bowsher

# Promoting Self-Help Housing

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other is the near uniqueness of each group's effort in terms of resident personalities, housing stock, and community contacts. Whatever the reason, there seems to be little networking among neighborhood groups, even in the same city; and its absence forces many newly developing groups into duplicative and unfruitful pursuits.

Where networking has developed, such as in Chicago's Rehab Network or New York's Association of Neighborhood Housing Developers, the experience seems helpful. Information can be shared, actions can be coordinated, and influence can be multiplied. The promise of more widespread networking seems great indeed, but it clearly needs assistance in overcoming the hurdle of community suspicion.

## 4. Cut Red Tape and Unnecessary Regulation

When neighborhood housing groups first appeared in the mid-60's, they dealt with such regulations as wage scales, building codes, or property disposition processes by simply ignoring them. The first groups were squatters, who moved into buildings they knew were abandoned, did most of the work themselves, and worked for free, scrounging materials as they went. The establishment's reaction was predictably negative; and as groups found they needed outside aid for survival, their approaches became less unconventional.

A decade and a half later, most neighborhood groups find themselves deeply enmeshed in building codes and labor regulations, and argue persuasively that the regulations add dollars to their projects and threaten the projects' continued affordability by the poor. When the projects include public funds, the groups point out, over-regulation can be doubly expensive: first driving costs up, and then forcing subsidies up to maintain affordability.

Despite the arguments of scores of housing groups across the country, few examples exist of progress on such remedial steps as rehab-modified building codes, deferred assessments on rehab-increased property values, or exemptions from federally mandated Davis-Bacon wage rates on government-assisted projects.

In Chicago, for instance, the Rehab Network began four years ago to develop a modified building code with the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. The main objective of the effort was to allow partial rehab of a building while avoiding conformity to new-construction standards. The modifications sought by the Rehab Network would have relaxed a common building code requirement

Another housing program, prepared by a Philadelphia group, summarizes much of the thinking of advocates for low-income and locally controlled housing. Their report does not include examples of actual projects and tends to resemble a "wish list." But it is a sober and succinct presentation of many proposals: city-owned banks, linked deposits, community credit unions, city housing bonds, pension funds, real estate tax reform, legal restrictions on speculation, labor union financing, housing cooperatives, tenant ownership or management and others. Single copies of the report are available from: Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, 3308 Baring Street, Philadelphia PA 19104, 215/382-7845.

that if rehab costs exceed a certain percentage of building valuation then new-construction standards shall apply. This might mean, for example, installing electrical outlets every 10 feet in an adequately wired building which might otherwise have only one or two outlets a room.

After some work by the Rehab Network and the local AIA, the project was taken over by the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, which has yet to make a final report. In the meantime, the Mayor's Office also began a similar study. While some building trades have cooperated, others have proved resistant, particularly, the electrical trades. To date, no proposal has emerged from any quarter; and when one does, still further action will be required by the City Council.

Seeing little progress and knowing few alternatives, most groups seem to have resigned themselves to whatever the situation is in their area. Still, some resistance occurs, such as the Minneapolis group which encouraged its construction workers to form their own one-man corporations in avoidance of city-mandated union wage rates for employees, or the Philadelphia group which "forgot" to notify the city of the rehab of 15 houses.

A strong commitment to de-regulation seems appropriate on two counts: one is the increased effectiveness of available housing dollars, and the other is the lowering of tensions between neighborhood groups and local officials over arbitrary and capricious rules and procedures.

## 5. Don't Overburden with Unrealistic Expectations

Perhaps most important in developing a new strategy, proponents of neighborhood housing efforts need to base their expectations on realistic assessments of groups' achievements and their capabilities.

So far, neighborhood-based efforts have functioned best in resource-poor settings where conditions were most desperate, and virtually any response improved the status quo. In that context, their responses have been impressive. "As an antidote to abandonment, self-help certainly earns high marks," asserts Columbia University's Robert Kolodny, a respected authority on self-help efforts.

Yet the groups' achievements emerge in a different light when measured against a broader perspective, such as HUD's estimate of 14.8 million low-income families which need, but are not receiving, housing assistance. And efforts to mass produce neighborhood-based efforts—such as the government's urban homesteading program—have not been encouraging.

So proponents of the new strategy need to guard against two dangers: overselling the capabilities of neighborhood-based groups, on the one hand; and accepting excessive responsibility for low-income programs, on the other hand.

The greatest danger to the groups may come from present efforts to pull back government involvement in social services, if the groups' records are used to justify massive transfers to them of low-income housing efforts. The scenario goes like this: local officials, tired of taking flack about poorly run public housing, use the rhetoric of self-help to turn their mess over to neighborhood-based housing organizations. But without the necessary financial, managerial or technical resources, groups would be overwhelmed, and the whole movement would suffer.



# Roadblocks to Community Cable

(Continued from page 1)

government censorship, or at the least, programming influenced by political considerations? Moreover, those familiar with the more regressive city-owned utilities and with rural electric and dairy cooperatives know that municipal or cooperative ownership is no guarantee a system will be democratic or innovative.

Community cable advocates respond with proposals for semi-autonomous or independent non-profit cable corporations created by municipal governments.\* The hope is to keep control local, but as far away from City Hall politics as possible. At the same time, they want a system both technically sophisticated and responsive to its consumers. No one can say for sure, however, how this will work. The city of Davis, California (pop. 40,000), for example, is planning a cable cooperative, but the details of ownership and control have yet to be spelled out.

"We know about housing coops and food coops," says Davis coop cable coordinator David Thompson, who heads the West Coast Office of the National Consumer Cooperative

Bank. "But nobody has done a big coop cable system before."

## A Major Stumbling Block: Financing

Along with ownership, financing is the major stumbling block for community cable, especially for systems larger than a few thousand subscribers. St. Paul is looking into raising capital through industrial revenue bonds, and the well known investment firm Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner and Smith has prepared an analysis of how cities can use their bonding authorities to finance municipal cable systems (contact: Robert W. Simmons, Merrill, Lynch, 1 Liberty Plaza, New York, NY 10080, 212/637-7576).

