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# commonground

Fall 1974

No. 3

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## TOWARDS COMMUNITY CONTROL?

The Progress and Future of  
Community Councils



PLUS:

- Residents Build N.E. Mpls. Park
  - People's Bicentennial
  - A New Community Cafe
  - An Old Housing Co-op
  - Swede Hollow History
  - Community Crime Control
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# commonground

This is the third issue of Common Ground, a quarterly magazine about work and community. Each issue will delve into the common experience of people isolated in their workplaces or their neighborhoods in the Twin Cities, and into the means to translate this into a sense of unity and self-determination.

The focus of this issue, "Towards Community Control?", is on the progress and future of community councils in the Twin Cities. We see the increased interest in community councils over the last year as evidence that neighborhood residents want to make the decisions about what happens to their communities. We wonder, however, if community councils will help facilitate that community control or merely provide a mechanism for absorbing resident energies in relatively meaningless citizen participation programs. The experiences of one Minneapolis and two St. Paul neighborhoods in dealing with a large corporation, government bureaucracy and neighbors, discussed in this issue, helps illuminate this question.

Although answers to this question are forthcoming as neighborhoods work with community councils, we think certain issues raised by articles in this section should be considered now as residents develop community councils: 1. Unless a strong informal network of people working to solve community problems already exists, formal community councils may be rubber stamps for outsiders with designs on our neighborhoods. 2. Community Councils built out of this existing organic neighborhood organization may be impotent without resources to create and implement neighborhood redevelopment plans. 3. One form of community council working in one neighborhood may not work in another neighborhood. 4. State legislators may be allies in helping to redistribute the power centralized Downtown. 5. Although community councils may not form the basis neighborhood self-determination, they can at least provide a means to develop a more effective strategy for political and economic control of the communities we live in.

Common Ground costs \$1.00 per copy, and is available either through subscription or at Twin City bookstores, coops, and magazine counters. While New Vocations Project staff forms the core of workers on the magazine, we welcome help in writing, artwork, production, and distribution.

Cover graphic by Community Press Service

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# letters to the editors

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As I have indicated to you several times when we have seen each other, I find COMMON GROUND an extremely useful periodical which attempts to look at life and people basically in neighborhoods in these times and with some perspective from the past.

I have subscribed and hope to enjoy future issues.

I am writing to you regarding your Spring 1974 No. 1 issue. Our agency is mentioned in two of the articles. One is on page 39 where Jeanne Teigen gives credit to Waite Neighborhood House for its assistance to the Phillips Neighborhood Improvement Association. Waite House is one of our neighborhood centers. We also are referred to on page 51 in the article by Dan Armitage, "The Curling Waters: A West Bank History."

I have been with Pillsbury-Waite Neighborhood Services since 1959. Previous to that I was on the staff of the E. F. Waite Neighborhood House from 1956-59. The current history of the agency is that in 1959 Pillsbury House, located in seven corners, was merged with Citizens Club, which served the west portion of the Seward Neighborhood often referred to as 'Hell's Kitchen'. The combination of these two centers resulted in a name change to "Pillsbury Citizens Service" and these two centers occupied space in Pillsbury House. In 1967, Pillsbury Citizens Service combined with E.F. Waite Neighborhood House which was and still serves the Phillips Neighborhood and the agency name became what we now call "Pillsbury-Waite Neighborhood Services."

I find the reference to Pillsbury House on page 51 quite inaccurate. I have no idea where the author went for his material but the facts of that day as he has presented them appear to me to be someone's opinion rather than on the scene experience.

When I joined the agency in 1959, I was Program Director. In 1962, I became the Executive Director. In these two positions, I have been extremely close to program and the community. From the agency experience I would like to relate some of what happened during that period in the life of Seven Corners and Pillsbury House.

First of all, Blacks were never barred from Pillsbury House dances or any programs by agency policy or design. It is one of the prime objectives of the settlement house or neighborhood center movement to utilize its facilities and services for purposes of integrating experiences while at the same time providing people from different backgrounds opportunities to preserve their heritage. I do not know if Blacks were barred from Dania Hall. I know that Blacks were not barred from Pillsbury House because I was there. Blacks were in program and we had Black staff members.

Pillsbury House was not destroyed in 1970. In the Spring of 1968 the House underwent a series of fires set by a neighborhood youth arson. After the third major fire the facility was in no condition to repair. The House had already been acquired by the State Highway Department for Highway 12 so we moved out to a new location in South Minneapolis. In 1970 we were not operating direct services such as dances in Seven Corners. The services we were offering were in neighborhood development at that time.

As for the large demonstrations in 1963 and 1964. I am not aware of "Large Demonstrations" at Pillsbury House. There were occasional fights among young people in the neighborhood and sometimes at the center. These were not always Black against Whites. It often was young people who were having personal and family difficulties and their acting out behavior was very noticeable and



*Drawing of Pillsbury House from an old House newsletter; courtesy Many Corners.*

disruptive at Pillsbury House and in the neighborhood. We are in the business of dealing with this kind of behavior. We often were the gathering spot for troublesome youth. This was a source of concern for the local residents and businessman and on occasion we were asked to stop serving Blacks and youth who "cause trouble." We did not honor this request and to this day we serve any group we feel needs our help if we can make contact.

The most serious altercation which took place during this period of "large demonstrations" was the result of efforts a local church was making at that time to try to serve teenagers. They conceived a combination drop-in center and dance program. They did attract some teens but after the second or third week, for reasons still unknown, they cancelled the program one night. The youth showed up, found the place closed and proceeded to march down Riverside Avenue and along a part of Cedar Avenue, quite angrily. One of the results was that a large window of one of the business places was broken. This brought the police. There were meetings with police, businessmen, residents and after serious and concerted effort the young people were diverted from this activity. Our role was to work with this group almost around the clock for several days until they were able to come in and out of the neighborhood without being disruptive. In this situation, the youth were mostly Black.

I could recount stories of difficulties with White groups which were not as open but just as serious.

When one tries to document this kind of social history, he has to be very aware of the times in which events take place. This was a period in our national history when demonstrations were one of the main techniques being used throughout the country by

Civil Rights leaders. Riots were contagious, as you will recall.

It was not necessary for Pillsbury House "to open its doors to Black patrons" in 1965 because I never was aware that they were closed.

In a few short sentences the author has inadvertently and inaccurately cast some serious allegations and disparagements on Pillsbury House. Comments like these need to be thoroughly researched and reported as accurately as possible, if only for good reporting or historical documentation. At a minimum, it would seem to me that the author would have made some attempts to check out his findings with me to see whether his information or facts were totally accurate.

I suspect and hope that your readership is growing. Your periodical is a form of information and community education. Pillsbury House and Pillsbury-Waite Neighborhood Services have developed a good reputation for social services, some of it dating back to 1897. Some things we do well. Some things we try and fail. Since we offer our services voluntarily we have no hold over people essentially although we try to help people to make the choices they ultimately think are best for them. When we are quoted or referred to, we would like it to be accurate even if it is warranted criticism.

If you think it would be useful, we would be interested in having our agency be the subject of an article of some kind in a future issue.

Best wishes to you and the COMMON GROUND staff for your efforts to help improve living conditions and the quality of life for people in the Twin Cities.

--Camillo G. DeSantis

# THE CITIES' BACKYARD

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## Swede Hollow: A Community's Love Affair With Its Past

by Polly Nyberg and Jerome Bette

*Polly Nyberg lives near Swede Hollow and works for the local community action agency; Jerome Bette works in the East Side. Each has spent over two years exploring St. Paul, especially the Swede Hollow area.*

Swede Hollow. Mention it to an Eastside St. Paulite and be prepared to hear of history, legend, folklore, fond remembrances, current hot political issues, ecology, community involvement. If you are lucky enough to get her or him to take you down Payne Avenue past Hamm's Brewery and the nearby railroad yards into the narrow tree-lined ravine, you might well be amazed that such a small area could provide so much to talk about. But the likelihood is great that most of what you hear about the Hollow's colorful life is true--conflicting versions notwithstanding. There are as many stories of events in Swede Hollow as there are people who made it their home.

Climbing down the nearly 70 feet from Payne Avenue, a happy transformation takes place. From the heavily industrial commercial East Side, you suddenly are in an area of re-emerging vegetation and wildlife, which will soon be a nature study. The feeling you receive while walking about is not an urban one.

When I try to imagine what the ravine looked like, my mind always goes back to a place in Wisconsin called Little Norway. Like Swede Hollow it has a spring, stream, and high bluffs; its bluffs are covered with luxuriant growth of trees and shrubs (Nels M. Hokanson).

The physical setting is only one part of

Swede Hollow's allure. The history of the people who lived there is another. For almost 120 years it was inhabited, first by hunters and trappers, then by succeeding generations of immigrants: Swedish, Irish, Italian, and finally Mexican. Although the shacks they once lived in no longer exist, the memories of that habitation are abundantly alive. It was the place of great personal transformation for the people who lived there--from being immigrants and poor to becoming Americans with hope for their future, and the future of their children.

Our parents tried. They made every effort to give us everything they possibly could. They were poor people, preoccupied with earning a living; some took more time than others to become Americanized (Gentile Yarusso).

Swede Hollow's history is as varied as the cultures which have existed there, and it begins several years before St. Paul was incorporated as a city. In 1838, a young Irishman named Edward Phelan was discharged as a private from Fort Snelling. He quickly made a claim near what is now the Civic Center. Avaricious and boisterous by nature, Phelan was accused of the murder of his com-patriot, John Hays. However, due to insufficient evidence, he was acquitted. It was just after his return from jail in 1841 that Phelan made a new claim above the creek which now bears his name, at the site of the



Houses like these, pictured in an early view of Swede Hollow, were temporary homes for Swedish, Irish, Italian and Mexican immigrants. A stable community never formed, however, because residents usually aimed to move "up-on the hill" to Payne Ave., once they were prosperous enough. Photo courtesy of Al Johnson.

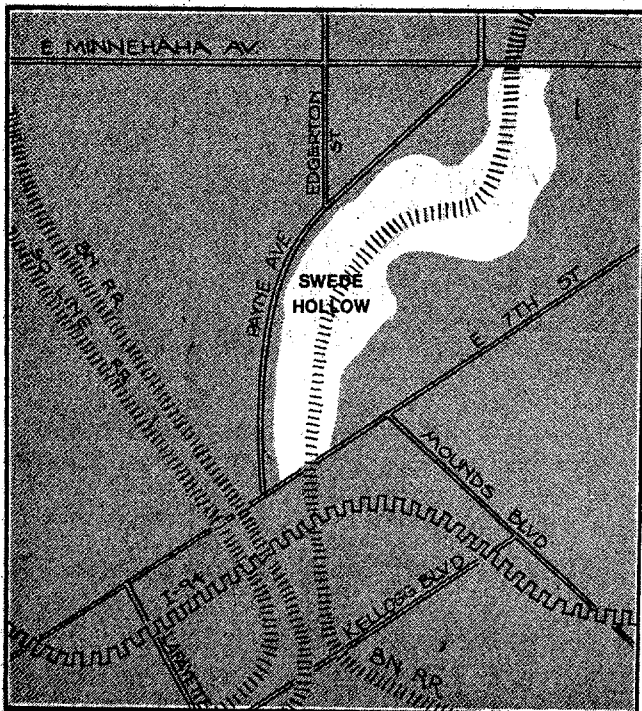
present Hamm's Brewery. The ravine offered protection, isolation, and a good life as a trapper. Others soon followed.

Hunters, trappers and timberscalers who, like Phelan, found the ravine comfortable in the winter and cool in the summer, put up shoddy hovels along the marshy banks of the stream (N.M. Hokanson).

The California Gold Rush and the promise of land and wealth lured Phelan and probably the others out of this serene setting and provided the basis of a settlement for future generations.

In 1849, when Minnesota became a Territory, St. Paul had only 900 residents. By 1860, the number had increased to 10,000, due to immigration during those years. This first great immigration was aided by the frequent steamboat landings.

Boat after boat landed at the levees bringing crowds of newcomers, until it became a serious question where they should lodge and on what they should subsist. As the St. Paul House could not accommodate all the applicants, some dwelt in tents or board shanties (Castle, St. Paul and Vicinity).



### A Cheap Place to Stay Until You Could Afford to Move

In 1855 the immigration of Swedes was unprecedented and the abandoned shacks of Phelan Creek offered quick, cheap (a fee of \$5.00/month to the city) and easy shelter to the many Swedes who took up residence there. They gave the ravine its new name, Svenska Dalen or Swedish Valley, later corrupted to Swede Hollow. Awkward with English and too poor to buy land, the Swedes found that the hollow afforded a sense of protection, to-

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getherness, a village concept. It was a place to maintain strong ties with the old ways, customs, and life styles while living for the chance to accomplish things which could never be accomplished in the old country.

What they talked about mostly was of their hunger, not for food, but the hunger that brought them here, the hunger for opportunity, for the right to vote, for a chance for education, for the right to be recognized. Here, in America, was Freedom (G. Yarusso).

The new settlers rehabilitated the old shanties and expanded them to fit their needs. New homes were built along the creek and on the bluff with little regard for building regulations. Lumber was readily available in the hollow. Some of the new homes were plain. Others had porches and gardens and were substantial enough to hold two families. Outhouses were built on stilts over the creek.

Health measures were of little or no concern to the city, and with the continued population increases and subsequent overcrowding, there wasn't much the Swedes could do in the way of sanitation but to use the creek as a sewer. The city only occasionally sent around a health inspector, so cleaning up the area was left to the people living there.

Residents instituted clean up days from time to time. On the date agreed upon, men worked to improve the drinking water situation, older girls led a horde of small children in picking up paper, broken glass, rags and other debris. Women and boys raked the garbage-strewn alleys. Later the boys waded in the creek to keep the mass of refuse in the center until it disappeared into the tunnel (N.M. Hokanson).

Otherwise life went on much as it had in Sweden, with the residents enjoying their "snuff, potato sausage, pickled herring, flat brod and especially coffee, which they drank at all hours." (Nels Hokanson) The women kept house, children, and occasionally worked "up on the hill" or took in laundry. Men were day laborers on the rail-

road, or, in later years, in Hamm's Brewery. Children had no end of amusements, including making and selling bottles of the abundant colored sand and playing in the caves which dotted the bluff.

Another great surge of immigrants occurred in the 1880's, coinciding with the enormous growth of the railroads. St. Paul increasingly became the dominant transportation center of the Upper Midwest and the starting point for more immigrants. Many of these were Swedes "recruited" through the efforts of Minnesota's Board of Immigration, which actively promoted the state abroad and "cooperated with the railroads in efforts to get cheap fares for immigrants and their families; and it build immigrant receiving houses for their temporary accomodation." (Blegen, Minnesota, A History of the State)

Some of these Swedes, of course, found Swede Hollow ideal to live in because the jobs with the railroads were plentiful. (In fact, very close by was the train to Duluth, which passed through the Hollow.)

The brakemen were popular with Swedish women who had a habit of calling to them, 'Skalle ha litte kaffe?' (Would you like a little coffee?) Because of this practice the railroad was known in the hollow as the 'Skalle Line.' (N.M. Hokanson)

## "Connemara Patch"

In 1881, the first group of Irish moved into the hollow. They were not directly immigrating to St. Paul, but instead were part of the radical, but ill-fated Connemara settlement of Bishop Ireland of St. Paul. Seeking to escape the famine and general overcrowding of their homeland, although none were farmers, all "agreed" to come to the western prairie to attempt farming. They were described as "a group of mendicants (beggars) who knew nothing of farming and were entirely unsuited to cope with life upon the American prairies." Life in the hollow with day labor was much more suited to them, and for awhile the hollow was also called the "Connemara Patch."

Although the Swedes and the Irish eventually found each other compatible, they



were occasionally at odds with one another:

The combative Irish boys, whom Father called the 'damnable Irish' threw stones at the drum during the Salvation Army services. They picked fights with the Swedes and harrassed me at every opportunity. (N.M. Hokanson)

Isolated from the rest of the city, but, of course, always close as a community, life in the hollow near the turn of the century was good, hopeful, and often rowdy:

It was a little world all of its own, and drunken Saturday night brawls failed to disturb the people far overhead. (St. Paul Pioneer Press, 1892)

I listened to the news the visitors reported: a Swede found dead, another beaten by drunken Irish, a Swedish couple hauled off in the paddy wagon after a fight... (N.M. Hokanson)

The lack of adequate sewerage brought a rare official interest in Swede Hollow. In

Etching of Swede Hollow by George Resler. Minnesota Historical Society.



1900, the city health department received so many complaints about the odor of the creek that a sewer project was much talked about. Brisk summer rains washed the area clean, and although by 1887 over \$1,600,000 had been spent on sewers in St. Paul, the cost of a sewer for Swede Hollow was seen as "prohibitive" and was never brought up again. (In 1937, the creek was diverted underground through a conduit, and the trickle of stream flowing from the spring was used as the sewer.

## Italians Find a Refuge from New York City

Eventually the Swedes and Irish living in the hollow got homes and jobs "up on the street." As they left there were always others to take their places. The next large group of people to populate the Hollow were Italians, many of whom came to St. Paul seeking relief from the tenements of New York City. Their desire was for a bit of land to grow some vegetables on, and for jobs. They came in droves on the train.