Financing cable cooperatives should be tougher. The Davis project, for example, hangs on an estimated \$5 to \$8 million loan from the National Consumer Cooperative Bank. In the largest cities, cable requires so much investment that some community ownership organizers admit their plans have little chance of becoming reality.

"Our strategy now," says one such organizer, "is to make ourselves such a political presence that city officials will have to include us in the overall deal they make with a pri-

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## Resources for Community Control of Cable TV

By now there is so much information on cable television that community groups and local officials have no excuse for not understanding how it works or how to gain access to their local system.

Neophytes should begin with *A Short Course in Cable* (\$2) published by the United Church of Christ Community Telecommunications Services (CTS), Suite 921, 105 Madison Avenue, New York NY 10016. CTS also runs workshops and offers consulting to both community groups and city governments on selecting the best cable system. Some CTS staff members helped write federal cable regulations, so they know what they are talking about. But like most groups, they have little direct experience with municipally-owned or cooperative cable systems.

Two other organizations act as national clearing-houses for community groups and local government officials seeking information on locally-controlled cable systems. The National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting is a Ralph Nader group with excellent contacts among those involved with cooperative and municipal cable ownership (NCCB, Box 12038, Washington DC 20005, Bruce Jacobs, 202/466-2520). The National Federation of Local Cable Programmers is made up of many public interest cable television groups. The Federation publishes an excellent magazine, *Community Television Review* (\$12/individuals, \$30/organizations, 3700 Far Hills Avenue, Kettering OH 45429) and can refer people to any of its member organizations through a national office (NFLCP, 202/544-7272). The ability of each local group to answer questions, however, will vary.

There is an abundance of local groups, private consultants, books, periodicals and other publications on local control of cable, most of which can be found by contacting any of the above three groups.

Information on cooperative and municipal ownership is much harder to find. The trick, of course, is to find people with experience in putting together such a system. Because these people are simply too scarce, the next best thing will be experienced cable consultants who are open to ownership alternatives. Several people can help you find them.

The person with the most hands-on experience in developing a major municipal cooperative plan is Neal Gosman, who directed the St. Paul Cable Cooperative (411 Main Street, St. Paul, MN 55101, 612/777-1253). Carol James worked with Neal Gosman in St. Paul and now provides assistance on cooperative cable for the Cooperative League of the United States of America (CLUSA, 1828 L Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington DC 20036, 202/872-0590). A group with an interest in municipal ownership of cable is the American Public Power Association (Jeff Farber, 2600 Virginia Avenue NW, Washington DC 20097, 202/342-7200). APFA may be sponsoring a workshop on starting a consumer-owned cable television system. Another person well versed in both cooperatives and cable is David Thompson, director of the West Coast office of the National Consumer Cooperative Bank (NCCB 1830 Broadway, Suite 1801, Oakland CA 94601, 415/773-7076). Thompson is directing the planning for the cable cooperative in Davis, California. Unfortunately, plans have only just begun and Thompson says he will have no substantive information to share until after January, when the Davis feasibility study is complete.

# Progress Reports

## Rodale Asks: Can U.S. Grow Food Locally?

Can community gardeners, farmer's markets and family-owned organic farms ever replace, or even make a dent in, American agribusiness? Rodale Press, publisher of *Organic Gardening* magazine (circulation: 1.3 million) wants to find out. It has started the Cornucopia Project, which Rodale Press leader Robert Rodale calls, "an idea, not an organization."

Cornucopia's success will depend on Rodale's resources, which are considerable. The company owns a 300-acre research farm in Maxatawny, Pennsylvania, where four Ph.D. scientists, half a dozen M.S. level researchers, plus dozens of technicians and support staff will spend \$800,000 this year alone studying organic agriculture. Work will focus on research needs identified in a U.S. Department of Agriculture study favorable to organic farming, but which USDA, under Reagan, says it has no budget to investigate. These include problems chemical farmers may encounter in the transition to organic methods, particularly control of weeds without the use of herbicides. Another part of the five-to-ten-year study will be a social and economic comparison of organic and chemical farms in seven states.

To spread the word and solicit help in planning, the Cornucopia Project organized a conference last summer which drew over 300 alternative food system organizers. A second conference is planned for next year. Using Rodale's sophisticated marketing, Cornucopia has also received letters of interest about the project from over 10,000 citizens. Cornucopia has already produced several publications, including information on what citizens can do in their own communities to change our present food system, as well as separate studies on food systems in Pennsylvania, New York and Maine.

Cornucopia has two weaknesses. First, few farmers are directly involved (at the first conference, only one of the



300 earned even half his or her income from food production). Second, in an effort to broaden its base, Cornucopia has dealt lightly with many political issues, such as who controls U.S. food production and how the present system serves their interests.

For a publications list and more information on the Cornucopia Project, contact: **Cornucopia Project, Publications Department, 33 East Minor Street, Emmaus PA 18049, 215/967-5171.**

## Job Strategy for Berkeley

Not many communities are like Berkeley, California: home of a major university with a tradition of political activism; a major center of cooperative business; a relatively stable, ethnically mixed and skilled workforce. No wonder many regard Berkeley as a unique—and not easily replicable—model for local self-reliance.

Recently, however, research on local economic development at the University of California at Berkeley recommends an approach that other communities may want to follow. Staff at the University's Institute of Urban and Regional Development examined Berkeley's economy from the perspective of promoting local self-reliance. They

gathered data on the local workforce by race, gender, age and skill. They found out who in each category was working and who was unemployed. They then listed the types of businesses in Berkeley according to size, growth, skills required and local employment patterns.

The study worked on several assumptions, many of them common sense, but surprisingly rare in economic development planning circles. First, researchers were looking for diversity, so that Berkeley's economy wouldn't depend on the fortunes of one or two markets. They also found that small businesses had generated the most jobs recently, while big firms had created job losses. Certain types of businesses, such as the once thriving chemical manufacturing sector, were declining fast, while others, such as food service and health care services, were growing. Researchers also found that Berkeley's already well-established cooperatives had potential for growth. Not surprisingly, Berkeley's minority youth, women and blue collar workers have the highest unemployment rates.

With the goal of promoting diversity, small businesses and cooperatives, as well as an eye for jobs in growth sectors that both match available job skills and provide jobs for those who need them most, certain planning strategies became obvious. The Institute's research focused one two: alternative energy businesses and child care services.

The report on child care services is the most specific and optimistic. Well over half of Berkeley's almost 8,000 preschool-age children require child care. If care were provided to just those on current waiting lists, an additional 85 jobs would be created. Almost all of these jobs could go to those in Berkeley who need them most. The report details the economics of child care and offers six specific actions Berkeley's city government can take to expand child care services.

The energy report runs into problems many other communities have found when trying to encourage alternative energy businesses. The long-awaited boom in solar panel production, weatherization services and other small alternative energy business has yet to materialize. Start-up capital for these



# Progress Reports

## Bank Offers "Solar T-bills"

A San Francisco bank has begun a "solar T-bill" program for churches, unions and individuals interested in socially responsible investment of their funds.

The solar T-bills, sold for one, ten or one hundred thousand dollars, offer the same interest as conventional T-bills—about 15 percent. Continental Savings and Loan, however, will use these investments to make long-term loans for solar improvements on private homes and small businesses. Response to the solar T-bill has been enthusiastic, with over \$1 million already in the fund.

The Solar Center, San Francisco's largest solar installation company, played an instrumental role in the development of the T-bill program. The company is now pushing for a statewide program set up for institutional investors such as pension funds and insurance companies.

For more information, contact: Peter Barnes, president of the Solar Center, 1115 Indiana, San Francisco CA 94107, 415/957-9660.

## Recycling Old Tires in Nebraska

A recent ILSR study for the state of Nebraska has found that all of the used tires generated in the state—over 10,000 tons each year—can be shredded, processed and used in the manufacturing of other products. The process, called cryogenics, converts old tires into crumb rubber, a marketable product used primarily in the compound rubber industry and for highway repair and construction. ILSR found that a cryogenics plant could divert all of Nebraska's old tires from local landfills, saving land and \$24,000 in disposal costs. The plant could also generate 20 jobs and \$3 million in revenue from the sale of crumb rubber in its first year.

Cryogenic processing is a good example of how local waste material can ac-

quire increased value when reused in the right way. If crumb rubber were burned to create heat energy, it would be worth under a penny a pound. When used in highway construction, however, its value jumps to 20 cents a pound. As a compound rubber ingredient, crumb rubber is worth even more. By using crumb rubber to replace other materials, the potential energy savings could be as high as 95,000 Btus per pound. Burning crumb rubber will yield only 15,000 Btus per pound.

## Community Garden Plots: 1 Million

Every year since 1971, Gardens for All in Burlington, Vermont, has asked the Gallup organization to conduct a survey on what's happening in home and community gardening. This year's report says that home and community gardening now produces a whopping \$15 billion worth of food each year.

The statistics on community gardening are particularly encouraging. Last year, just under three million people gardened on about one million community plots. The survey projects that another eight million people would till community gardens if they had the chance. In fact, a third of existing com-

munity garden programs have waiting lists.

Community gardening programs were also found to be enormously successful. When the garden coordinators rated their projects on a scale of one to ten, 81 percent gave them a rating of seven or better. Ten percent gave their projects a 10! In two other measures of success, 22 percent of the projects will be larger this year, and 89 percent will continue, even though three-quarters of the sites are not permanent. Almost half the sites are owned by city or town governments. Twenty percent are owned by private individuals and 16 percent are owned by businesses.

The Gardens for All Gallup survey also includes information on home vegetable garden production by type and dollar amount, and data on who gardens and why. People who want to make the case for community gardens to local businesses or government agencies will be well armed with this report. A limited number of free copies are available from: **Gardens for All, 180 Flynn Avenue, Burlington VT 05401, 802/863-1308.**

## Breakthrough in Marketing for Consumer Groups

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) in Wisconsin works like many groups organized to protect consumer interests in dealing with large corporations. CUB retains lawyers and researchers, mainly to fight unnecessary rate hikes initiated by electric, gas and telephone utilities in Wisconsin.

CUB, however, has one important advantage over most consumer groups. Because of a recently passed state law, Wisconsin utility consumers (numbering one and a half million households) receive CUB promotional literature enclosed in their utility bills. The material describes CUB, details how it can save consumers money, and asks people to join (minimum annual dues are \$3, though the average contribution is \$5). With this effective marketing tool, CUB has garnered over 50,000 members in less than a year. In its first major in-



kind of businesses is almost non-existent, and few low-income people are trained for the skills involved. Almost all efforts to create small alternative energy businesses in low-income neighborhoods have been heavily subsidized by government programs. The Berkeley report on creating jobs in alternative energy, not surprisingly, is hopeful but lacks specifics.

One plan, developed after the energy report was published, involves a soon-to-close 600,000 sq. ft. factory owned by Colgate-Palmolive. When the plant shuts down this year, 400 people will be out of work, but only 15 percent of them are Berkeley residents. A group of newer, progressive small businesses in Berkeley wants to convert the factory space into an industrial park. These businesses, typified by the rapidly growing North Face camping equipment company, would use the space for expansion, or for other businesses in what they see as growing markets consistent with their concerns for environmental quality and local control.

This group, which constitutes an informal alternative local Chamber of Commerce in Berkeley, has yet to develop any plans for the proposed industrial park. Meanwhile, Colgate management has cooled to the idea of donating its surplus factory to a non-profit community development corporation (in exchange for tax write-offs). They now say the factory may remain vacant but unsold for a year or more.