It was a period when thousands of Italian immigrants got off the train in St. Paul. They all had tags on their lapels, and on each tag was written Joseph Yarusso, No. 2 Swede Hollow. My grandfather was often there to meet them, for he felt he had an obligation to see that these people should have a place to stay. (G. Yarusso)

These people, as had the others, found the hollow a comfortable place to live. They loved it for reminding them of their homeland, there were many of their own country people close and jobs nearby. Gardens and outdoor ovens in which to bake bread and somewhat successful attempts at growing grapes (there wasn't always enough sun filtering down) characterized the homes then.

The Depression brought little change in the life of the hollow since, in a sense, it could not get much more austere, and, too, the people were already very self-reliant and cooperated in sharing what they had with one another. The area was usually ignored, not only by city health officials, but by the general city--except for some economic relief for individuals.

A description of the nearby Lincoln School, which the Hollow's children attended, said much:

Lack of physical cleanliness. No

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backing from the Dept. of Education on this. School building is oldest in city and has no gym, no auditorium, the roof leaks. There is no nearby playground, no nearby skating rink. It is a neglected area. (1930 St. Paul Welfare Council Report)

Despite disadvantages such as those described by outsiders, people continued to occupy Swede Hollow and its homes as long as they were still standing.

We children often wondered why our people chose this enchanted place to settle in. Why not somewhere else? As we got older we knew; they chose this place because they were with their own countrymen, with familiar faces, family noises, gestures, facial expressions. They selected this enchanted landscape because it resembled the place they had left behind. They loved the hills, the trees, the stream, the security of friends and relatives. (G. Yarusso)

## The Last to Leave

Like the Swedes, Irish, and Italians who at one time had made Swede Hollow their home, and who had enjoyed the Hollow's seclusion and close proximity to those who shared the same language and customs, the last inhabitants to leave--mostly Mexican-Americans--in 1956, also found the same appreciation for the Hollow. However, unlike the others who lived in Swede Hollow and left as their prosperity permitted, those who left in 1956 did so because they were forced out of their homes by bureaucratic edict.

The history of the city's concern for the people of Swede Hollow would best be characterized by the Nixonian phrase "benign neglect." Since the residents had very little political impact, perhaps the phrase should be "out of sight, out of mind." Maintenance of the area was always left up to the people who lived there, and proper sewerage was never a reality. People simply managed as best they could.

In 1956, however, the situation changed suddenly and dramatically. Working with the

St. Paul Housing and Redevelopment Authority, the city health department had the area declared a health hazard due to the contamination of the water supply. It is hard to imagine that the water supply would not have become contaminated since it was used as a sewer, but such reflections were too late. The remaining 16 families were summarily evicted and the houses were burned down by the St. Paul Fire Department.

For the Garners and the Bravos there have been no appraisals, no condemnation proceedings, or fat little checks to mend the wounds of uprooting a neighborhood. (Oliver Towne)

I don't know where we'll go. Who wants a family of 12? (Mrs. Bravo)

## Concern Heightens

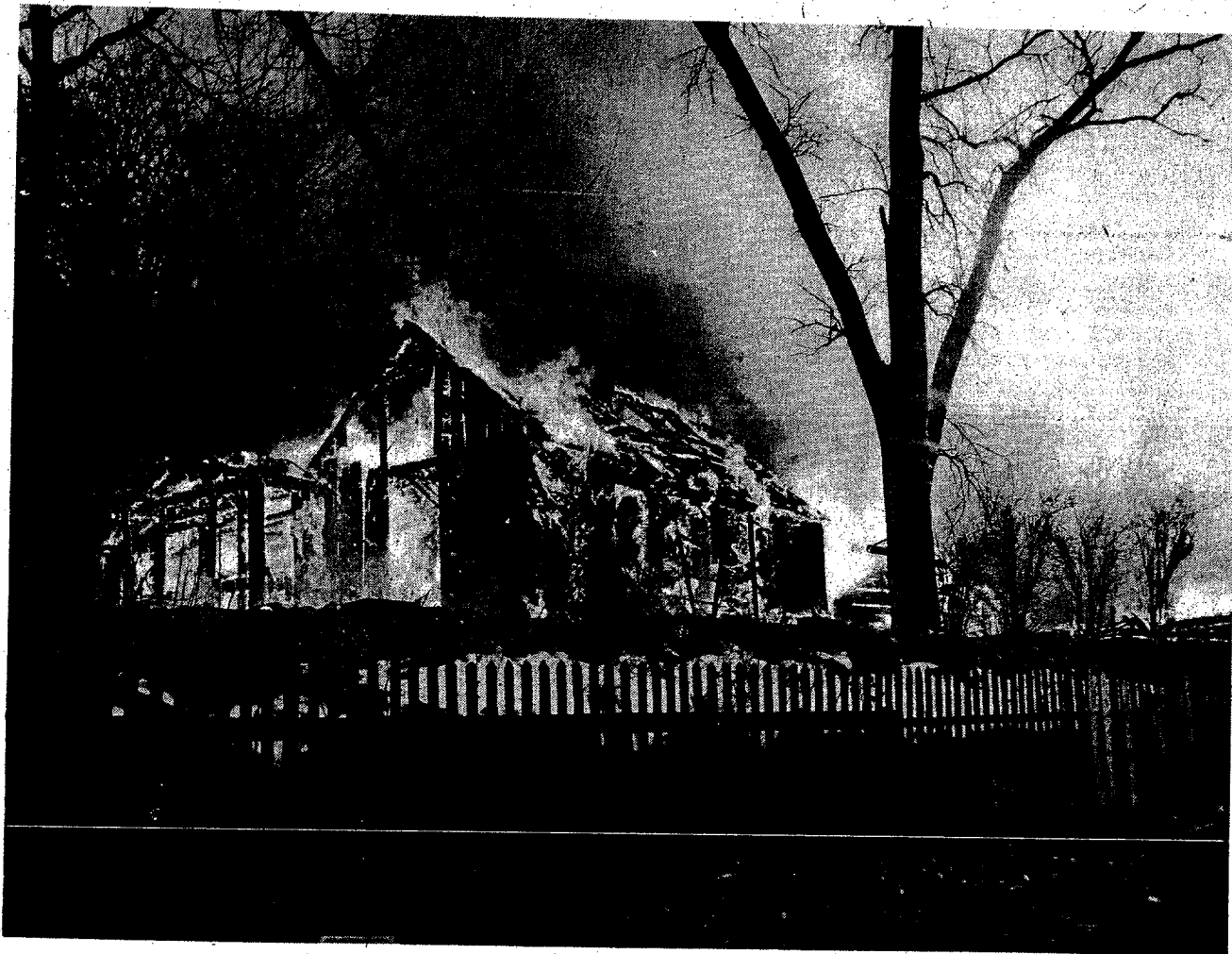
The love which former Swede Hollow inhabitants had for their home did not die with the burning of the last homes. Indeed, for the remaining "old timers" who are descendants of the original Swedish immigrant settlers of the Hollow, and the many Swedish, Irish, and Italian Hollow residents, or those many others who have been infected with the pride and love which is felt for a piece of land so rich in history and beauty, the concern about the area and its future has steadily grown. It is no longer a matter of inhabitants working hard to keep their living space clean, however. The concern and commitment of people today has been to preserve Swede Hollow as a natural site.

"I've always thought it should be a park. It's like a wild spot in the city; it's so quiet. It should go back to that." (Al Johnson)

## A Long-Term Hope for a Park

The goal of Swede Hollow Park will soon be realized. Attaining that goal has been a slow and interesting process.

Despite the generally overcrowded con-



Dec. 11, 1956. The City and the HRA had combined to declare all of Swede Hollow a health hazard, because of unsafe drinking water. Their solution was to evict all the residents and burn their houses down. Minnesota Historical Society photo.

ditions throughout it's inhabited era, the Hollow contains a surprising 23 1/2 acres - including its slopes. Consequently, it has always been a place with which "something" could or should "be done". Once again the history of the city's official interest is filled with lots of ideas and talk, but with little real action. Somewhat ironically, there are plans by the city planning board dating as far back as 1921 for a city park at the site, which were periodically updated, but apparently gaining title to the land constantly evaded the park board. One of the last semi-official plans - even before the fires were out in 1956 - was also one of the most bizarre ones the area was targeted for: it was to be filled in (!) and rezoned for industry, with hopes that "modern manufacturing plants will bloom in the ashes of the ancient edifices and old Indian trails." (St. Paul Dispatch, Dec. 11, 1956) That bright idea quickly faded when it became apparent that the cost would be enormous.

An official plan for Swede Hollow which

was never realized was to be the construction of an overpass of Highway 212 over the Hollow. 212 was to have come barreling through the East side, but a strong citizen opposition, led primarily by Dayton's Bluff Community Council President Ed Kramer, was able to eventually halt the project.

After 1956, the Hollow served the people of the city in several different ways. It was first of all a quasi-official dumping area.. (There were occasionally special city permits issued for dumping.) Everything imaginable was dumped there. Stoves, refrigerators, furniture, plaster, marble and concrete from renovated buildings. Most prominent and numerous, however, were tires. The West Seventh end of the Hollow was the place to dump old tires. Ranking second in importance of use were the caves. Whether for illicit beer parties or just general fooling around, the caves were a big attraction.

"A lot of kids go into them in the summer because it's cool inside. And there are plenty of older kids

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who use them for beer parties. I must turn in 40 calls a summer to the police department."  
(East Side resident quoted in the St. Paul Pioneer Press)

Ironically, it happened to be incidents involving precisely these two uses of Swede Hollow which triggered the recent citizen involvement with the area. This involvement ultimately culminated in Swede Hollow Park.

The first event was the tragic death in May of 1964 of a 14 year old boy who was carving his initials in the side of one of the caves when the roof gave way and buried him in rubble. Local residents were outraged that the open caves continued to provide an unsafe play area, and demanded action. They wanted the "caves sealed immediately and forever." At a hearing of the Ramsey County Board which unanimously approved sealing the caves, State Representative Richard Richie, who comes from the area, added that the board "might be able to get some State funds to create a park." A majority of the commissioners present at that meeting declared themselves in favor with the park idea. However the Highway 212 issue was at that time unresolved, and people focused on stopping it. So throughout the sixties the park idea stayed alive, Highway 212 was stopped in late 1972, and attention again turned toward Swede Hollow.

## Concerted Effort by Residents Builds the Park

By the summer of 1973, it became an idea whose time had come - at long last. Interest in ecology, ethnic cultures, reviving cities, and the upcoming city elections gave Swede Hollow the wider audience it needed. Hence, by the end of 1973, Swede Hollow Park had become a publicly funded project, and, perhaps more importantly for its success, had the support of nearly everyone in city government.

At about the same time, the St. Paul Garden Club under the influence of Mrs. Arthur Dodge, was looking for an area in the city to help develop into a nature center. "As criterion to go on, we began looking for a site where the land had his-

torical, ecological, or geological value. We were referred to Swede Hollow, which has all three." (M.A. Dodge). Sam Kelly, Director of Community services for the city also knew of the city's plans for a park and he coordinated the negotiations which led to the eventual mutual effort by the city and the Garden Club.

But the true facilitators of the movement for Swede Hollow Park were the people of the East side of St. Paul. They never let the idea fade from view. Citizen action is difficult to champion. Too often the special magic which somehow binds a group together has disappeared and the whole effort disintegrates. Individuals change in time. They drift from their mission, loose sense of their original zeal and become bare facsimiles of their original model group. This was not the case with the Swede Hollow effort, however. The prod which stirred citizens to action was the dumping on the Hollow's slopes of over 300 concrete pillars discarded from the old lights in I-94. They were an eyesore and dangerous. Their sight riled many people in August of 1973.

## The City Finally Responds

"I was driving home from work when I first saw them. By the time I got home I was mad. I called everyone. I could get a hold of downtown. I guess a lot of other people called too." (Buzz Wilson)

A September meeting was called for by two area community councils, the Phalen Area Community Council and the Payne-Minnehaha Community Council. Mayor Cohen (arriving directly upon returning from Washington D.C.) and six other city officials attended the meeting at East Consolidated School. There were 40 or 50 area residents whose mood was, according to Buzz Wilson, "civil, but with a lot of anger at the city. We wanted to hear what they had to say."

What they had to say was that first of all the pillars would be removed immediately and, according to Tom Kelly, whose interest in a park was as strong as anyone's, "We're not just going to be talking about Swede Hollow anymore. . . You'll see some-

thing done about it." The 'something' included a pledge by the city to help remove the trash in the Hollow; the erection of barriers to prevent further dumping; details of the Garden Club's and Mrs. Dodge's agreement to install plantings and help design a nature center; plans of the city to acquire the balance of the tax-forfeited land in the Hollow; a pledge by Hamm's to provide water that is clear and drinkable; and a presentation of a map of the Parks and Recreation plan for the park. Later came \$50,000 from the city for the park's development.

One other result of that meeting was the formulation of a watch-dog committee, to make sure these ideas were carried out. This was the start of the Swede Hollow Committee. One of its first activities was to organize a clean-up day for the Fall. Some residents, like Buzz Wilson, were cautious: We've had clean-ups for the last three years over here. One more won't hurt us." The clean-up did draw much help, however, and more people began to feel that the park was really going to happen.

"I have a lot of seedling trees, if they need them or anything else I can give." (Al Johnson)

During this past summer (after the land had been transferred from the county to the city) federally funded Neighborhood Youth Corps Workers spent their time cleaning out cans cement, tires, dead trees and building a stairway.

"Swampy areas have been drained, weeds and brush cut low and rocks dug out. Low areas will be filled in with dirt and re-planted with grass or flowers. An amphitheater for classes will be built as well as wood-chip trails." (Tim Agnes, Swede Hollow Park Project Coordinator)

Plans call for the completion of the nature center by fall, 1975. The Swede Hollow Committee has been working in coordination with the city and the Garden Club this year, providing assistance in planning and also pressure to keep the project moving ahead. However, most of the committee's time, money, and energy this year has been spent on fighting a new issue - the moving of the Union Gospel Mission from downtown to Seventh and Payne, directly across the street from the Hollow.

## The Mission Threatens

The proposed move of the Mission is a direct result of a plan by HRA and the

Sommerset Corporation called 'Project 85' - a revitalization of downtown through the creation of sort of an old-town-in-town. One of the first developments was the brickyard called Smith Park. It was readily apparent that the residents of the Mission's hotel were not appreciated as users of the park. Plans by HRA to move the Mission resulted in the 'hotel' designated to a nearby, but not out of sight location. (The rest of the Mission's services are not scheduled to move to the Seventh and Payne site. They are going to be located elsewhere.) The result has been a storm of protest by East Siders and the Swede Hollow Committee. The official position of the committee is that they are not opposed either to the Mission or its relocation; they are opposed to its relocation in a residential neighborhood.

"Nobody has ever come out against the work the Mission does. We all agree it does fine and necessary work. It's that we've worked for a long time to get Swede Hollow Park. If the Mission residents are not good enough for Smith Park, why should they be good enough for Swede Hollow Park?" (Buzz Wilson)

At present the issue is being negotiated by HRA, the Mission, the City, and the committee. Another site is being given serious consideration, but nothing is finalized yet.

"If we can stop the Mission from moving here, and we get the park finished, then maybe we can start working on getting Payne Avenue fixed up." (Buzz Wilson)

So the saga of Swede Hollow is still incomplete. Nevertheless, East Siders will maintain a vigilance over the area which has provided them with proud and pleasant memories.

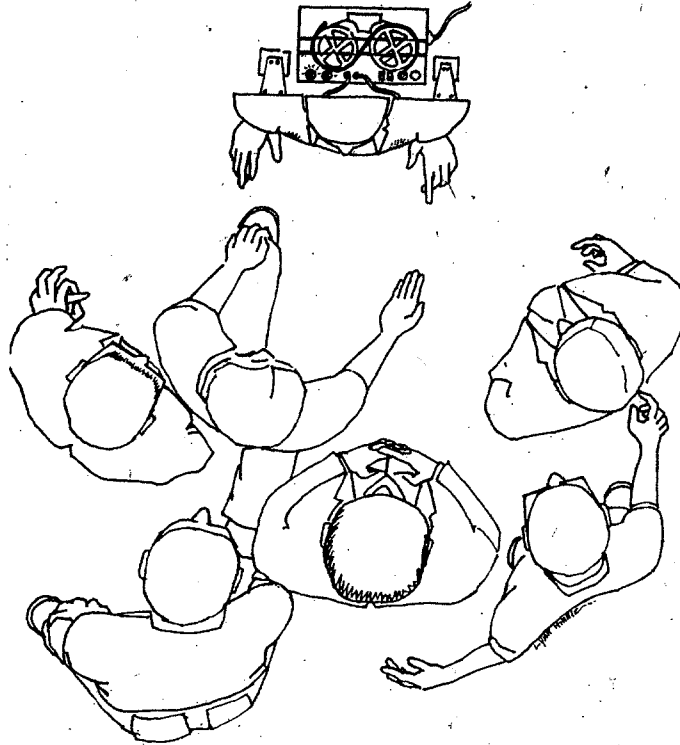
Nels Hokanson lived in the Hollow 1890-95, and wrote "I remember St Paul's Swede Hollow" (Mn. Historical Society, winter 1969.) Gentile Yarusso's grandfather lived in the Hollow. Gentile wrote the booklet, "Swede Hollow, Then...Up On the Street." Oliver Towne reporting for the Pioneer Press Dec. 1956.