All of the Berkeley reports prepared by the Institute of Urban and Regional Development are available to the public. In addition to *Creating Jobs in Berkeley by Alternative Energy Strategies* (\$1.25) and *Job Creation in the Family Service Sector: The Case of Child Care* (75 cents), they include: *The Berkeley Economy: Prospects for Economic Development Planning* (\$2), *Economic Development: An Implementation Strategy for the City of Berkeley* (\$1.50), *The Berkeley Business Incentive Program* (\$1.25) and *Feasibility Analysis for Development of the Air Rights Over the South Berkeley BART Station* (75 cents). For copies, contact: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley CA 94720.



## NCAT Designs Compact Home

The National Center for Appropriate Technology has developed plans for homes which can be built for one third to less than half the cost of the current going rate for single family homes—and heated for between \$50 and \$200 a year. NCAT says these homes are the housing equivalent of the compact car. The house can either be built at or delivered to the site for as little as \$26,000 for a do-it-yourself shell or completely constructed with union labor for \$46,000. Land costs will be additional. The average sale price of a single family home in the United States is currently \$82,000.

The superinsulated NCAT house is small—800 square feet with an optional 136 square foot solar greenhouse—but space is well planned, and the design relies on no furnace or wood stove. Blueprints for both a site built and modular homes are available for \$20 from: NCAT, Publications Division, Box 3838, Butte MT 59702. Specify either the site built or two piece modular plan.

When writing to any of the contacts mentioned in SELF-RELIANCE, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope. It will speed the reply and will save these folks some money.

## Putting a Halt on Runaway Plants

Legislation requiring companies to compensate workers and communities when a factory relocates or shuts down now exists in two states. Relocation restrictions in Maine and Wisconsin are relatively mild, but tougher bills have been drafted in 12 other states (Connecticut, Illinois, Iowa, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Indiana). In Pennsylvania, a runaway-plant bill has 90 sponsors, three times as many as an earlier version. In Ohio, runaway plants are a main organizing issue for the Ohio Public Interest Campaign, a statewide citizen action group.

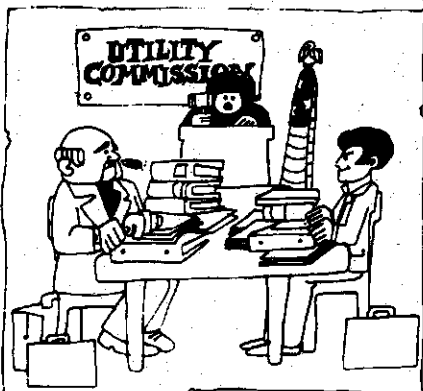
State by state organizing, however, does not prevent companies from playing one state off another. Many organizers say the only effective restriction on runaway plants is a national law. Rep. William D. Ford of Michigan will introduce such a bill (as he has done in every session since 1974) but it is given almost no chance of passage, and citizen groups are not organized to lobby on its behalf.

One alternative to runaway plants, worker takeovers, continues to receive attention. A massive study on runaway plants which discusses employee ownership has just been released in a condensed, easier-to-read edition. *Corporate Flight: The Causes and Consequences of Economic Dislocation*, by Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, is available for \$3.30 postpaid from: Conference on Alternative State and Local Policies, 200 Florida Avenue NW, Washington DC 20009. Also available from the Conference is *Employee Ownership, Issues, Resources and Legislation*, by Corey Rosen (\$6.55 postpaid). Other groups working on runaway plant and employee ownership issues are: National Center for Economic Alternatives, 2000 P Street NW, Washington DC 20036, 202/833-3208, and the National Center for Employee Ownership, 4836 South 28th Street, Arlington VA 22206, 703/931-2757.

tervention, CUB helped save over \$14 million for Wisconsin Electric Power Company ratepayers.

Not surprisingly, the state's utilities adamantly oppose CUB, even though CUB pays all costs for printing and enclosing its literature in utility bills. The legislation which created CUB passed after three years of careful negotiation and coalition building in Wisconsin. Nevertheless, consumer activists are spreading the CUB concept to other states.

CUB organizers in Wisconsin cannot respond to the many requests for infor-



Be a knowledgeable consumer... doing your homework pays off.

mation they receive, but a group organized by Ralph Nader has become a clearinghouse for information on the Wisconsin CUB and CUB organizing in other states. The Nader group has also just published a book, *Banding Together*, which explains CUB and other plans where consumers can earmark part of the cost they pay for goods and services to form an organization to protect their interests. Copies of *Banding Together* are \$10. For information, contact: CUB Campaign, Box 19312, Washington DC 20036, 202/387-8030.

Urban enterprise zones are a supplier's solution to economic development in our poorest neighborhoods. Offer tax incentives and cut back government regulation and red tape, say proponents like Reagan disciple Congressman Jack Kemp, and private enterprise will step in and create jobs. If you've doubted the logic of this idea since it first surfaced a year or so ago, *Enterprise Zones and Economic Development* (April 1981) will provide plenty of facts to confirm your suspicions. This report is no hatchet job, just a sober analysis of why the enterprise zone concept as currently proposed won't work, as well as thoughtful suggestions on what will work, based on the government's already considerable experience, both good and bad, in promoting local economic development. Included is an extensive bibliography on urban enterprise zones. Copies are \$5.50 postpaid from: Center for Community Economic Development, 1320 19th Street NW, Mezzanine Level, Washington DC 20036, 202/659-3986.

The link between energy and national security has received a lot of attention lately. We identified several reports and articles on the subject in *Self-Reliance* #26. All point to the vulnerability of centralized, large-scale power plants and distribution systems. We did not mention a 315-page report prepared by Amory and Hunder Lovins for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. No word on when it will be published, but a good summary appears in an interview with the Lovins' in *New Roots* #18 (single copies, \$1.75 from *New Roots*, Box 548, Greenfield MA 01302, 413/774-2257).

*Urban Foresters' Notebook*, free, College of Environmental Science and Forestry, State University of New York, Syracuse Campus, Syracuse NY 13210, 315/470-6688. A news and network service for urban foresters. Material has included abstracts on ongoing research and a list of 15 newsletters with information on urban forestry. Information on resources such as the slide show on urban "mini-climate" research in Dayton, Ohio, which *Notebook* subscribers can rent for free.

*Grantseekers Guide, A Directory for Social and Economic Justice Projects*, by Jill Shellow. \$7.50 from National Network of Grantmakers, 919 N. Michigan Avenue, 5th Floor, Chicago IL 60611. Basically an update of the much-used *Directory of Change-Oriented Foundations*, published in 1978. These are the 90 or so foundations willing to consider "progressive" proposals. Covers foundation purpose, areas of interest, financial data, application procedures and the all-important contact person. Those listed will no doubt be flooded with proposals.

*American Community Gardening Association* newsletter, \$5/yr. ACGA, Box 8645, Ann Arbor MI 48107. After several false starts, a network for community gardeners has finally gotten off the ground. Sixteen directors of the association include most of the nation's leading community garden organizers. The newsletter's first issue includes descriptions of well-known programs in Boston, Ann Arbor, Austin and Cheyenne. It even tells you how to get a copy of someone's masters thesis on the history of community gardening—for just \$34!

*Displacement*, by Richard LeGates and Chester Hartman, \$2.50, 42 pp. 1981, National Housing Law Project, 2150 Shattuck Avenue, #300, Berkeley CA 94704. The best report on this subject to date. Cuts through government studies that cloud the displacement problem or attempt to minimize it, particularly the misinformation coming from the U.S. Housing and Urban Development office. A follow-up report, *Displacement: How to Fight It*, is due in mid-October.

*Transformation of Transportation*, single copies free, California Office of Appropriate Technology, 1600 Ninth Street, Sacramento CA 95814, 916/445-1803. Will we ever get rid of the private car? Not likely, but there are ways to make its presence manageable. Some surprising observations: the much-touted Japanese "bullet trains" pose many problems, while the best bet for reducing inner city traffic congestion, air pollution and overall energy consumption may be the unheralded owner-operated taxicab.

# State and Local Laws Which Promote Recycling

Most recycling takes place at the local level: city dumps, curbsides of neighborhood streets, drop-off recycling centers. The local level is also the best place to find laws and regulations which promote or discourage recycling. Many recycling activists, in fact, are passing up Washington, D.C. in order to lobby their local city councils, county commissions and state agencies. Their efforts have produced many new or reformed laws breaking down barriers to recycling.

The main goal in this local legislative strategy has been to raise money to finance recycling projects. Given the small amount of capital and research and development funds provided by the federal government, recyclers depend heavily on state and local support. In some cases, they are getting it.

The Oregon state legislature recently passed a 35 percent tax credit for firms which invest in trucks, balers, sorters, scales and conveyor units used in recycling operations. Not only will this tax credit encourage recycling firms to expand, it will attract low-polluting, labor intensive industries to the state. The credit takes effect this January.

"Litter tax" laws and state resource recovery bonding authorities are the biggest and most reliable sources of funds for recyclers, but both of these approaches have drawbacks.

Litter and recycling taxes are paid by manufacturers, distributors or retailers of products. Funds are distributed as grants or loans for litter education or recycling activities. Some \$10 million has been raised nationally over the past few years.

The programs represent a compromise. The packaging industry agrees to tax itself as an alternative to container legislation ("bottle bills"). Recyclers forego bottle bill efforts in exchange for much needed capital. According to Armen Stepanian of the Fremont Recycling Station in Seattle, litter taxes used to set up comprehensive curbside recycling will recycle much more than the six to eight percent of the waste stream typically eliminated by a bottle bill.

A clear example of this strategy can be found in Palo Alto, California. Before the litter tax fund in California, drop-off programs were recycling about five percent of the post consumer solid waste stream. With about \$200,000 in equipment grants from the litter tax fund, community-based recyclers are now collecting between 30 and 40 percent of the waste stream, including organics in a composting operation located at the landfill.

The litter taxes have been opposed, however, by the National Association of Recycling Industries (NARI), a trade association of salvage dealers. NARI feels that the taxes subsidize potential competitors to established salvage operations. NARI is particularly disturbed because some litter tax grantees have used capital to recycle commercial and industrial waste streams, and not household waste streams as originally intended.

A related problem is that grants have been consistently awarded to build collection systems. But this is only half the recycling process. If collected materials cannot be reused, markets quickly become saturated, prices fall, and the entire system is undermined. For the most part, market development has gone unfunded.

Community-based recyclers are also upset with some of

the litter tax developments. One problem involves who pays the tax. In California, the tax was originally levied on all businesses, regardless of their impact on waste generation and litter. When small and cottage businesses balked at paying discriminatory taxes, the tax was cancelled, and funds were drawn from general tax revenues. This allows the offending industries to pay on a small amount—5 percent—of the total litter management program cost.

Another problem involves how the tax is used. Recyclers in Colorado, for example, found that \$388,000 of the \$486,000 so far collected on that state's litter tax has gone to

## Many recycling activists are passing up Washington, D.C. in order to lobby their local city councils, county commissions and state agencies.

industry sponsored litter clean-up programs. These kind of programs are extremely unpopular with recyclers, who generally feel that litter is a minor problem compared to the task of transforming our current solid waste management system into one based on recycling.