Mrs. Bravo lived in the Hollow until the City burned her house down in 1956.

Al Johnson lives in the East Side.

Buzz Wilson is a longtime East Side resident and prime mover of the Park Committee.

# A FALSE PROPHET COMES TO TOWN



By Al Wroblewski

A gang of eager politicians piled onto a bandwagon. Straining to see, they peered down the road. All waited anxiously. Not a sound could be heard.

Suddenly a politician with keen vision got up and shouted, "I see it! I see it! It's coming!" Others jumped to their feet.

Sure enough. Something was coming down the road.

The politicians lept and cheered making quite a noise.

A distant speck grew larger and larger as it approached. Finally, its form could be recognized as it reached the bandwagon. The politicians were elated. It appeared to be what they all wanted to see: a neighborhood savior.

A fight broke out among the politicians over which of them deserved credit for inviting the savior to town. One wide-eyed politician not engaged in the scuffle asked the newcomer, "Please tell us, what is your name? For there are many who call themselves savior."

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In a voice that trembled the earth and sent shivers up the spine, the alleged savior responded, "I understand. But, I am the true savior, all others are imposters. I alone am the answer to all problems. I am called COMMUNITY COUNCIL."

Hearing this, every one of the politicians dropped to his/her knees in adoration. A hush fell over the crowd.

After a moment, the politicians got up from the ground. To see how the neighborhood savior would be received, they all traveled to a nearby neighborhood.

Upon arriving, the residents slowly poured out from their homes to witness the commotion. The politicians, with large grins and beaming eyes, introduced their savior to the residents.

Some residents ran inside buildings and locked the doors. A couple of others huddled closer to one another. And some just stood there and laughed.

These responses startled the bewildered politicians. They had expected a warmer welcome. They asked for an explanation.

**"The residents answered, 'The schemes brought from outside meet outsiders' needs, not ours.' "**

A fearless resident stepped forward and explained. "Well, you see, you call this a Community Council. It might really be terrific, but we have some ideas of our own. And our ideas come from within our people and grow like tall trees. They are not imported. We don't have any need for your savior."

In disbelief a politician responded, "Surely, you're kidding! I've never heard of a neighborhood not needing an outside savior. At least you need a project area committee or an Alinsky organization. But to organize yourselves without an outside scheme? That's impossible!"

The resident answered, "The schemes brought in from outside meet outsiders' needs, not ours. We once thought your ways were good. We have learned how you like us to set up little leaders and elites so you can divide them from the rest of us. We know this. So we have worked hard to create our own way of saving our neighborhood."

Grumbling, the politicians left the neighborhood. All but one, a state legislator from South Minneapolis. She stayed behind and asked the resident to explain further. Happy that someone was interested, the resident proceeded to tell the story of his very unusual neighborhood:

Years ago, a number of us were troubled. Bad housing, kids in mischief, lousy schools, and other ailments plagued our neighborhood. Politicians brought in lots of programs. None of them ever seemed to work. Every time a new program came along, our hopes were raised and then crushed when funding stopped or red tape took over. So we decided to figure out our own way to chart our own course.

First, we found out how the city officials viewed our neighborhood. For a long time they abandoned us. But, then they wanted to develop our area. Not as we would like but to make money for bigshots. The city borrowed money, started all kinds of tax breaks and land write-downs so money would flow out of the neighborhood into the hands of outsiders. Since we resisted some of these things, the city tried to pacify us. We got citizen input programs. The programs took the heat off the power people when things went wrong. And they did p.r. for the out-

siders monkeying around in our area.

The business leaders tuned in to the same notions. They wanted more profits. They wanted to expand their empires. Which they did. They tapped the neighborhood's purchasing power by opening up all kinds of commercial operations. Neighborhood people were enticed with trinkets to put their money in savings and loans so their neighbors could pay the s & l's for the use of the money. Land speculators, real estate sharks, and absentee landlords prospered. The small businesses run by local people were run out.

Government and business worked hand in hand. We became leery of their motives which didn't serve our interests. Even big labor and the churches didn't mind what went on. All the giants conspired to protect and expand their empires. Our people were left with little to call their own.

Buried underneath, we found our people. Most paid high rents. Few owned their homes. Fewer still had interest in the neighborhood; most were distracted by their work, schooling, play, shopping, which took place outside the area. Our people didn't know one another, they competed, they consumed and bought like vultures, and they felt no tie to their neighbors.

But we also found a thread of life woven through the community. Hardly visible, were the beginnings of small groups. The first two organized were a food co-op and a buyers co-op. From there many more started.

Some people got together a furniture co-op and some others began a clothing co-op. Then a childcare co-op and a repair co-op. One bunch even started a snow shoveling co-op. All this brought people together. The small groups formed a living network without leaders, without staff, without tax-exempt status, without redtape. The network grew and made good use of our resources, skills, time, money, cars, land, houses, and goods.

Each group had 10 or 15 people and acted on its own. No one joined a group without having a real, personal interest in what the group did. Some of us who saw the potential encouraged neighbors to form groups around common interests. A good beginning was

**“Even with our new enthusiasm we found ourselves misusing power. Learning how to use power correctly was and still is a prime goal.”**

sharing a meal a month with some folks. The effect of all the groups was to build self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on outsiders.

Even with our new enthusiasm we found ourselves misusing power. Learning how to use power correctly was and still is a prime goal. We were thoroughly conned into fighting for ourselves. We had competition ingrained in our bones. Shaking off the individualism was hard. The go-it-alone mentality weighed heavily against efforts to crack our common isolation. When people felt trapped, they closed the door on others. Neighbors were viewed with suspicion. Folks caught in these binds needed committed support on the part of other neighbors. And I think they got it through their small groups.

A good training ground for learning how to use power decently developed in simple basic functions and ties. Working in a co-op, putting together a commune, doing repairs together, creating dresses, toys, gardens, all helped clear the air. In many ways, these activities possessed qualities which freed people from trying to get the edge over one another. But all these meant changed personal priorities. For some the change was difficult.

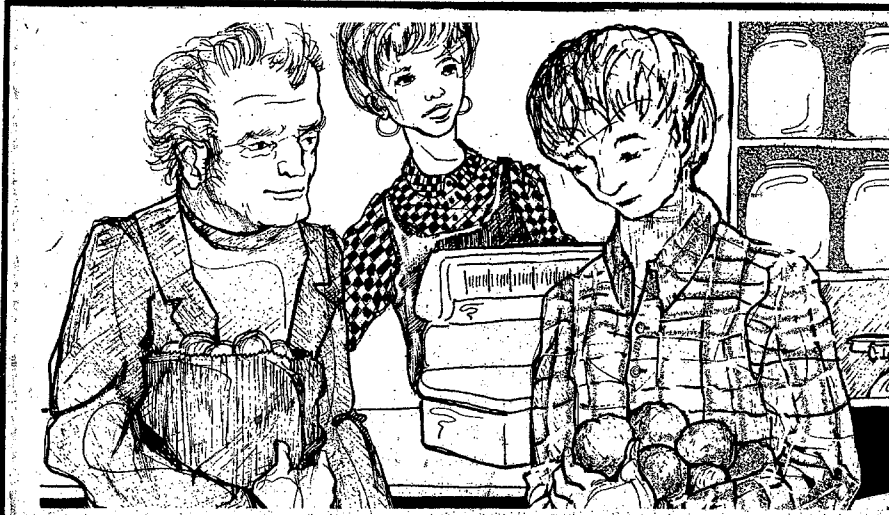
As a neighborhood, we had to learn that it was short-sighted to use our power to elbow out other neighborhoods for a piece of the pie. Although just starting, we've begun expanding our network into other neighborhoods.

Individuals within the neighborhood network weren't allowed to amass excessive personal power. Power was distributed widely and not focused in one person. So we had to get rid of most citizen participation programs. Their tight chain of command had to yield to freer, open forms of decision-making. This fostered creativity, spontaneity and warm, human contacts.

To see what others were up to, we visited the people in the Cedar-Riverside area of Minneapolis. Life flourished in the shadows of the towers. The People's Center, the food hardware, and book co-op, the New Riverside Cafe, the environmental defense fund, the tenants' union, the 400 Bar, and a maze of small social networks and friendship groups thrived. When a big crisis comes or the whole community is under seige from the outside, the groups can come together to defend the area.

Recently, this very thing did happen. Heller-Segal, developer of the new high rises, tried to hike rents on their older dwellings in Cedar-Riverside. Because a network among groups and individuals existed, a strong, united tenants union sprang up overnight. The union worked effectively to protect its members' interests. I'm sure once the issue is resolved to the tenants' satisfaction the union will dissolve. It will remain only as a memory.

While not organized formally, Cedar-Riverside's network seemed to give people a spirit and vitality often found in older



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**"We wondered why neighborhoods are expected to be structured to make decisions in meetings while the powerful downtown conspire in club rooms over lunch . . ."**

European villages. And from this insight, we decided to call our network idea, the neighborhood village.

In our village networks, people reestablished the sharing ties which can survive only in small group contacts. And people in one group, say childcare, would touch base people in another, like a tenants union. No need to chase around to countless meetings since groups gathered only to do things. The network's strength came from its informality, its personal nature, and because it responded to deeply felt needs. Of course, networking required changes in life style, more time in the neighborhood, and less consumption.

Once the network grew in strength, it took on new tasks. Dealing with spats between neighbors and straightening out vandalism was carried out within the network. Garbage collection for the neighborhood was taken over by the network. Gardening, food production and storage became a function of several groups in the network. Goods and services were exchanged within the network without using money. All of these efforts needed no city government intervention. However, at some point we'll probably start using property taxes raised in our neighborhood to handle our own services rather than let the city do a poor job.

Too many schemes we tried in our neighborhood relied on outside sympathy. We always needed someone else's money or approval. So we built an organic, living, changing

network which respected the culture and life-style of our people. We wondered why neighborhoods are expected to be structured to make decisions in meetings while the powerful downtown conspire in club rooms over lunch and make up their minds in informal settings. Why kid ourselves? Why not expand the existing ties of trust and co-operation instead of imposing a decision structure?

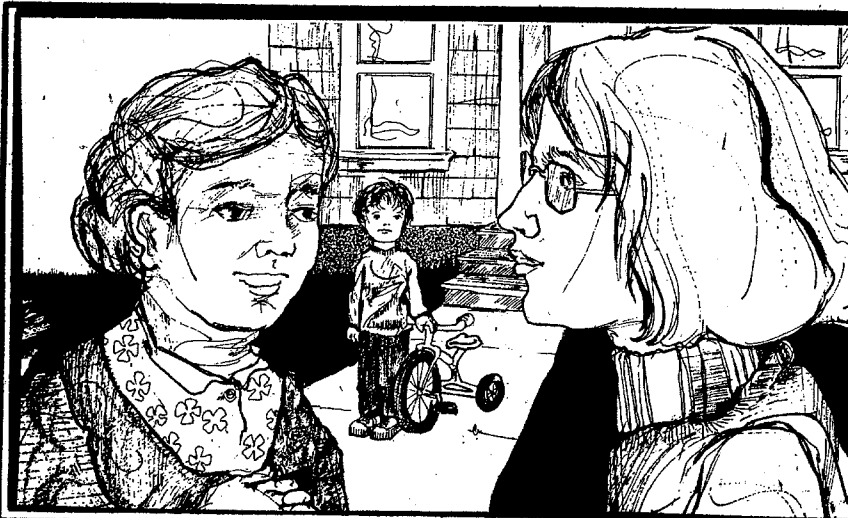
Because of the personal, daily contact involved, accountability of people speaking for a group was not as hard as trying to hold an elected rep in line.

So now we think of ways to build our village by expanding our network. Someday, the city will be comprised of many neighborhood villages which will hold power equal to that now controlled by downtown profiteers. And all the villages will be strong and self-reliant.

Having finished his story, the resident asked the patient legislator if she had questions. She replied that she didn't, but would begin drafting legislation right away for the neighborhood village act. And off she scurried, headed for the State Capitol.

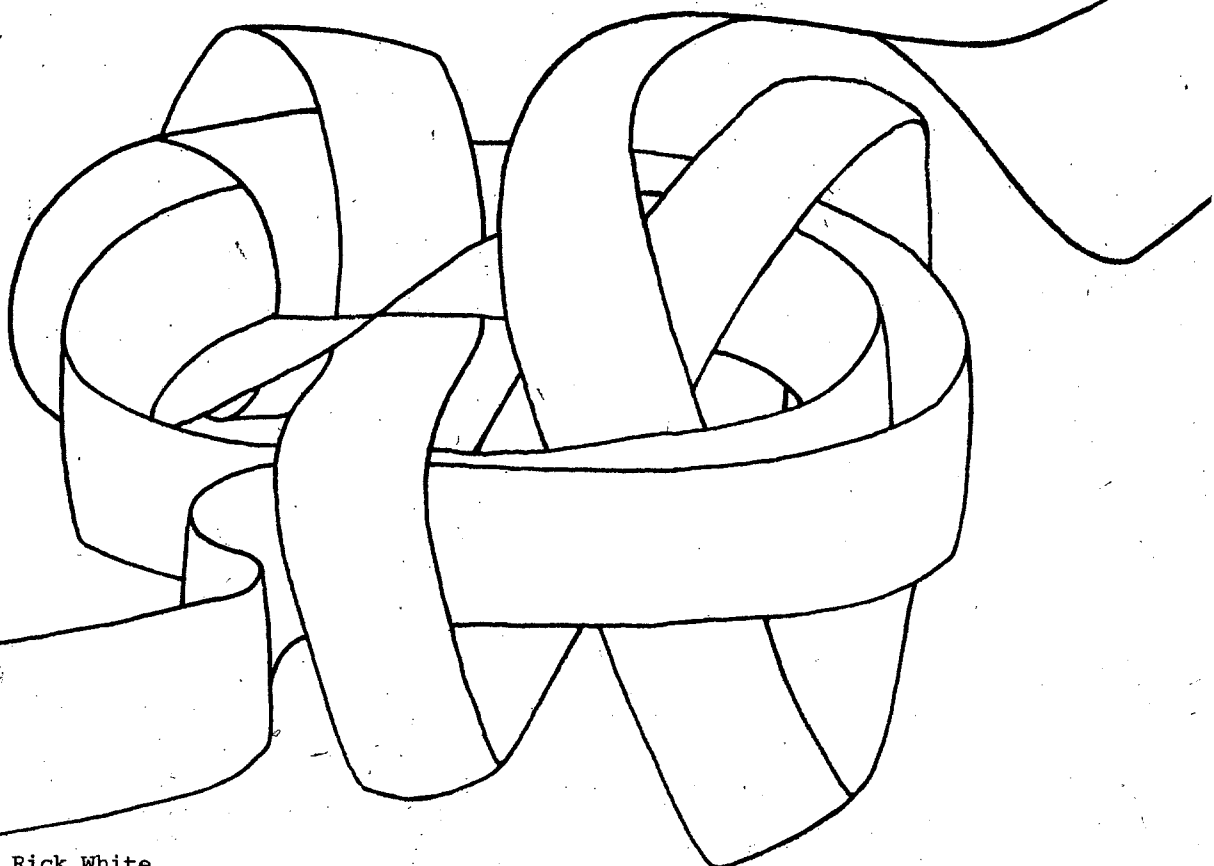
The resident yelled for her to stop. But she was already gone. Shaking his head, the resident thought, "When will these politicians learn that there are some things that can be done without making new laws. And neighborhood villages is one of them."

*Al Wroplewski - Editor of The Minnesota Leader*



In our village networks, people reestablished the sharing ties which can survive only in small group contacts. And people in one group, say childcare, would touch base in another, like a tenants union.

# LEGISLATING COMMUNITY COUNCILS - NO STRAIGHT ROADS TO LOCAL POWER



By Rick White

In 1970, the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations' State Legislative Program included a section entitled "Neighborhood Sub-Units of Government." This section provided a draft of model legislation for local governments interested in implementing a plan to give residents back some measure of control over the decisions which affect their community in order to maximize the benefits of citizen involvement in dealing with Urban problems.

In the spring of 1973, Rep. Linda Berglin, who had been working with Metropolitan Housing Committee to find a way to encourage the establishment of an on-going citizen participation structure in her district, introduced this model legislation (H.F. 1595). It was intended as a base for future discussion and action.

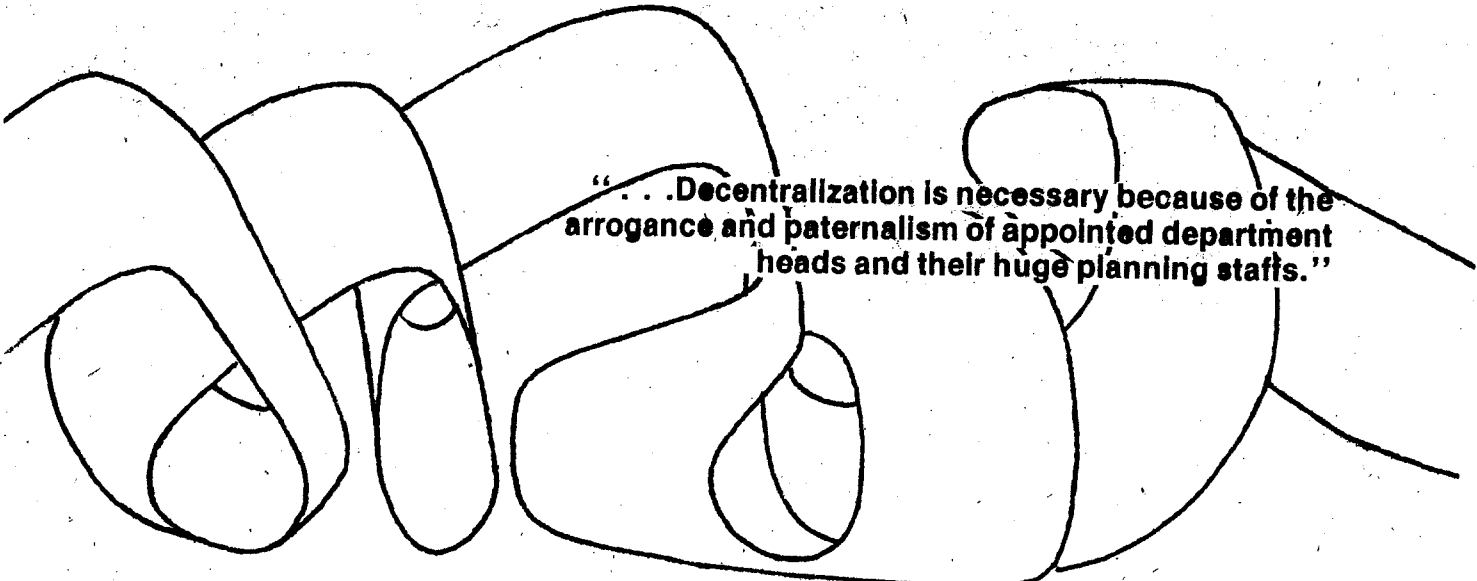
A few weeks before the Legislature was to adjourn the '73-'74 session, the Minneapolis City Council endorsed a then totally rewritten bill, contingent upon inclusion of a

new section prepared by Council President Louis DeMars and added in the 11th hour. This section called for State funding of community councils in Minneapolis, and, as intended, assured the death of H.F. 1595.

The story of this legislation, which became known as the "Community Council Bill" - what it was based on, the changes it went through and where it ended up - provide a framework for an analysis of what kind of formal structure can best foster more community control and citizen involvement, what role legislation can and should play and what can be expected from the political process in general.

## Decentralizing Planners' Powers

The notion that government has become too far removed from the people is nothing new. However, what we were attempting to address through this legislation is the fact that the responsiveness of elected officials



**“...Decentralization is necessary because of the arrogance and paternalism of appointed department heads and their huge planning staffs.”**

is not the central issue as is often claimed. Decentralization of City government in the areas of planning, delivery of services, and the formulation of redevelopment policies is. This decentralization is necessary because of the arrogance and paternalism of appointed department heads and their huge planning staffs. The city bureaucracies simply cannot be controlled by elected officials no matter how responsive.

The municipal reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, aimed at the political party machines and their inefficiency and corruption, was the dawn of the age of 'experts'. It was thought that professional administrators and their planners, protected by Civil Service and supposedly removed from the political process, could better manage a city's business while elected officials made 'policy', set taxes, argued over the allocation of funds and attended ground breaking ceremonies.

However, the potential corruptibility and incompetence of bureaucrats aside, changing conditions have caused this movement to become counter productive. With the growing complexity of running a large city, these professional bureaucracies have gained more and more power by default. And, with the advent of urban renewal, the new school of urban planning, etc., they are no longer simply managing cities' business. They are deciding the future of our communities.

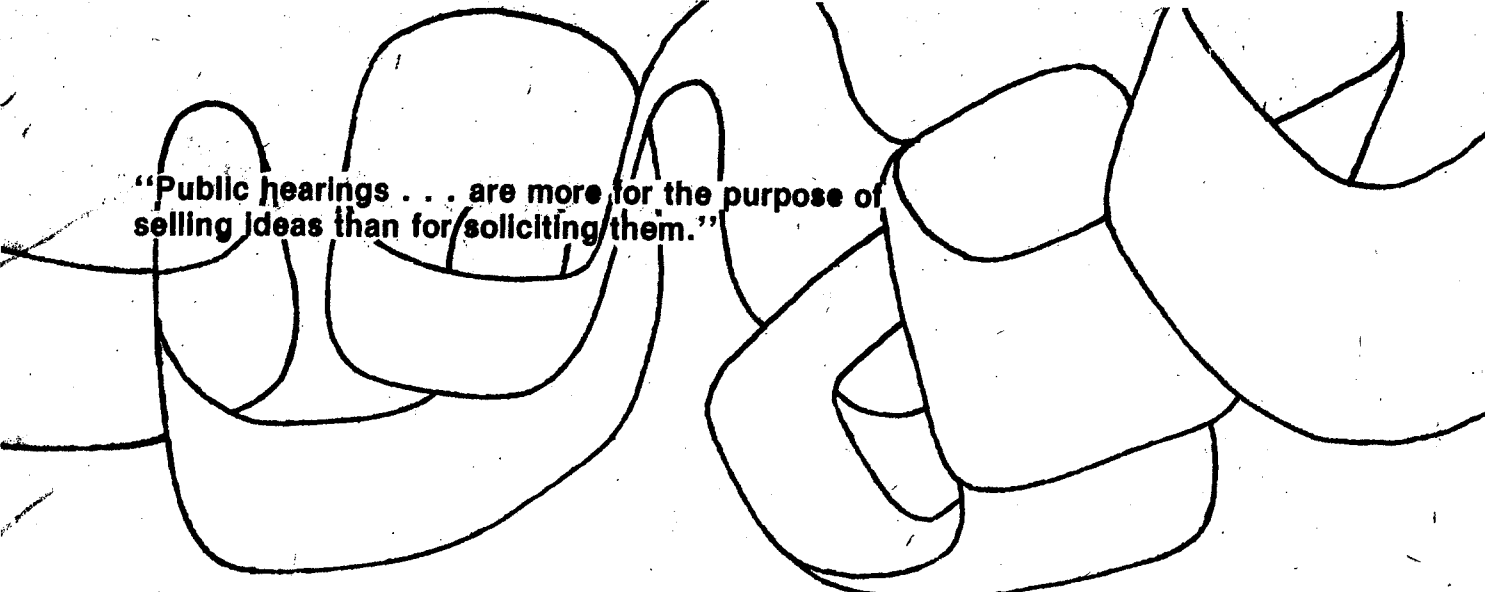
Can anyone seriously believe, for example, that the Minneapolis City Council controls Tommy Thompson, who has increased his City Coordinators office staff from 5 to 400 in a period of 5 years and created his own empire? His proposals may be rejected (more likely only altered) and he may come under fire, but he holds the reins because he holds the information and orchestrates the movements of the bureaucratic machine. Where does this leave the average citizen?

City Council actions and decisions are influenced considerably by the reports and proposals of their experts. Residents, if consulted at all are primarily involved on a token basis and usually after the planners and administrators have already decided on a course of action. Public hearings held by departments are more for the purpose of selling ideas than soliciting them, and are hardly sufficient for residents with few resources to make an impact on presentations prepared at great length and great expense by an over staffed planning department.

The development and continued existence of this situation has been very costly to the city. Average citizens see their communities being planned out of existence and become alienated as a result of the immense difficulty in participating in the workings of their government. As a result, the city is deprived to a considerable extent of the resources and cooperation of the community which are absolutely necessary for initiating and implementing solutions to problems and developing plans for the future which adequately reflect real needs.

Contrary to outdated but still prevalent administrative thinking, a related by product of the absorption of power by centralized bureaucracies has been decreased efficiency. Many people have decided that they ARE going to participate. However, in the absence of a formal structure through which communities can be totally involved (on at least an equal footing with the planners and administrators) so that their needs and desires can be adequately reflected, obstruction is the only course. How much tax money did the City Coordinators office waste on the Dome Stadium Boondogle - before and after its unveiling?

The authors of the Community Council Bill, Metropolitan Housing Committee, and other supporters felt that the creation of elected councils, with some degree of



**"Public hearings . . . are more for the purpose of selling ideas than for soliciting them."**

actual control over what happens in their community is essential in any effort to achieve a balance of power between city residents and the city bureaucracy. And only when that balance is achieved can positive citizen involvement be maximized.

### **The "Community Council Bill"**

The Bill, as introduced, detailed a procedure for the creation of "neighborhood service areas" and the election of "neighborhood councils of government" through resident initiation in the form of a petition. The petition would have to carry the signatures of 50% of the qualified voters in the proposed service area, and would set forth proposed boundaries as well as outlining powers and functions of the council to be elected. A public hearing is required following submission, wherein the governing body of the city maintains full discretionary power in approval of the petition and any of its provisions.

Other sections dealt with criteria for determining boundaries and their subsequent alteration, dissolution of a service area, election procedures, the kinds of powers and functions (advisory and substantive) which could be transferred to or shared with a council, authority to initiate and carry out self help projects, budget and finance authority (including the possibility of a separate levy by and for area residents to finance special services), procedures for council meetings, reimbursement of expenses and a required annual report.

Many of these provisions we found desirable or necessary to delete or re-write. In fact, the final versions bore little resemblance to the original. However, we felt the concept was right and the basic premise remained.

The very first revisions were primarily technical and aimed at more specifically orienting the bill to Minnesota (at that time Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Bloomington were included by definition), and dealing with such things as the potential size of neighborhood service areas. The first hearing was scheduled before the Senate Metropolitan and Urban Affairs Committee in late November.

### **Initial Bargaining**

After the November elections we went to Alderman DeMars, soon to be chosen president of the Minneapolis City Council, to show him the bill and get his reactions. He said, fine. Would he testify in favor, sure.

With that endorsement under our belts, we met with Commissioners Olson, Ticen and Hanson, who constituted the majority coalition of the Hennepin County Board. They were in favor of the bill, but wanted the County's position clarified. The original indicated that the County could create these councils, and they did not want to set up a potential conflict with the City. Therefore, references to the County in this area were deleted. However, since they have been toying with the idea of decentralized planning and delivery of health care and other services, they were interested in the possibility of entering into 'purchase of service contracts' with neighborhood councils.

This was the beginning of a series of revisions dealing with the formation of councils and the powers and functions they could hold. The City became solely responsible for the formation and operation, while the door was open to a possible relationship with other governmental units through subsequent negotiations. Purchase of service contracts had been a successful vehicle for resident



"Many were beginning to feel that it was time to get beyond the type of cash handouts that (inadequate as they are) characterized some federal programs."

determination under the federal programs. They are written for specific planning, staffing or administrative services to be provided by the resident organization in carrying out a government responsibility in the community. Official 'promises' don't have to be relied on, and the relationship between the organization and the governing body is clearly defined as well as the goals and process by which they will be met.

"Coordination" became a major thrust of the bill at this point, and increased in importance latter on. While the City Coordinators office has increased to 80 times its original size, there has been no corresponding increase in actual coordination. Several governmental units and agencies continue to operate autonomously, sometimes as if they didn't recognize each other's existence. The effects of this situation have been most severely felt at the neighborhood level, of course. What better place then to implement a resolution to the problem?

The reaction from several community organizations was favorable, but good questions were raised, and more changes were made. Metropolitan Housing Committee meetings were the main forum for discussion of the bill, and the leaders of several community organizations were contacted for their feelings. Time was a major problem, however, and the constant changes that the bill was going through made it hard to involve as many people as we would have liked on a continuing basis.

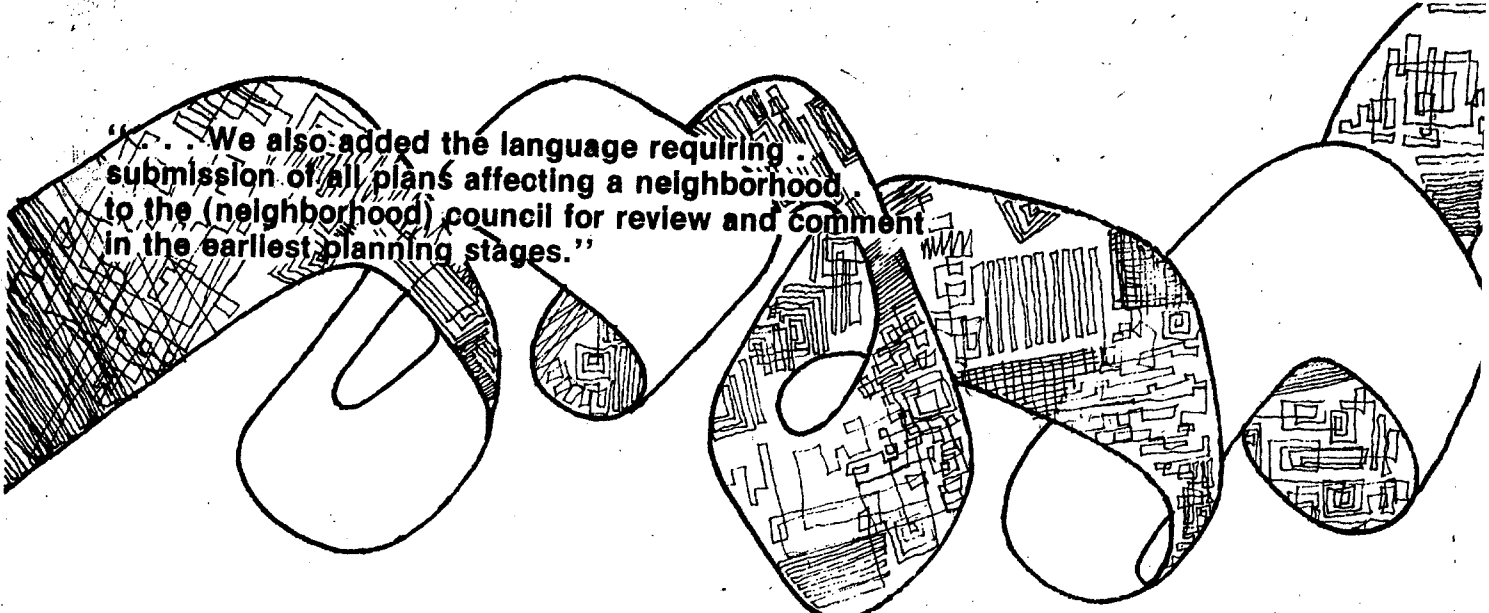
Some leaders felt that more definite powers and means of financing should be included in the bill itself. These were very touchy areas. We tried to maintain a bal-

ance that would open the door to potential maximum control while neither scaring away local officials nor establishing a structure that was too rigid. As for financing, there were several important considerations.

The section in the original bill dealing with the possibility of a small, separate tax levied by a council on area residents to finance special services is an interesting concept, but the immense political and legal problems that could have been generated by the subject (the language probably would have required an amendment to the state constitution) prompted us to leave that question to a later day.

Requiring the City to extensively finance the councils would provide them with an 'easy out' in these days of tight budgets. Beyond that, many were beginning to feel that it was time to get beyond the type of cash handouts that (inadequate as they were) characterized some federal programs. Realistically, we are going to have to put together good programs and proposals, and then sell them. That leaves the area of a budget for staff and operations for which there are many possibilities. Foundations, in-kind contributions from agencies and business, fund raising projects, purchase of service contracts, and community held, non-profit development corporations, are a few. The latter represents one of the best and most exciting prospects because it provides the opportunity for us to generate our own, no-strings-attached capital while improving the community - our way.

Apparently, if we are going to get staffing money out of the city from such sources as revenue sharing, it is going to involve extensive dealings, and for practical considerations that subject was eliminated from



"... We also added the language requiring submission of all plans affecting a neighborhood to the (neighborhood) council for review and comment in the earliest planning stages."

the legislation, as were many other specifics that we realized would have to be dealt with on a local level.

### Compromises, Obstruction, and Reversals

As the hearing drew near we had lined up testimony from Alderman DeMars; Commissioner Olson; Mary Ellen Grika of the Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association and Council of Community Councils; Judy Challman, Chairwoman of the Minneapolis Model City Planning Council; May Pecina, who was involved with several St. Paul organizations; and Dr. Atilade of the St. Paul Model City. Ted Koldrie of the Minneapolis Citizens League had indicated that organization's support and also was to testify. We ran into a major conflict with them however.

Their approach, as outlined in "Sub-Urbs in the City" would be to establish a committee to divide the City into districts, and then go about setting up a uniform system of citizen participation, predominantly advisory in nature. They suggested that the Planning Departments "ten communities" be a basis for drawing the lines. This we could not buy.