Further, evidence from several states with bottle bills shows that the law encourages other forms of recycling. In Oregon, Connecticut, Ohio and Michigan, bottle bills have stimulated new private and community businesses which redeem and process deposit glass, metal and plastic containers. Connecticut's deposit system specifically encourages independent recycling centers by allowing grocery stores to refuse to accept returnables if they are within a mile of such a center. This provision also addresses the major complaint stores have against bottle bills—they require additional space and labor. In Charlotte, Michigan, the Owens-Illinois glass plant now recycles 300 tons per day, a dramatic increase over pre-bottle bill days. In Oregon, a glass plant is recycling 40,000 tons per year. Before that state's bottle bill, virtually no recycled glass was used. Peter Karter of Resource Recovery Systems, Inc. in Branford, Connecticut, cites "piggybacking" of recycling on the bottle bill consciousness as the major reason for his rapidly expanding glass processing business. According to the Department of Environmental Quality in Maine, there was virtually no recycling in that state until the deposit law created markets, volumes and transportation networks which the recycling community could build on. "Deposit legislation," concludes a survey prepared by recycling activists Tania Lipshutz and Jerry Powell, "results in massive multi-material recycling and good opportunities for community recyclers, as well as improving the professionalism of municipal recycling." No wonder that in at least two litter tax states, California and Colorado, there are renewed efforts to pass container deposit legislation. For too long, activists, feel, litter taxes have unnecessarily prolonged the one-way beverage container.



In states which have resource recovery agencies, (California, Ohio, Connecticut, Florida, New York and Wisconsin), recyclers have not gotten a fair share of the pie, even though they require much smaller amounts of capital than the waste-to-energy projects which are provided bonds, loans and grants. In Wisconsin, recyclers and environmentalists had to form a low-technology advisory committee to press the state Resource Recovery Authority to take an even-handed view of the alternative approach to waste re-use. California recyclers are fighting the State Solid Waste Management's Board overemphasis on combustion plants financing. In New York, a lobbying coalition led by County Environmental Managers in Ulster and Westchester Counties convinced the state legislature to free \$1 million of the \$175 million reserved for resource recovery bonds exclusively for recycling in 1978. However, excessive restrictions on how the funds could be spent meant that little of the money was actually used by recyclers. The 1980 New York Resource Recovery Act, thanks to the efforts of recycling lobbyists, allocates \$5 million to recycling and reduces the requirements for eligibility.

## Those Who Waste, Pay

Landfill surcharges are the most recent addition to the potential approaches to raising capital for recycling. Two states have passed landfill surcharge laws which are just now taking effect. The Colorado law allows landfill fees to be used for "solid waste management," regardless of where or how it is done. Before, all landfill fees had to figure in the operating budget of the landfill. This past July, Boulder County passed a surcharge at its landfill. This medium-sized Colorado County expects to raise \$125,000 a year to support recycling projects. Summit and Larimer Counties are considering similar surcharges.

Pete Grogan of Ecocycle in Boulder feels that "this is the most logical and sensible method for funding source separation recycling. The general taxpayer is not carrying the burden, but the waste maker is. It's preventative maintenance resource recovery."

Tim McClure of Summit recycling in Breckenridge is waiting to see how Colorado's approach compares to a similar program in New Jersey. In Colorado, each county will control the transfer of landfill fees to recycling. In New Jersey, a state-wide office will collect fees from 250 landfills in

that state and redistribute funds to local communities.

"It will be a good opportunity to determine at which level of government it is more efficient to conduct this type of business," McClure said. He will be following the comparative administrative costs in future issues of RENEWS, which he edits for the Colorado Recycling Cooperative Association (Box 472, Breckenridge CO 80424).

The New Jersey Recycling Act of 1981 has drawn national attention because it is the first to involve community-based recyclers and environmentalists along with government officials and industry representatives.

To achieve maximum practical recycling by 1985, a waste management advisory committee considered a variety of legislative options (State of New Jersey Recycling Plan, New Jersey Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Newark, 1980). The committee selected the landfill surcharge over a product litter tax. It also recommended against a bottle bill, primarily because the New Jersey glass industry was committed to invest in total glass recycling (500,000 tons by 1985). It also felt deposit legislation on containers only discriminated against other kinds of materials.

Under the New Jersey plan, municipal community and private sector recyclers can count on annual cash flows for five years. Local communities will be paid based on the amount of solid waste recycled annually.

Plans like those in New Jersey couldn't come at a better time for recyclers. Waste-to-energy plants, which burn solid waste and directly compete with recycling, have just lost massive federal subsidies (a \$29 to \$50 billion Department of Energy plan to increase resource recovery 36 fold has been scuttled by Reagan). At the same time, high interest rates and weak tax-exempt bond markets have cut back private sector investment in waste-to-energy schemes. As a result, the prospects for incorporating recycling into an overall waste management program have never looked better.

—Neil Seldman

*The Institute is keeping track of local and state laws which promote or discourage recycling. For a copy of our current list, send \$2 to ILSR, 1717 18th Street NW, Washington DC 20009.*

## Community Cable

(Continued from page

vate cable operator."

This was similar to the thinking in St. Paul, where cable cooperative organizers had just a few months to prepare a bid competing against experienced and well-heeled private companies. The City Council rejected the cooperative proposal, but strong grassroots organizing (including a pro-cable coop petition with 5,500 signatures) convinced the Council to also reject the private bids and opt for community ownership.

Citizen efforts in St. Paul, as well as in Davis, may produce the models other communities can use to control their airwaves.

—David Macgregor

### Cable Industry Tries End Run Around Local Governments

The power of local governments to regulate cable systems was almost pulled out from under them by legislation proposed in the U.S. Senate this summer. The bill passed a Senate subcommittee, but the provisions curtailing municipal control of cable were defeated on the Senate floor in October. Had the provisions remained, cities would be virtually powerless to form community-controlled cable systems. Municipal lobbyists say the private cable industry is continuing to work for decreased local control of cable. To keep up with cable developments in Washington, D.C., contact Cynthia Polis, National League of Cities, 1301 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20004, 202/626-3020.