In the first place, those "communities" may make sense in terms of some blueprint that the planners may have for the city, but for the most part they have nothing to do with real, existing communities. But even without using those lines, this approach would be counter productive.

Different areas of the city have different concerns and varying levels of sophistication in dealing with the planning and provision of government services. There are also many different existing formal bodies of organized citizen participation

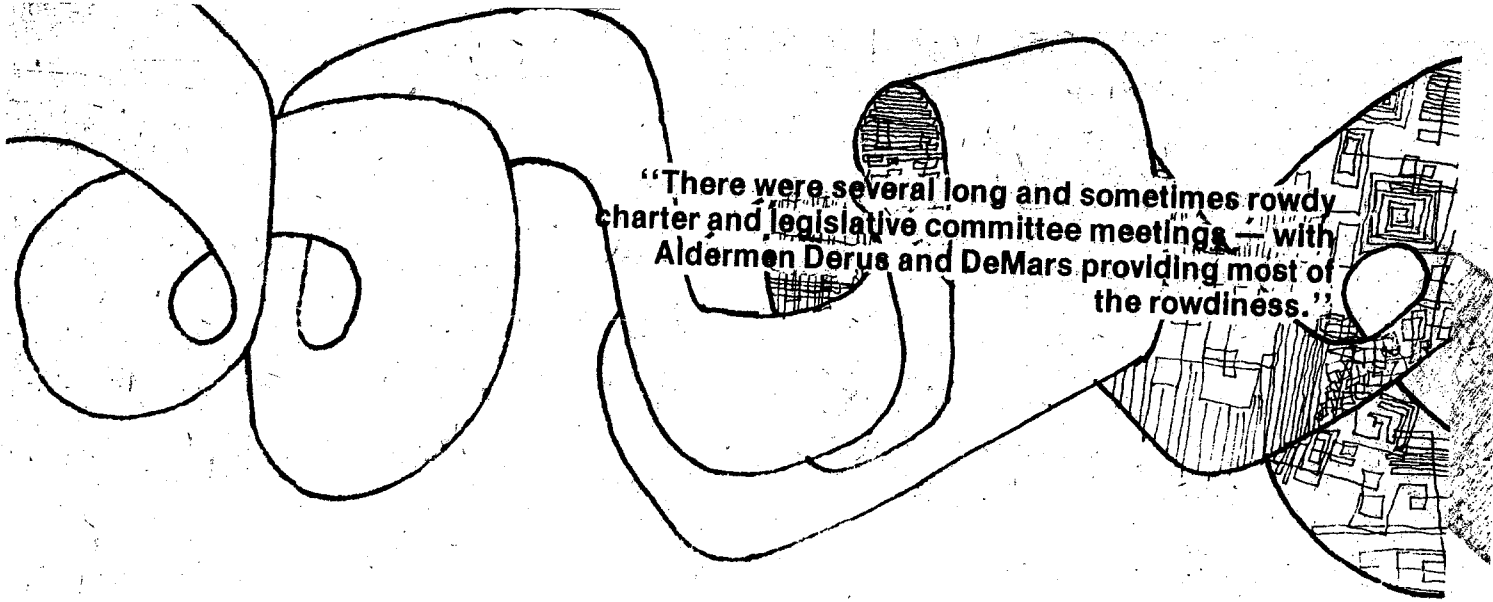
as well as areas that have historically been opposed to any such formal structure. Therefore, not only would such a plan generate unneeded controversy, it would deter service areas and councils from evolving in a way best suited for each particular community.

Local initiation was one of the most important aspects of the bill and we felt it important to maintain in all aspects. As for "advisory powers," we know what that means.

As far as dealing with official bodies was concerned, most of the activity had centered in Minneapolis. Bloomington had been eliminated and no one was sure how to deal with St. Paul government. Many people in St. Paul wanted to remain in the bill but it was beginning to appear that one bill could not cover both cities.

The only formal contacts we were able to arrange were with the Mayor's office, which had formed a task force on citizen participation that published two reports. They were not totally opposed and provided some good criticism, but a real settling of differences seemed out of the question.

One of these differences was over the question of elections. Participants in the mayor's task force who were representatives of the Alinsky inspired federations had considerable influence in the recommendations of the report. One of these recommendations was that local councils have the option of being formed through appointments by existing community organizations rather than elections (the way the federations themselves were formed). We were all for flexibility but allowing for that possibility in the bill would have necessitated eliminating its guts. The "one person - one



"There were several long and sometimes rowdy charter and legislative committee meetings - with Aldermen Derus and DeMars providing most of the rowdiness."

vote" provision of the constitution would prohibit the delegation of any governmental authority to a body that was not elected by affected residents on a proportional basis.

The functions of government councils and federations should not be mutually exclusive, but hopefully complimentary.

We were expecting the hearing to be a sounding board. We knew that there were a lot of problems to be worked out and realized that more revisions would have to be made. What we didn't expect was Alderman DeMars calling the senate author, Steve Keefe, the night before the hearing to say he had changed his mind about testifying in favor of the bill. This was a portent of things to come and, the hearing, though it had its good points, primarily made us realize how much work still remained.

There isn't space to go into all the intricacies of what happened over the next several months, except for some highlights. The bill became Minneapolis legislation and we needed approval of the Hennepin County Delegation at the legislature because time was growing short and local bills that were at all controversial needed that support. This fact necessitated formal approval by the Minneapolis City Council as quickly as possible. Several meetings went by and there was still no resolution.

Rep. Berglin and I began working with newly elected Alderman Tom Johnson, chairman of the charter and legislative committee to do some serious rewriting. We also received some helpful suggestions from Walter Rockenstein, the lone republican on the council.

Actually, the major question was to what extent we should attempt to accomplish our goals through state legislation. Our conception of the bill went through some changes

and we began to pare it down. We eliminated many of the specific details and broadened the language to make it more of an "enabling" piece of legislation. At this point we also added the language requiring all governmental subdivisions of the state and all agencies to submit all plans affecting a community where a council has been formed to the council for review and comment beginning in the earliest planning stages.

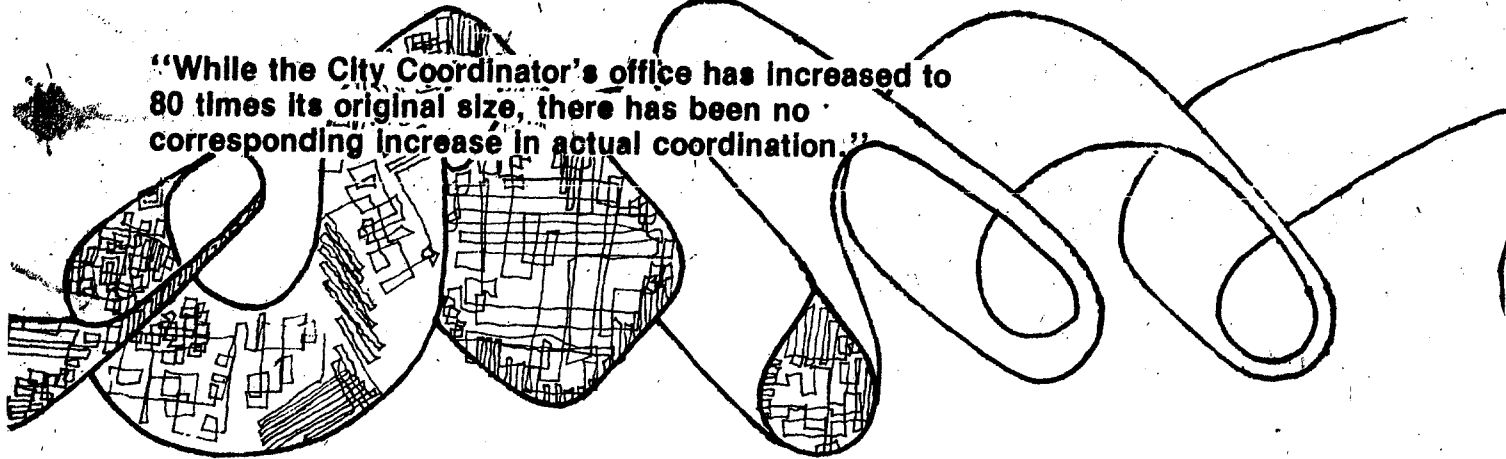
There were several long and sometimes rowdy charter and legislative committee meetings - with Alderman Derus and DeMars providing most of the rowdiness. The two played a perfect tandem. Derus was to be the bully who had occasional outbursts of understanding. DeMars, the concerned public servant who just wanted things 'done right' who went into occasional tantrums over the fact that the entire state legislature was trying to ram this thing down his throat. Occasionally they even reversed roles. It was a good act, but a weak ruse. DeMars did make some revisions that, taken apart from the rest of them, would have improved the bill. After eliminating some entire sections, stripping down the rest and adding some new language we finally had a good bill that should have been well accepted. Including the 'good' DeMars revisions and a couple unilateral afterthoughts of my own on some wording, the major provisions would have looked like this:

"Community Service Area means any area within the City of Minneapolis in which a community council is authorized to participate. . .

"The governing body of the City of Minneapolis may by resolution establish within its boundaries one or more community service areas.

"The Governing Body of the City shall promulgate regulations regarding the establish-

**"While the City Coordinator's office has increased to 80 times its original size, there has been no corresponding increase in actual coordination."**



ment of Community Service Areas and the operation of community councils, including but not limited to regulations governing a petitioning process through which the residents may request recognition of a proposed service area and election of a council to carry out proposed functions and powers, and regulations governing the process by which service area boundaries and council powers and functions may be altered or amended. . . .

"The council members shall be elected on a non partisan basis by the residents at a time provided by law for holding general elections. The governing body may establish such regulations as it deems necessary to insure an orderly elective process.

"The governing body shall hold a public hearing on the proposed formulation, dissolution or alteration of a community council . . .

"Any state agency, governmental subdivision or agency of a subdivision which plans and/or provides services to a community service area shall submit all plans and proposed actions which significantly affect that area and its residents to the council for review, comment and recommendation commencing with the initial conceptual stages of planning..

"Consistent with regulations promulgated by the governing body of the City, the governing body of any governmental subdivision of the State may: (1) Delegate substantive authority to a council over governmental services and programs which primarily affect that community and are not emergency services, (2) Appropriate such funds as it deems necessary to enable a council to carry out its functions and responsibilities, and, (3) contract with a council for purchase of services..."

"Nothing in this act shall be so construed as to prevent the City of any other government subdivision of the state from adopting additional means of involving citizens in the operations of government..."

A bill like this, by no means a wild proposal, would have accomplished the basic objectives of legislation and help set a tone for the future. The latter is apparently what Derus and DeMars felt threatened by.

### **City Council Opposition Solidifies**

Derus succeeded in including the possibility of councils appointed by aldermen. At least he had the guts, though, to vote against the whole proposal. DeMars on the other hand, faced with a more actively involved constituency in a ward with more citizen participation organizations than any other, had to be more tactful.

He claimed (at great length) that it would be a cruel hoax to pass this legislation without state funding, and proceeded to add the state appropriation section. There is no question about the absurdity of that section, but, of course, he had the votes.

In the full council meeting he played "protector of the people". Derus was blunt and somewhat irrelevant. Dick Miller cracked some of his usual obnoxious jokes and said he didn't want to go to any more night meetings. Nieman used some big words to say nothing, and Russ Green felt that periodic telephone calls from his constituents and neighborhood coffee parties could accomplish the same things as this bill. Along with Zollie Green and Sam Sivanich they put the matter to rest.





**"Metropolitan legislators are in an excellent position to provide a positive influence in dealing with the balance of power on the local level."**

I was naive enough to believe that we still had a chance to pull it out, if we could get the delegation to delete the appropriations section and adopt the legislation as a delegation bill, followed by a succession of other "ifs".

The last delegation meeting was long and tedious, and we were near the end. We had our obvious supporters: Kahn, Spear, etc., and some others. But many members were absent, including friends, some didn't want to offend their buddies in City Hall, some didn't care, and most just wanted to go home. In any event, we died around midnite.

The fact that the climax (or anti-climax) was more or less expected didn't prevent a flood of self-recrimination over past misjudgments, omissions, poor preparation and the like. But most I was cold and tired while trying to start a reluctant truck in the empty Sears parking lot across from the State Office Building at one in the morning.

## **The State and Community Councils**

Generally, everyone involved was drained and demoralized by the process. That is part of the reason why work that should have been done over the summer hasn't been done. And there are doubts about what course of action should be taken now. The subject is getting a lot more attention now, partially due to this little bill and its loose knit following, but there is a real danger of a "blue ribbon" plan being implemented that will do little to change the progress of business as usual in Twin City government. It is important to keep pushing on the local level and at the Capitol. It is essential to involve the legislature in the process.

Practically this is necessary because without enabling legislation, governmental units could not grant substantive authority to a resident council or contract for purchase of service without competitive bidding, even if we convinced them to do so. Nor could units other than the City be bound to seek the participation of councils in their planning and implementation of plans and programs.

There is a more fundamental reason also. The State created cities--gave them their existence. They are and should be involved in the structure of local government. Their present involvement, aside from taxing policy, is basically on two levels. The first is ridiculous. Valuable committee hours are eaten up as the legislators consider such things as municipal liquor licenses and the number of City Council aides. Hopefully this practice will be ended.

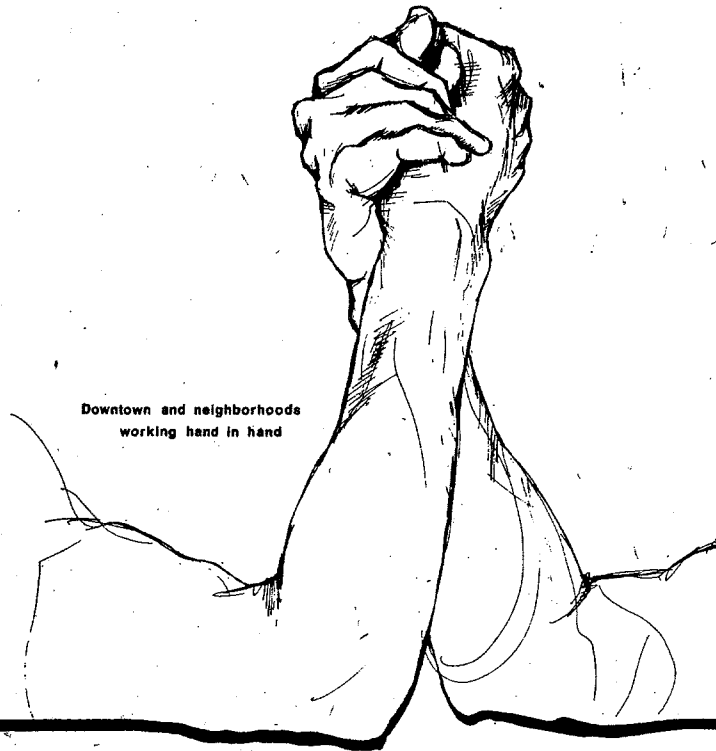
On the other level they are dealing with such things as the further consolidation of government functions into Metropolitan units. This movement makes decentralized sharing of authority over some functions even more important. Metropolitan legislators are in an excellent position to provide a positive influence in dealing with the balance of power on the local level, but first we have to remind many of them that they were elected to represent all their constituents, not just the ones who happen to be aldermen, mayors and administrators.

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*Past staff of the Minnesota Tenants Union and editor of Housing Rights, Rick White spent considerable time with the Model City Planning Council developing, among other things, a downzoning report/video tape. More recently, Rick worked as a legislative lobbyist for Metro Housing Committee. Rick is currently bartending.*

# SUMMIT-U BUILDS COMMUNITY CONTROL

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Downtown and neighborhoods  
working hand in hand

by John Gehan

The Summit-University community has just undergone a genuinely invigorating experience, one which not only has contributed toward a much-needed positive sense of community identity, but may also result in a small change in the existing power relationship.

## **S-U Residents Set Terms for "Citizen Participation"**

Summit-University is St. Paul's inner city and as such has been the recipient of several types of federal money. This money has gone directly to Summit-University by means of two federal programs: Model Cities and the Neighborhood Development Program (NDP). Both of these programs require some type of "citizen participation" in their administration. In Summit-University the "citizen participation" has taken the form of one council, the Model Neighborhood Planning Council (MNPC). It has been commonly known as the Model Cities council.

The MNPC has worked, over the years, with varying degrees of success and efficiency. In the past few years, how-

ever, it had come to be regarded with suspicion and distrust by a variety of interests, some within the community and some outside of it. It was criticized as being unrepresentative and unyielding.

This past June, 1974, the MNPC, like other Model Cities councils across the country, entered a crisis stage. The federal Model Cities money had dried up. Programs had to be cut. The MNPC found itself in a most difficult position: it had no money. No money to rent an office. No money to pay a staff. No money to rent a copy machine, or to buy office supplies. The MNPC went looking for funds.

Neighborhood Development Program money was available, but St. Paul's HRA, the agency which controls the money, was in no mood to negotiate. The MNPC had given them too much trouble in the past. Before they signed away any of "their" money, the HRA wanted a different council, a new council, one that would be more malleable.

HRA operatives contacted various com-

**“ . . . The neighborhoods, jointly, could have hiring and firing power over the city-wide HRA staff, going right up to the head honcho himself.”**

munity interests (who were sympathetic to their logic, if not their motives). Some of these interests, in contact with the powers downtown as well as the HRA staff in the neighborhood, insisted that the formation of an entirely new council, formed by an immediate (and, inevitably, haphazard) election, was the best alternative.

Meanwhile, a group calling itself the Ad Hoc Committee of Concerned Summit-University Residents began to meet. Representing a broad range of community interests, its recommendations called for expanding the existing council. New members would be appointed from previously unrepresented groups and interests. The community election would be postponed until next summer.

The Ad Hoc Committee wanted to preserve and build upon the momentum already built up by the existing council. In a series of moves, growing stronger after each, the MNPC accepted the Ad Hoc Committee's recommendations and defeated its opposition. The City Council and the HRA have now accepted the MNPC. Under very adverse conditions, lack of money and subversion by the HRA among them, the community pulled itself together to a point where the MNPC is now the "recognized group" representing the area. It was done not in response to a need created by a federal program but almost in spite of it.

## **Towards Controlling HRA**

Just where all of this will lead the neighborhood is, of course, very sketchy. The next step in the process is negotiations of a contract between HRA and the neighborhood.

Without a change in the state law, the neighborhood cannot now (legally) assume some ultimate powers of the HRA--eminent domain, for example--but could bargain for hiring and firing power over HRA staff in the neighborhood. And the neighborhoods, jointly, could have hiring and firing power over the city-wide HRA staff, going right up to the top honcho himself.

## **Community Control — Some Lessons**

In spite of the tentative outcome of the MNPC situation, perhaps it is not too early to try to draw some conclusions about what has happened:

- 1). The neighborhood's primary source of power has been political, rather than dependent on a particular law or program.
- 2). The principle threat to that base has been the fear and suspicion within the community, often created by interests outside the community.
- 3). The neighborhood should develop a tradition of looking inward for its strength, not outward to the government.
- 4). We should not shy away from using existing forms of "citizen participation" merely because they are part of a large federal program. Existing forms often have a stability and credibility which can be used to the people's advantage. We should, however, guard against those who warn of "going too far".
- 5). We should recognize the integral role that staff plays in the operation and success of any project, and strive for an as-great-as-possible degree of control over that staff by the people.
- 6). Effectively used, "citizen participation" at a minimum can expose some of the inconsistencies of society and lead to an increased political awareness within the community.

The MNPC experience illustrates a strategy for gaining greater control over the HRA. But an HRA that has been taken over by people clamoring for power would most likely die a hurried death at the hands of those in charge, leaving the people with total control over a penniless agency. Indeed, the mayor is now talking of absorbing the HRA into the city government, leaving "citizen participation" to the Planning Commission.

What is most important, however, is not that people take over HRA, but that they develop the political skills necessary to deal with whatever new form comes along. The importance of a particular form is secondary.

*John Gehan recently ran for St. Paul Councilman from the Summit-U area.*

# STEVENS SQUARE RESIDENTS TESTING SELVES, GENERAL MILLS



© By Bill Grimberg and Doug Madson  
Photos by Robert W. Denniston

Much has been written about urban America, particularly concerning the lack of safety, the flight to the suburbs, powerlessness, and the hostility of the center city.

## Stevens Square Residents Organize

At this time a year ago, none of the members of the Stevens Square Community Organization knew each other. However, all of them lived in apartments, shared similar concerns, and doubted their voices would have any meaningful effect. People living in the neighborhood realized a voice in their community was non-existent, and most acknowledged, as did Sam Woodward of the local Senior's Highrise, "this neighborhood isn't what it used to be, and there's not much we can do about it."

Nonetheless, the Stevens Square area held many attractions for people like Eleanor Mueller who has spent most of her adult life there, and those who had recently chosen the neighborhood as their home and wished to remain. For apartment dwellers, the area's reasonable rents, and relative lack of deterioration are major factors of its desirability. Convenient to bus service and shopping, the neighborhood contains institutions such as Abbott Hospital, The Community Involvement Program, The Neighborhood Counseling Center, and a close proximity to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

At the first meeting of the Stevens Square Community Organization residents arrived at a mutual understanding of what they as people living in the community

**“ . . . The Stevens Square area held many attractions for people like Eleanor Mueller who has spent most of her adult life there, and those who recently chose the neighborhood as their home.”**

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could do for themselves and their neighborhood. By the second meeting, the organization's goals were set forth. The pleasure of new friendships formed by the initial meetings prompted the idea of a community fair containing the qualities of block parties, craft displays, and old-fashioned ice cream socials.

Stevens Square, the focal point of the community, was chosen as the fair location for its convenience and to encourage people to become more familiar with the park and use it frequently. The most desirable qualities of the fair, aside from the event itself, centered on those things that would come about in the fairs' planning, and evolve from the actual day.

### **Revitalizing Stevens Square Park**

In order to bring people to the "Stevens Square Family Affair" and simply into the park, some things had to be changed. Statements like: "It's too dirty" . . . "I don't know if there's anything to be afraid of out there, but I am" . . . and "someone's always asking you for a dime, a quarter, a cigarette", were common. The City and the Park and Recreation Board had to be made aware of what Stevens Square meant to the people living around it and how the Square could be maintained to fit their needs.

The organization invited elected officials from the City Council, Park Commission, and State Legislature to a meeting, seeking explanations of red tape, and to enlist these representatives' aid and support of the community. Their response encouraged the newly formed group, however difficulties arose as people attempted to find their way through and around bureaucratic structures in pursuit of the wily and elusive commitment.

The response of departments of the Park and Recreation Board to the groups' requests varied. Carl Seline of the Maintenance Department, and Horticulturist Carl Holst, for example, were very helpful, while other members of the "professional"

staff were not so cooperative. Inquiries concerning the Park and Recreation Board's ability and commitment to sponsoring activities in the Square were refused due to "lack of funds" and restrictive scheduling. Interestingly, the S.S.C.O. was able on rather short notice to bring the Alive and Trucking Theatre Company to the Square!

It appeared that the further away from the downtown office, or the lower in the bureaucracy the staff members were, the more available and ready they were to do what they could for the parks and people using them. To some extent, staff responsiveness improved as the organization became more established and more persistent in the eyes of the board.

Members of the S.S.C.O. attended two Park and Recreation Board meetings, and Paulette Will, Charles Ellis, and Bill Grimberg made presentations on the needs of inner city parks. The importance of the parks to neighborhood residents as "front porches, backyards, social clubs, and playgrounds" was stressed, and the lack of programming by the board was pointed out. As a result, Commissioners Spartz, Petersen, and Nieman directed the staff to report on allocations for various parks so equitable funding and programs could be assured, and requested a letter of specifics from the S.S.C.O. Long-run benefits from the organization's contact with the board include: an improved maintenance schedule, stepped-up garbage removal, a part-time playground supervisor, assisting the neighborhood in planting a flower garden, a bulletin board, and a sign naming the park "STEVENS SQUARE".

Elected officials gave generously of their time to help on specific problems concerning the fair and the neighborhood. State Representative Tom Berg, once it was brought to his attention, saw to it the Institute of Arts became more active in the community. Alderman Earl Netwal helped the organization immensely by cutting through red tape in obtaining permits for the "Family Affair", getting the city to increase its services to the area, and sponsoring Operation Identification/Crime-watch.

**"The importance of the parks as 'front porches, backyards, social clubs, and playgrounds' was stressed (by residents) . . ."**

### **The "Family Affair" — A Neighborhood Get-Together**

In spite of a far smaller business and institutional involvement than was hoped for, the 100 degree heat, and confusion three days before the Fair by the Park and Recreation Board over permits, the 500 people who attended on July 14th attested to the afternoon's success. Ice cream and lemonade were donated by Abbott Hospital, a bluegrass band, a recorder group, and a polka band that appeared spontaneously, all performed. Residents of the Community Involvement Program and Clara Doerr Residence and other area artists and craftspeople displayed their work. Plants donated by Bachmans and the Park Board Greenhouse were given to adults, children received balloons and toys from the Neighborhood Counseling Center and Community Involvement Program, and the Minneapolis Institute of Arts conducted a walking tour of the neighborhood for everyone.

Realizing that people attend fairs for fun, not education, information booths were held to a minimum. The MTC, Minneapolis Police Department-Community Relations Unit, Voter Registration, and the Minnesota

Esthetic Environment Program were invited and participated.

The Mayor, Representatives Tom Berg, Marty Sabo, Senator Bob Tennesen (from the State Legislature) and Don Peterson of the Park and Recreation Board all visited the neighborhood during the fair, and residents spoke with them concerning the issues of the neighborhood. Instead of attending meetings and merely hearing about Stevens Square, these representatives participated in the activity of the area. They saw for themselves the results of the organization's efforts, and came to a better understanding of what a small group could do.

Limited goals and neighborhood activity, as principles that were effective in promoting the fair, are being employed in the S.S.C.O.'s current activities. Based on its past efforts, the continuity of the organization emphasizes three distinct areas; a continued concern for the social life of the neighborhood in sponsoring community activity, speaking for the community at governmental meetings and hearings, and providing community representation within the neighborhood and to area-wide councils and coalitions.



Part of the varied group of people gathered in Stevens Square Park for the "Family Affair".

**“ . . . It appears the city views this area as one that could absorb relocated people from development areas like Loring Park and Cedar-Riverside.”**

A sense of neighborhood and community is clearly a beneficial attitude for the residents of any area to possess. People feel safe in places where they recognize faces. Children will use a park, and their parents are less reluctant to allow them to use it, when they see people they know by sight. This identity with one's neighbors does not develop among strangers, and the S.S.C.O. has committed itself to promoting the widening of acquaintances through continued sponsorship of events. The "Family Affair" will be an annual event, and the National Guard Band and a marching pipeband are scheduled for this Fall.

Ideally, meetings and hearings conducted by the city provide citizens with an avenue for input into governmental decision making. If these functions are unattended, however, it is possible for a small area like Stevens Square to be overlooked or not considered when decisions that affect it are made. Without representation from any particular community, an incomplete body of facts may constitute the sole basis for a decision having major consequences for that area.

For the S.S.C.O., this fact is rooted in experience. The Park and Recreation Board apparently had little idea that a natural spring in the Square was a major amenity of the park. One of the community's most prized possessions, the pump, was inoperative until this was brought clearly to their attention. Through the organization's effort, the water was certified, the hardware serviced, and the pump opened. Continuing contacts with the Park Board will be necessary to encourage further improvements in the programming for, and the appearance of, the park. The S.S.C.O. will persevere in stressing those areas needing attention.

The city is currently studying down-zoning proposals. Until the S.S.C.O. attended the Whittier Area Land-Use Hearing and presented the community's viewpoint, the Planning Commission's plan failed to include the Stevens Square area. The Commission's study neglected one of the highest population density sections of the city. There is some question as to why this happened, as it appears the city

views this as one that could absorb relocated people from development areas like Loring Park and Cedar-Riverside.

Even though final plans have not been formalized, the Stevens Square community has received no indication or assurance from the Planning Commission that the area will be meaningfully downzoned. The S.S.C.O. believes better dissemination of real information and a simplification of procedures, would enhance the quality of citizen input. Under current zoning, the seventeen block area of Stevens Square could theoretically accommodate 40,000 people. Surely no sane planner would agree to such astronomical density. Yet this plan that is so far removed from reality can be changed and revised to reflect the current neighborhood more closely. As the second round of hearings begin this Fall, the S.S.C.O. plans to attend the hearings so a more reasonable plan for the neighborhood can be devised and implemented.

In the recent past, the S.S.C.O. neighborhood was segmented into different police precincts. Under a new redistricting, the entire community is now within one unified precinct. Bruce Lindberg, Captain of this expanded precinct, has contacted members of the organization to establish a working relationship with the community.

A coordinated approach to problem solving, especially as it relates to crime, is very attractive and necessary for an area such as Stevens Square. The organization currently meets with representatives from neighborhood residences for mentally handicapped persons in implementing a crime task force, desiring to deal with crime problems against the handicapped and against community residents as a whole. Lisa Carl of the Clara Doerr staff said that "Crime cannot be dealt with solely from a handicapped person's point of view, i.e. crime just against mentally retarded people or in mentally retarded residences, but from a total community level, how it affects everyone in the community, handicapped or not." The task force also cooperates with residents of Whittier East and other Whittier area groups in combatting crime in the entire district.

**"The General Mills investments in the private rehabilitation project will be a minimum of two million dollars over the next ten years, all in the Stevens Square area."**

All these groups agree that broad issues such as crime and downzoning provide natural areas for cooperation between communities.

Assuring an ear for the community's voice, the organization intends to continue meeting with the Mayor, the Ward's Alderman, and the local Police Precinct's Captain. These meetings will deal with the substantive issues and concerns of the community so that significant decision can be made with resident input and people with questions can get answers.

### **General Mills Becomes Stevens Square Landlord**

Groups from different neighborhoods working together cannot be overstated, but a community organization must first and foremost deal with aspects of its community that affect it specifically. General Mills, Inc. recently announced it was forming a company with two neighborhood businessmen; Jim Larson and Bruce Wäage. The General Mills investment in the private rehabilitation project will be a minimum of two million dollars over the next ten years, all in the Stevens Square neighborhood. Under this plan apartment build-

ings will be renovated while keeping rent increases to a minimum. General Mills has stated that during the first ten years of the program, all profits will be re-invested in continued rehabilitation. According to Cyrus Johnson, General Mills Vice President, "After that, I'd be delighted to get five percent."

In spite of initial suspicion, the residents of Stevens Square are willing to work with General Mills, as long as the relationship between the company and the community is based on trust and mutual understanding. Comments from a statement delivered immediately after the General Mills announcement, sum up the feelings of the S.S.C.O., "We are confident this interest (in the restoration and rehabilitation of sound, existing structures) is compatible with the interest of the neighborhood, and that rents will continue to remain within the realm of current resident's ability to live here." In the past, American corporations have not been responsive to the needs of the communities they affect. If General Mills does indeed operate as they have described, it will be a welcome change. The S.S.C.O. hopes the company will respond to this challenge.

The organization bases its attitude



Seeing familiar faces encourages folks to use the park as a "front porch".



**"In the past, American corporations have not been responsible to the needs of the communities they affect. If General Mills does . . . it will be a welcome change."**

primarily on the track record of Larson and Waage. Both were helpful in making preparations for the fair, and in bringing neighborhood concerns to the attention of the City and the Park and Recreation Board. Through their past efforts in the neighborhood, they have convinced many of the Stevens Square residents that their interests and those of the neighborhood coincide. All want a better place to work and live.

General Mills has exhibited a concern for the goodwill and input of the community in that they agreed to meet with the community as a whole so that resident's views could be expressed. They have also consented to community representation on the new company's board. Although the S.S.C.O. suggested the public meeting and will handle some of the details and publicity, this will not be a meeting of the organization, but of the community as a whole, taking its direction from the community.

Large housing projects have the potential for disrupting the "ecology" of a neighborhood. Just as a stable forest is made up of a delicate balance of vegetation, a stable urban neighborhood is composed of a mix of different kinds of

people. The residents of a neighborhood are in a better position than a non-resident planner to describe the composition and needs of that neighborhood. Therefore, the input of Stevens Square residents is essential to the success of any housing plans for the neighborhood.

Many different people make Stevens Square what it is; old people, young people, people of varied ethnic and social backgrounds, and from various economic strata. The differences of these people are the backbone of the neighborhood and the neighborhood organization. The Stevens Square Community Organization has committed itself to preserving the neighborhood and this mixture.