# Off the Shelf

Paul D. Maycock and Edward N. Stirewalt

## **Photovoltaics: Sunlight to Electricity in One Step**

1981 221 pp. \$9.95  
Brick House Publishing  
Andover MA 01810

*Photovoltaics will be fully economic for massive private use before a major utility can design, purchase, and install its next new nuclear reactor. . . . If we seriously begin to adopt photovoltaics now, as much as 30 percent of the nation's electric energy can come from this source by the year 2000. This is roughly three times the market penetration of the nuclear option today.*

*There is, in essence, no technological limit on the use of photovoltaics.*

With these bold statements, Maycock and Stirewalt set out to introduce the general reader to the technology and social implications of photovoltaic electricity production. They do a superb job of presenting the material understandably and entertainingly to the general reader, yet without sacrificing thoroughness or accuracy. The book is politically astute; not so surprising as Maycock was formerly Director of Photovoltaics for the U.S. Department of Energy.

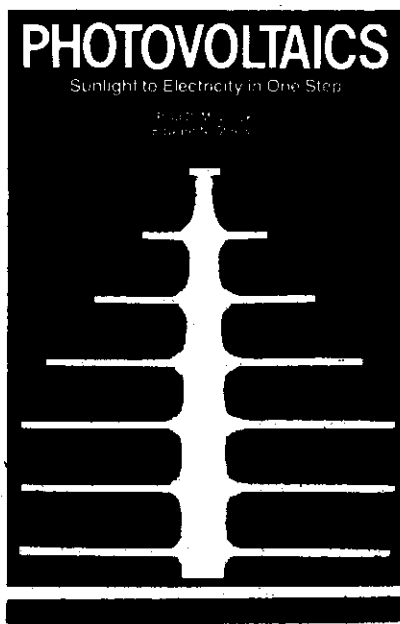
This is the best introductory book to the changing field of photovoltaics, and the most up-to-date. It is clear that the authors are advocates of widespread implementation of photovoltaics as a major national and world energy source, and it is refreshing to see them robustly make a solid case for what they believe is right, rather than take the safe, "objective" position adopted by so many professionals in the photovoltaics field. They present a photovoltaics-powered USA as a realistic choice rather than an unattainable pipedream.

There is lucid commentary on the very real technical, political and economics problems of rapidly expanding other energy sources, such as synfuels, nuclear and coal, and a good explanation of how these problems can be avoided by instead rapidly expanding

the use of photovoltaics.

The book has a wealth of concrete suggestions which can be applied by individuals and local communities to hasten the transition to renewable energy sources. For example:

- *If every zoning jurisdiction in America promptly amended its ordinances to require adequate south facing roofs clear of obstructions and with proper slope, new homes could exploit photovoltaics without major design changes or cost penalties.*
- *Insurance companies could prepare now to provide insurance . . . Companies that provide coverage for solar systems should mention it in advertisements.*
- *Tradesmen can set up a photovoltaic service and*



**This is the best introductory book to the changing field of photovoltaics, and the most up-to-date.**

*installation company, or add this capability to an existing electrical or roofing operation.*

The explanation of how a photovoltaic cell works is comprehensive and a bit heavy, reminiscent of high school chemistry books. For those who want to learn it, this is as good an explanation as I've seen anywhere. Those readers less interested in the unseen details of how a solar cell works its magic may skip that section and easily go on to the rest of the text.

The economics section is well done. The authors lead you by the hand through the appropriate financial and economic analyses without getting bogged down in details which the enterprising reader can work out for himself.

The "Applications" chapter presents photographs and descriptions of many photovoltaic systems already up and operating, from small, portable battery chargers to village power plants in Arizona and Saudi Arabia. Photovoltaic houses which are connected to the local power company grid instead of using storage batteries are given particular attention. The authors foresee these household systems becoming extremely popular in the mid 1980's.

After dealing thoroughly with photovoltaics, the authors examine the bold possibility of cutting oil imports through the combined use of stationary photovoltaic arrays and battery-powered electric cars which are recharged with solar energy when they park.

*Trading gasoline cars as they wear out for electric cars is without doubt the most cost-effective way open to free this country from dependence on foreign oil. . . . A gasoline car could be rented for an occasional longer trip, and the owner would still be ahead economically.*

Finally, the book contains a useful Appendix which explains how you can estimate photovoltaic requirements for your own house. There is also a nice "Further Reading" bibliography at the end of every chapter, and the text is extensively footnoted.

—John Furber

Mark Francis, Lisa Cashdan  
Lynn Paxson

## **The Making of Neighborhood Open Spaces**

April 1981 176 pp. \$6

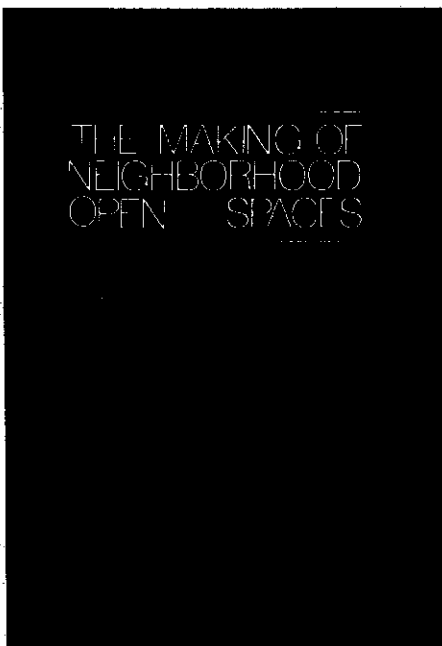
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City University of New York  
33 W. 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10036  
212/790-4550

Considering the obstacles community groups have to overcome, it is remarkable that they manage to build any parks for themselves at all. Yet citizens have designed, built and maintain tens of thousands of parcels of community open space nationwide. According to one estimate, there are several thousand community parks in New York City alone. Networks of citizen park builders thrive in many major cities, including Boston, Oakland, Philadelphia and Newark.