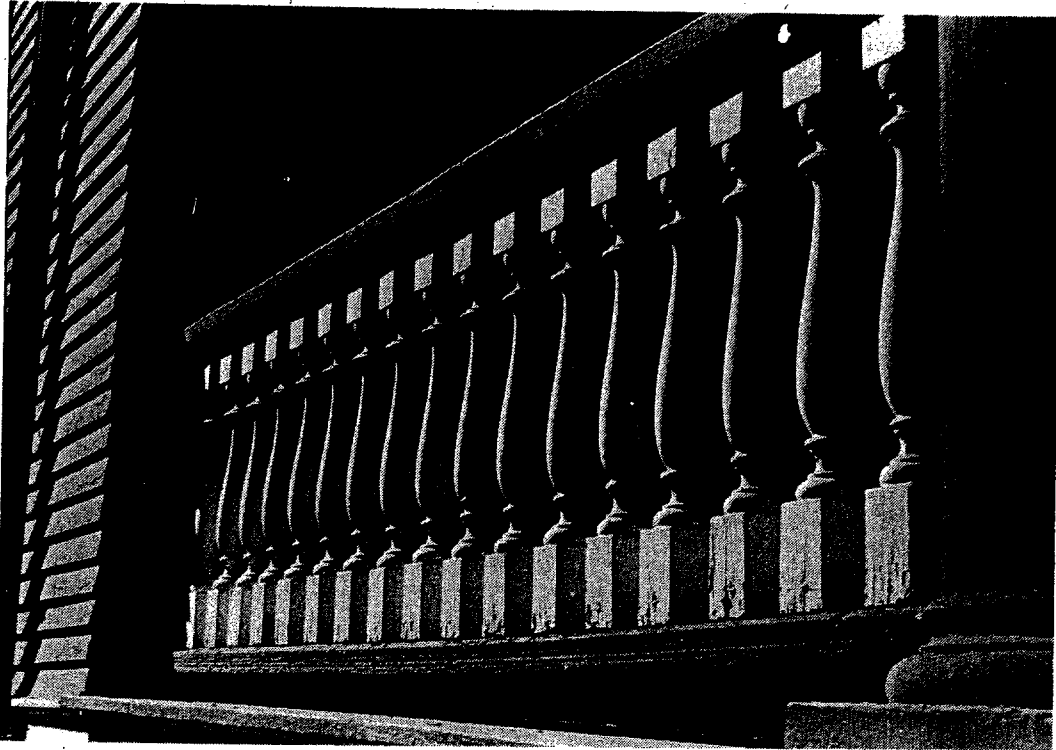
Such things as a successful fair, the establishment of identity for the S.S.C.O., and a working relationship with governmental bodies and neighborhood groups may seem to be intangible successes, but these accomplishments have gone far beyond initial expectations. It is reassuring that the efforts of neighborhood residents do to accomplish results in the Minneapolis area.

*Bill Grimberg, who works at the Neighborhood Counseling Center and Doug Madson, a freelance writer, are both Stevens Square residents.*



Stevens Square residents have park spaces for slow or fast-paced activity.

# MAINTAINING HOMES TOGETHER IN LEXINGTON - HAMLINE



by Steve Madole; photos by the Photo Collective-EH

*Steve Madole is a four-year resident of Lexington-Hamline and is a member of the LHCC's Housing Committee. He worked for the environmental planning section of the Minnesota Highway Department, until he attended a meeting of the Pollution Control Agency.*

If people pool their skills and resources, can they buy home maintenance services more cheaply? If people work together to physically revive and maintain their neighborhood, can a stronger sense of neighborhood identity result?

Neighbors in the Lexington-Hamline community of St. Paul are experimenting. They are learning how to work together to stabilize their neighborhood and they know that one of the key problems to stabilizing a neighborhood is taking care of the housing stock in a concerted comprehensive way so that people may buy, sell, maintain and upgrade their homes without fear of losing their investment. They are experimenting with co-operative housing maintenance.

Their experiment is not complete. After long months of planning, prodding, pushing, and estimating, the first house is yet to be rewired and brought up to electrical code through the joint efforts of neighbors. Nor has the first house

painting contract been let completely as area residents had planned. A firm foundation has been laid, however. A group of residents meets regularly, and is now finalizing plans for the wiring of houses. Residents have worked together. They have worked with reluctant contractors and sometimes skeptical neighbors, with tight schedules and unreasonable city regulations, but they continue to hold high hopes.

## How the Maintenance Program Was Organized

"This neighborhood is a neighborhood that according to the city and the code enforcement department and a lot of realtors is a neighborhood on the decline. I've heard people use the term it's a 'blighted' neighborhood and it's a 'deteriorated' neighborhood. The Council feels

**"I guess we don't accept as inevitable that the neighborhood is going to decline and is going to be another renewal area."**

very strongly on being an effective force to prevent decline and deterioration and to turn it around. I guess we don't accept as inevitable that the neighborhood is going to decline and is going to be another renewal area."

--Barb Boulger

In the Spring of 1973, residents of the Lexington-Hamline area began meeting in various homes in the community, determined it was time for them to become involved in their neighborhood. Their concern resulted in the revival and reactivation of a dormant neighborhood organization, the Lexington-Hamline Community Council. The Council addressed itself to problems dealing with all aspects of neighborhood life. One of the obvious problems was the quality of the housing stock and the appearance of the neighborhood. A committee was formed to deal specifically with housing problems.

## Caring For the Entire Neighborhood

"So what if I can fix my house up and the people next door let theirs go to Hell. To me, personally,

it's (Housing Maintenance Program) meant a hope for the neighborhood. If you don't fix it up, it's going to go down."

--Chester Zimniewicz

Although the idea of banding together for housing maintenance has probably occurred to many people before, it was probably a report by the Citizens League, "Building Confidence in Older Neighborhoods" that got things off the ground. The report, published in June of 1973, found that efforts to date to save the inner cities and older neighborhoods had been inconclusive if not unsuccessful. The cause, they believed, was the emphasis on construction of new housing and neglect of the maintenance of old. "... (We) must now think in terms of maintaining subdivisions, rather than individual housing units." So says the report.

Of a number of different options suggested by the Citizen's League report, the Lexington-Hamline Community Council decided to opt for joint contracting. The plan that Lexington-Hamline settled on was one where the Community Council would determine the demand for services, select those of highest demand, bring together the people who had in common



Barb Boulger and her daughter: "Most people, when they heard about the program, thought it was a ridiculous idea. Not the concept, but that no one could pull it off.... You know, it was Chester who said, 'This program will never work, never in a million years. And he spoke from experience. That kind of attitude kind of spurs you on."

the need for a particular service, and help guide them in the selection of a contractor to do the work for the whole group. Although the plan seemed simple, every step taken represented a difficult decision. There was no precedent in the area and each decision was accompanied by the gnawing doubts that go with walking on virgin ground. The Lexington-Hamline group applied to the Citizen's League for help and expertise in setting up the program, only to find that the Citizen's League had no experience or guidance to offer. Instead, the Citizen's League has turned to neighborhood

associations for their experiences and is trying to accumulate a body of knowledge that they can disseminate.

I asked Barbara Boulger how the Lexington-Hamline group got started. She said, "I went to Spring Hill (a Citizen's League-sponsored weekend seminar on the report, "Building Confidence in Older Neighborhoods") and we discussed these ideas. We came back to the Housing Committee and we discussed the idea of doing a maintenance program along with all these other things we were doing.

## about the Lexington-Hamline Community Council:

The Lexington Hamline Community is bound by Lexington Parkway on the east, University Avenue on the north, Hamline Avenue (to the Short Line) on the west, and Summit Avenue on the south. The community is located adjacent to the Summit-University area and shares many of the same problems and concerns. However, the Lexington Hamline Community is not a code enforcement area and therefore has received no assistance from either the City of St. Paul, H.R.A. or any other concerned agencies.

The Lexington Hamline Community, of approximately 3,000 persons is primarily residential with the exception of a few business' along Selby Avenue. The neighborhood is 85% white and 15% black.

The neighborhood has a high proportion of people 62 years of age or older (13%--1970 Census) and 36% of its population is under 18 years of age. Housing stock is generally between 50 to 70 years old (although there are some newer homes). Many of these homes are in need of maintenance or rehabilitation efforts. There are few services provided to area residents, low income home improvement loans (at low interest rates) are not available and, until the Council was organized, no neighborhood recreational programs were available to our children.

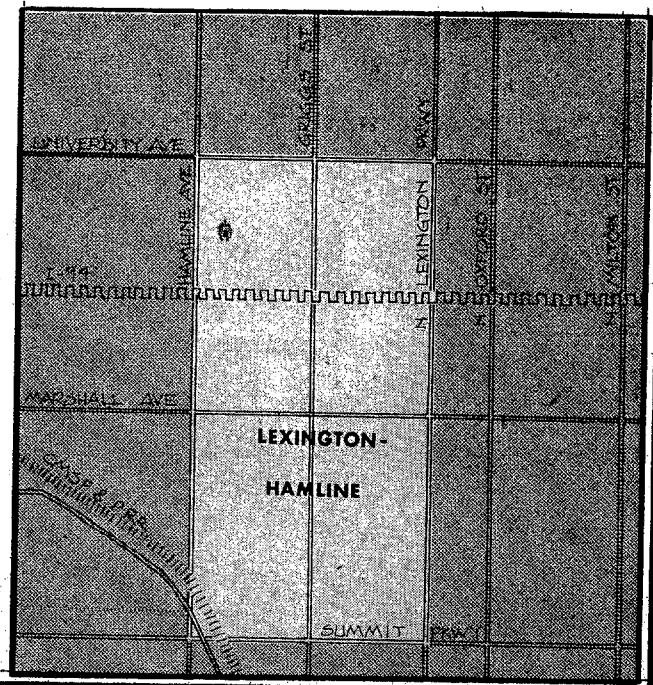
In the last five years the Lexington Hamline neighborhood has experienced many changes. Some of these changes have caused the area to be considered "blighted" or "deteriorated" by many City H.R.A. and HUD officials and also by St. Paul realtors.

The Lexington Hamline Community Council does not accept this bleak picture of the area. Rather we feel that we

are a unique and viable community because our area brings people together: people that are young and old, of different social, economic, racial and religious backgrounds. Such diversity is our unique strength.

The Council's program objectives are many but include recreation, housing, communication, block organization and education.

The Council has a monthly newsletter, regular monthly meetings, in addition to committee meetings. They have developed a recreation program, successfully procured a city park in the neighborhood, published a brochure describing the neighborhood's assets, and worked on ordinances concerning boarded-up and vacant houses in addition to their work in housing maintenance.



"It's a new and complicated idea . . ."

## Sounding Out the Contractors and the Residents

"Then we talked to one contractor about whether or not he felt the idea was even feasible; that a contractor would be willing to work in the neighborhood; whether it could save the residents money if they did it on a neighborhood basis. This contractor thought it could work and was interested in the program...

"After the meeting with the contractor, we drew up a two-page sheet of maintenance jobs that needed to be done: plumbing, cement work, steps, wiring, roofing, painting, windows, that kind of thing. What we did was take the sheet around to five or six different block meetings. People who were interested signed up on sheets that indicated what area they were interested in..."

"From those meetings it became apparent the areas most people were interested in were wiring, painting and roofing, which is what we eventually wound up offering to the community. Then that Housing Committee meeting

Chester Zimniewicz: "So what if I can fix up my house and the people next door let theirs go to Hell. To me, personally, (the Program) meant a hope for the neighborhood."



took place where they decided whether to offer a lot of ideas to the people or to offer just the three options.

## Selecting a Target: Three Tasks in Three Blocks

We opted for the three: wiring, painting, and roofing. Then we picked three target blocks on which to concentrate our efforts. These were the blocks between Dunlap and Griggs on Selby, Hague, and Laurel. The reason we picked these three blocks was that visually they seemed to need a lot of maintenance. One block also had a house that was being rehabilitated, and we felt we should get things going on that block to get people to take care of their homes.

The Housing Committee felt very strongly that we needed to use a lot of staff time if this project were to get off the ground. We needed to put a lot of effort into it. Our staff person, Judy Williams, went door to door to every person on each of these three blocks, carefully explaining the maintenance program and asking if there was any interest in it. She also left forms to be filled out and sometimes had to go back three or four times to get them. From these forms, we compiled a list of people who were definitely interested in having either wiring, painting or roofing done."

The program was also publicized in the monthly newsletter and at monthly meetings. Most of the participants however, were people who had been contacted directly by Judy Williams or had heard the program explained at block meetings. Barbara said, "...I guess the board felt it was worth having a person get out, having a person get in contact with people directly, rather than just sending out a flyer. It's a new and complicated idea."

What happened after this was that the question was raised whether people really knew what kind of money they would have to spend to get their work done. As a result, a contractor was asked to

**"Many people were shocked and surprised at the cost of repairs, and some people dropped out immediately, realizing they couldn't afford to have the work done."**

supply preliminary, non-binding estimates to the interested residents. Many people were shocked and surprised at the cost of repairs, and some people dropped out immediately realizing they couldn't afford to have the work done.

### **Proceeding With the Most Interested People**

What was left was a core of interested residents who were mindful of the costs, and still willing to proceed. The Housing Committee put the problem of how to choose a contractor(s) to the program participants. This is not a problem to be taken lightly. After much discussion of licensing, bonding, union vs. non-union, word-of-mouth recommendations, etc., we fell back on a list of contractors who had not been administratively debarred from working on HRA projects. Although the Housing Committee was not totally satisfied with this method of selection, no one has yet come forward with an easier or more fair way. Contractors from the list, in each of the three areas were contacted to see if they were interested in participating in the program. Disappointingly, few replied except for the electrical contractors. Later, a spot check revealed that few of the contractors had understood the nature of our program.

Next, the committee wrestled with the problem of how to get bids. In the end, it was decided to turn the list of interested residents over to the contractors and let them make the contacts. Some of the contractors did, others didn't and those that did, did so after the two week deadline we had set. One of the electrical contractors withdrew from the program when he was given the list of seven names saying that was too many houses and he didn't have enough men to do that much work.

### **Paring Down Even Further**

For a multitude of reasons, it was decided to drop the painting and roofing sections of the program. Only one roofing contractor was left and it

was felt that this wasn't competitive. Several residents dropped out of painting because of the high cost, or because they were running out of time and had little faith that the program would get off the ground before summer's end. Of the large number of electrical contractors who were interested only five were invited to bid because some residents objected to having fifteen to twenty contractors traipsing through their houses. Of the five, only two submitted a complete set of bids.

Another meeting was called and the bids were compared. The low bidder on six of the proposals was highest by \$65.00 on the seventh proposal, and the resident with the odd bid wanted to pull-out from the group. A number of solutions were discussed, but more questions resulted. Would the pull-out of one person cause the remaining bids to rise? If so, by how much? Were the bids really made so as to give a discount for the group package? Would the odd man be able to get his low bid without the other six? Were the bids any cheaper than the residents could do on their own? Are two bids sufficiently competitive to make a decision? Might the six subsidize the loss of the seventh to preserve group cohesion?

As you can see, this got to be quite a can of worms. The residents decided to seek more bids, ask the contractors about the effect of dropping one party and to delay final decision until that information was obtained. That is where the Lexington-Hamline Co-operative Housing Maintenance Program stands at this writing. So far, no contractor selected through the program has done any work.

### **next issue . . .**

*Steve Madole's article continues, with an analysis of the Housing Maintenance Program: How well has it worked, and what can other neighborhoods learn from their experience?*

# St. Anthony East Builds Its Own Park

by Kathee Prokup

*Kathee was an urban studies major at the U of M, where she heard about the St. Anthony East Park through the Office of Special Learning Opportunities. She now works on the World Resource Inventory Project.*

The 3-acre site of St. Anthony East Community Park is shaped into an open space with simple formal structures for creative play and leisure. The uniqueness of this park is the residents' decision (made independent of the Park Board) to use the space the way they envisioned.

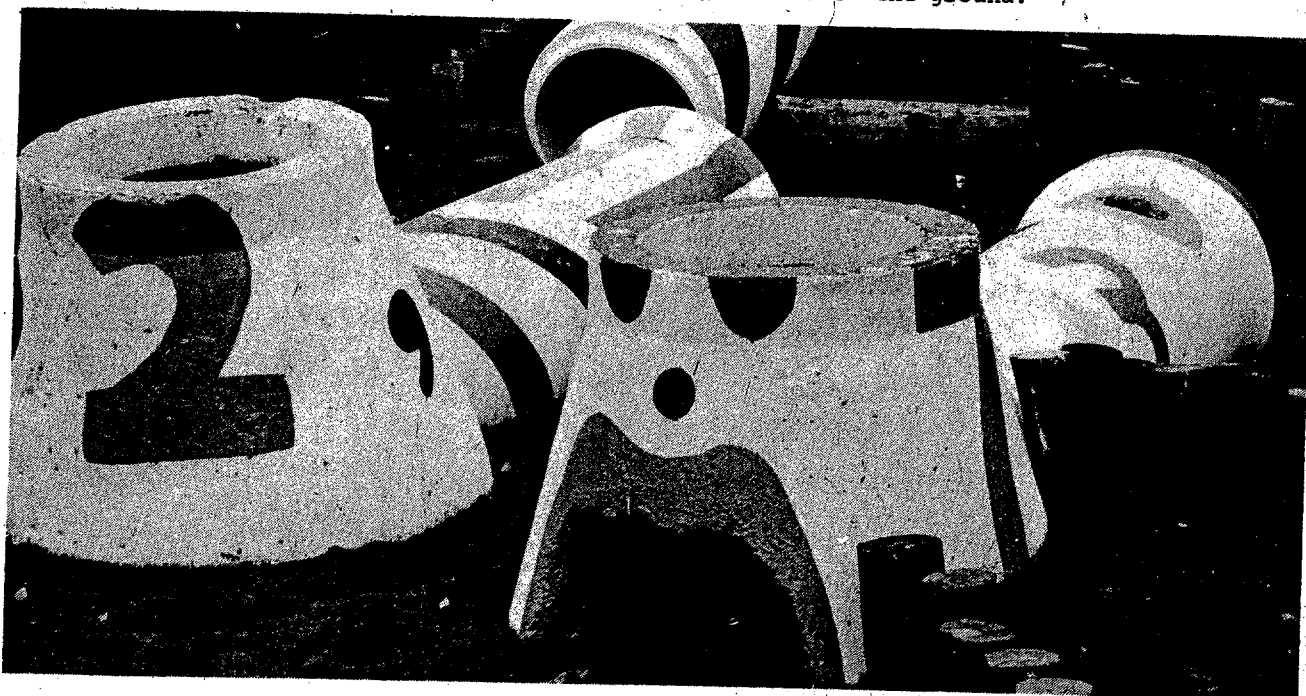
Not just little people but also big people needed an open area for breathing space. The community, composed largely of senior citizens and young families, united in one voice to exclaim, "We want a park!" St. Anthony East Project Area Committee, a citizen advisory council for the HRA urban renewal program in the area, initiated the park development of the small acreage bounded by a railroad underpass, a switchyard, an alley and two truck routes. It wanted the land to remain a playground, because children had been using it as such for years.