Many of these community open spaces are in the poorest inner-city neighborhoods, where vacant lots are usually strewn with rubble, garbage and junked cars. If a community group can somehow convince neighbors that cleaning up a messy vacant lot will ever make a difference, its problems have only just begun. Coming up with a plan for the open space that pleases everyone can be as hard as negotiating a baseball strike settlement. Often residents don't know what they want in the open space, or discover that what they think would be good really doesn't work. Yet, when citizens consult experts in open space design, the "help" people get sometimes means they lose all control of the project. And then there are the owners of the vacant land, often local governments, whose cooperation comes with heavy strings attached and mind-boggling bureaucracy that can drag on planning for months or years. Paying for improvements means endless scrounging, especially when a bake sale usually won't raise enough money to buy a single park bench—not to mention maintenance costs that seem to get higher every year. And when the project is finally running smoothly, the owner could always decide he wants his land back.

These and other seemingly insur-

mountable problems are detailed in *The Making of Neighborhood Open Spaces*, the definitive work to date on urban community-based open space development. Despite the litany of difficulties, the book is surprisingly upbeat. After reading it, you will actually want to organize a group to clean up and develop a neighborhood vacant lot. Specific information is the reason why. Want to know how much your project will cost? The book says that most run between \$500 and \$5,000. How many people can you expect to help out? According to the book, usually fewer than ten people make the decisions and do



**Citizens have designed, built and maintain tens of thousands of parcels of community open space nationwide.**

the major work. Where can you find technical assistance? It's listed in a section called "Resource Groups." The book's only weakness, at least for a national audience, is that it centers on New York City. Most of the conclusions and recommendations, however, will be helpful to anyone (send a copy to your City Councilor or local parks director).

The case studies provide a good survey of what's possible in urban open space design, without getting bogged down in a lot of unnecessary details.

—David Macgregor

## **Richard Britz, et. al The Edible City Resource Manual**

1981 335 pp. \$14.20 postpaid

William Kaufmann, Inc.  
One First Street  
Los Altos CA 94022

At the beginning of *The Edible City Resource Manual* publisher William Kaufmann makes a startling admission: "I recommended that we forgo much of the customary time-consuming pre-publication reviewing, editing, design, production and other procedures and get this book into print." Because Kaufmann saved himself a little time, readers of this book will have to spend much extra time wading through a mishmash of information, confusing illustrations and practically unreadable typefaces. Too bad. There is some useful information here, particularly the detailed lesson plans for a school farm. Some of the other information, such as the chapter on the Whiteaker Project, has been recycled verbatim from other publications which are available for free. A few items, such as the description of the pottery kiln, simply have no business in a book on urban agriculture. The rest of the material could use drastic reorganization and tight editing. A lengthy section on "urban block farms" typifies the failings of the futuristic "new age" literature—lots of fancy plans and no clues on how to get from here to there. Most astonishing is that the author and contributors have been hard at work at the University of Oregon Urban Farm, but there is nothing in *The Edible City* on how it works, other than some general principals and goals.

—David Macgregor

# Notes

Our list of integral urban homes continues to expand (see *Self-Reliance* #25 and #26 for descriptions of 11 such projects). Most are run by private organizations, universities or community groups and serve as research and education centers. Jeff Ball of Suburban Homesteaders, Inc. runs his project himself, with the help of his family. Ball's suburban home includes an organic garden, solar greenhouse, wood heat, waste recycling and food processing and storage. He is planning to raise chickens, bees and fish. Ball describes his experiences in a weekly newspaper column and a bi-weekly 30-minute television show on a local cable station. For more information, contact: **Suburban Homesteaders, 17 Greenhill Road, Springfield PA 19064, 215/544-5308.**

***Water and Power*, by Harry Dennis, \$4.95, 168 pp., 1981, Friends of the Earth, 124 Spear Street, San Francisco CA 94105.** A proposed canal would irrigate California's San Joaquin Valley at a cost of \$23 billion—more than three times the cost of the Alaska pipeline. Alternatives suggested in this book include conservation, a reform of the water entitlements system and reclaiming wastewater.

***The Successful Volunteer Organization*, by Joan Flanagan. \$7.15 from Contemporary Books, 180 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago IL 60601, 312/782-9181.** Follow-up to Flanagan's highly successful *Grass-roots Fundraising Book*, though the information is not nearly as groundbreaking. Covers tax-exempt, non-profit status, building membership, managing money and access to a plethora of "free" advice available to community groups.

***The All Montana Catalog*, \$12, Box 8567, Missoula MT 59807, 406/721-4999.** A 320-page resource book containing over 100 articles on economic, cultural and natural resource issues in the state, plus listings of small businesses and community organizations. A worthy variation of the *Whole Earth Catalog* idea that groups in other states, large cities or regions may want to adapt for their own.

***Pioneers of Alcohol Fuels: Vol. 1—Profiles of the Pioneers*, 1981, 72 pp. \$4.75 Citizens' Energy Project, 1110 6th Street NW, #300, Washington DC 20001, 202/289-4999.** In-depth reviews of the work, experiences, problems and successes of 17 people who have been among the earliest proponents of alcohol fuels. An important documentation of a little-known and fragmented movement, though the average non-alcohol specialist might find too much information here to draw any quick conclusions. Also includes another 85 "mini-profiles" of other alcohol fuel activists, with addresses and/or phone numbers for each.

***Electric Power from Orbit: A Critique of a Satellite Power System*, National Academy Press, 2101 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington DC 20418, 202/389-6731.** Inquire about availability. A put-down of the solar power satellite, grounded for the time being due to Congressional cut-off of additional research funds. Confirms findings of ILSR study comparing the satellite unfavorably to a ground-based decentralized photovoltaic network. Summary of the National Academy of Sciences report available from: **Coalition Against Satellite Power Systems, 1110 Sixth Street NW, Suite 200, Washington DC 20001, 202/289-4999.** Send SASE.

## Support Self-Reliance

The Institute for Local Self-Reliance is a research and consulting organization that explores the potential for, and the implications of, high-density population areas becoming independent and self-reliant. The Institute, incorporated five years ago as a tax-exempt non-profit organization, conducts basic research; develops working demonstration models of new technologies, institutions and small-scale production systems; develops educational materials; and disseminates information.

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