The Minneapolis Housing Redevelopment

Authority owned the vacant lot at the corner of Broadway and Central N.E. "The 3-acre vacant land was a junkyard, unkept, a waste of space," said Randy Walter, project director. "The St. Anthony East neighborhood association proposed to HRA that the space be used for a park rather than HRA's proposed plan to build houses. HRA was very cooperative with meeting the community's needs."

"It was just an eyesore back there," said Doris Mruz, president of Community Commons Corporation. "PAC talked about developing the land into a park. Then there was talk about developing apartment buildings. That's when Kathy Kittleson and I began petitioning within the six block area for the tot lot."

"Long before the park was started the kids would use one of the hills as a slide in the winter," continued Doris. "They would slide on the hill before the snow had even covered the ground."



**“Not just little people but also big people needed an open space area for breathing space. The community, composed largely of senior citizens and young families, united in one voice to exclaim, ‘We want a park!’ ”**

A non-profit St. Anthony East community organization formed specifically to work on the park project, the Community Commons Corporation. Originally, the local HRA office stated it would give title of the park space to Randy Walter, project director and the Community Commons Corporation. The downtown HRA office and other people in HUD wanted a more stable organization.

### Help From Many Fronts

At this point the two community organizations approached the House of Faith United Presbyterian Church to join forces and funds. House of Faith is in the process of taking title of the property. The park land is valued at \$10,000 but the HRA received Department of Housing and Urban Development approval to sell the land for \$500.00

Naegele Outdoor Advertising, Inc., has offered to rent a billboard location there for \$175.00 a month on a 10-year contract. The rental fees will support park maintenance.

"One of the most appealing things to me about this park's development is the fact that it has encouraged people to look at land that is part of their community but

not directly theirs, and say, "What can we as a community do with this land to make our community more attractive? It's the people thinking about the we rather than the I," said Rev. Walter Clarke of House of Faith Church.

"St. Anthony East is like a small town in some ways. The people retain their loyalty to the area. This has advantages. It causes a sense of stability in community pride. There are members who feel that community is something to take responsibility in and not just in their own property," added Rev. Clarke.

The Community Commons Corporation took the responsibility of naming itself park developer and property manager. The vacant land thus formed the raw materials for the playground, but to come to life it needed the workers to shape the open space.

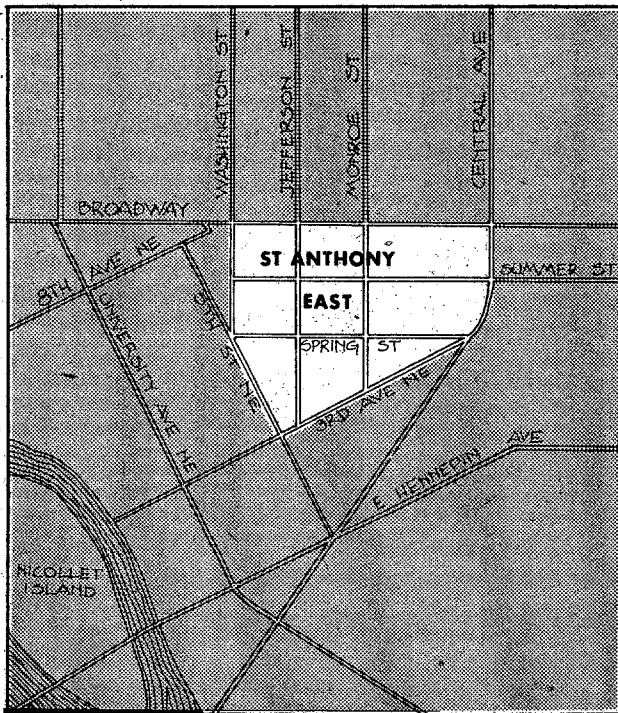
The Church provided a stipend for Randy, and assistant director, Georgiana Bergquist. The funds to pay the workers came from HRA, originally \$15,000, but presently down to \$9,000. "The kids that worked on it last year were under 13 years old mostly, but this year they are 15-16 years old because of the child labor law," explained Randy. "They all live in the immediate area, they all know each other and are paid \$2.50 an hour and the younger tykes are helping out, too, as volunteers."

### Grass, Gardens, and Neighbors

During the summer months the workers tilled land, laid soil, replanted trees and built picnic tables. Senior citizens from a nearby highrise at 828 Spring St. planted a garden of vegetables along with a neighbor.

"The park has been quite a change for me," said Fred St. John, 81, a resident of the community for 22 years. "It isn't only the garden that I have over there. I have met so many nice people. That to me is just as much or more than what we grow in the garden."

"I like children. I know so many of them around here. Some of them now have jobs working that I helped to teach to walk or helped them to start counting. A lot of them call me grandpa. The others call me Uncle Fred. Anytime I hear either one of those names I know it's for me."





**"One of the most appealing things to me about this park's development is the fact that it has encouraged people to look at land that is part of their community, but not directly theirs, and say, 'What can we as a community do with this land to make our community more attractive?'"**

"I visit with the children alot. They would come over when I was working there and I always have time to visit with them. I can do the gardening after the children are gone. The first twenty years of my life I was raised on a farm and I don't think that entirely gets out of a person's blood. You like to plant seed and watch it come up and grow. Just for the pleasure of it I went every day after the garden was planted two to three times a day. It's only two blocks away."

A few older citizens have adopted some of the kids in the neighborhood as their grandchildren. The kids have come to appreciate the older people, they have learned to respect them. The senior citizens and the kids enjoy each other," said Kathy Kittleson, secretary of Community Commons Corporation.

Besides the garden the senior citizens have open spaces seperate from the tot lot for picnic and sitting areas. An area is set aside for the recreational pastime of horseshoe.

The tot lot is designed so it's too small for older kids providing smaller children with their own sense of space to play. Besides a ball field and second horseshoe area, a hill to climb and slide has been grounded. The main concern is to keep the park an open space, replacing it with grass.

### **Battles to Fight**

The community is not without battles in shaping the park. They have had their bouts with the city. "The city is slow in removing garbage on their designated space," said Randy as he pointed at the pile of landscape debris on city property.

Lastly, the city has \$10,000 in public improvement funds they must spend in the St. Anthony East area. Specifically, the funds could be spent on screening Central Avenue. The screening project amounts to the construction of earth berms (3 or 4 ft. hills that screen noise) with shrubs along Central Avenue and the alley bordering the west side of the park. The city doesn't want to take easement of the screening:

stating they don't want responsibility of maintenance of the landscape.

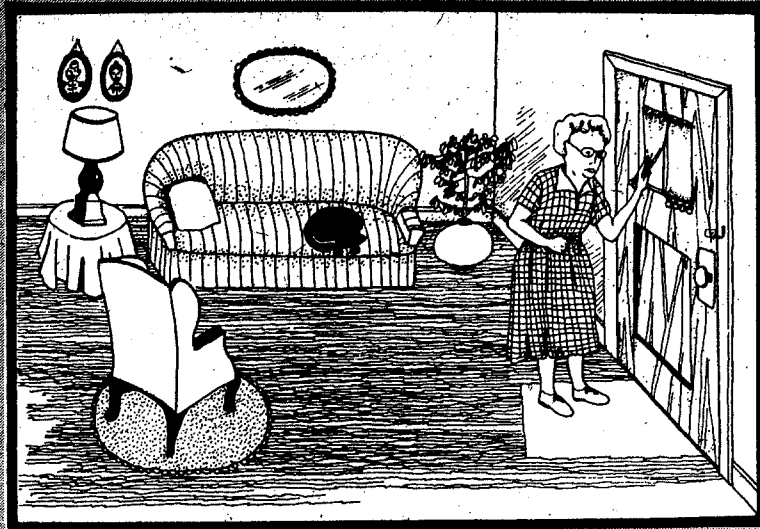
The local chapter of Women in Construction and local contractors took on the project of the drinking fountain, donating their time and labor.

"As time goes on and the more the park is developed I think more people, particularly the older people will use it," said Doris Mruz.

The success of the park will depend on the St. Anthony East community families and senior citizens. For the children its environmental meaning will come from the hills they slide, the games they play, the friends they'll discover. For the senior citizens its meaning will stem from the gardens they grow, the leisure walks and getting acquainted with the neighborhood. Since both groups have helped to build the vacant lot into a breathing park the likeliness of success is entwined with the landscape of their labor.

Randy Walter, director of the park project.





## WHERE THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY FAILS-THERE CRIME GROWS

by Ken Nelson, *State Representative, 59B*

Once last summer on a sunny Sunday my home was burglarized. A basement window had been broken, a TV and stereo had been taken. It was a wierd experience to walk through my own home where moments before some burglars had walked, undetected and unwanted, taking their time to choose from my personal things what they might impersonally and flippantly sell for a few bucks. Damn it! Why were they-- and why me?

I suppose that's what a lot of us think and feel when it happens to us. And yet others live in constant fear believing that burglary or robbery or assault will happen to them. Which is worse--having your home burglarized, or spending half your waking hours worrying that it will be burglarized?

I called the police and while waiting for them to come I went next door. My neighbors hadn't seen or heard anyone but they informed me that they had recently had a power snow-blower stolen from their garage. I then went across the alley to ask other neighbors if they had seen anyone. They hadn't but said that their TV had recently been taken. I became aware that we didn't have much of a community when we didn't even know about these crises in each other's lives. When we are burglarized we usually communicate vertically--to the police, but rarely do we communicate horizontally--with our neighbors. And how about before the crime? What kind of a community or a neighborhood do we have if in times of crisis or to prevent crisis we don't communicate and trust? Why do we rely on outside forces to do what perhaps we could do ourselves--and maybe better?

Because of this kind of an experience--

and this type of question and concern--many neighbors are getting together to build community and, not so incidentally, to prevent crime.

### Operation Identification

Stevens Square was primarily a place of fear for area residents, who had little identity with each other UNTIL some people including Bill Grimberg began a "park watch" demonstrating that positive things can happen in parks--events like community fairs, theatre and concerts. It was a conscious effort called "people recognition," which is resulting in people knowing, trusting and communicating with each other.

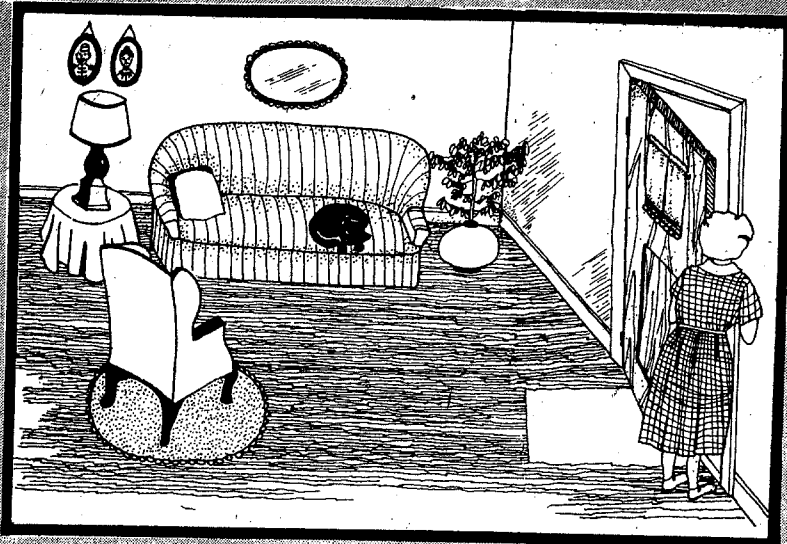
That's the basic Operation Identification, people knowing people--it is the best crime deterrent there is. But there is another kind that is fairly effective in preventing burglary.

The people of Stevens Square are now going door to door to encourage their neighbors to engrave their valuable possessions with a stylus in coordination with the Minneapolis police. They then put a decal on the front door to discourage burglars since a burglar would have a difficult time fencing engraved goods.

(Bill Grimberg, who helped write a more complete article on Stevens Square (p. 26), can be reached at 874-5369.)

### Whistlestop

Ron Manderschied has helped organize Whistlestop in a 16 block area surrounding Pillsbury House, 3517 Chicago Ave. So. The senior



"... The organizing has helped to break down the 'isolation' that did pervade the area and fed fear and criminal activity. 'People are getting to know each other.' "

citizens from the area gathered in February to look at safety in their neighborhood. They wrote to Mary Garrily, Coordinator of Whistlestop, Edgewater Community Council, 5609 No. Broadway, Chicago 60660 for materials, direction and permission to use the patented tradename. In March and April one person from each block volunteered to talk to each of their neighbors, distribute leaflets explaining Whistlestop, and request commitment. In May a letter was sent by Ron to each person who had indicated interest. About 70 people came to a May 18th meeting. Whistles were purchased at 90¢ each and instructions were that at anytime a person was in a situation of physical harm he or she should blow two long blasts either to frighten the would-be attacker or to receive help.

Does it work? Ron believes that it does. "People have told me that they feel much better and more secure as they walk outside now. They believe that their neighbors will help them in time of need." At least one assault was prevented because a neighbor saw it happening and blew a Whistlestop. Also, the attacker was apprehended because the neighbor had called the police. (Ron Manderschied can be reached at Pillsbury House, 3517 Chicago Ave., 823-6257.)

Jerry Challman who works at Northside Settlement Services (522-3377) says that the Whistlestop conducted in the Glenwood-Lyndale and Sumner-Olson public housing areas has "not totally proved itself," though crimes have been prevented. He believes that it has spread itself too thin. But the organizing has helped to break down the "isolation" that did pervade the area and fed fear and criminal activity. "People are getting to know each other." Now the community is concerned about police-community relations. Recently some residents went directly to a

police station to complain of police action and "to hold the police accountable." It worked, the police apologized and seem to be more responsive now.

### Block Organization

In the South Central area of Minneapolis, Sabathani Community Center is providing assistance for anyone who wants to prevent crime in his or her block. Kay Williams, Clarissa Walker, and Barbara Westberry each have assisted different blocks by providing flyers, refreshments for the first meeting and technical help to facilitate block organization. But it's necessary for the people to carry it from there. Sabathani has helped to organize at least 14 different blocks. Kay Williams, Sabathani's Director, believes that basically its "getting to know your neighbor" and developing an "acceptable, effective trust level where people will share phone numbers and inform each other of when they will be gone for a period of time, etc." (Sabathani is located at 24 E. 31st St., 827-5981.)

The Whittier Community has formed into four task forces to deal with crime in their neighborhood. They deal with Operation I.D., Block Watch, Whistlestop, and Judicial Study. They are consulting with Capt. Bruce Lindberg of the 6th Precinct. They were given great impetus by the "Sunday In Whittier" event which helped the people meet and come to know each other.

The Community Safety Patrol from the Lowry Hill Association did a regular "block walk" during high crime time last summer, according to the Association's president Mary Ellen Grika. Two adults would stroll around the



**"In one instance, the walkers simply stopped and talked with some kids involved in petty theft. The kids became so engrossed in the conversation that they were literally walked and talked out of the crime."**

block letting some potential vandals know that they were being watched. In one instance the walkers simply stopped and talked with some kids involved in petty theft. The kids became so engrossed in the conversation that they were literally walked and talked out of the crime. At another time some kids came to a Safety Patrol meeting and asked to be left alone. They were told "We'll leave you alone when you leave our neighbors alone." And they did. Two burglaries were foiled and the burglars apprehended as alert resident, knowing that their neighbors were out of town, called the police. Right now the Safety Committee is signing up people for Operation I.D. (Rita Martinez 372-2833 or 823-1453 can be called regarding this.)

### **Block Watch**

Last summer I met every other week with the residents of 35th and Clinton. Neighbors who had lived in the same block for 14 years didn't know each other. Forest Hill, who lives at 3508 Clinton, emerged as the coordinator. He says that "crime is the issue, but socialization is the answer." They now call themselves the Block Watchers. They are planning a block party and they still meet every other week in each others homes. They know each other now. Recently they stopped a burglary in process by alerting each other, the police, and by making so much noise that they befuddled the burglar. Last summer an elderly lady received a series of anonymous phone calls from someone obviously checking out her home. She called three neighbors that she had come to trust through the Block Watchers and asked them to each watch her house from their different perspectives. They did. She felt that someone out there cared for her. There was no incident. (Forest Hill can be reached at 348-6201 or 823-4045.)

### **Police Services**

Sgt. Charles Wodash is directing the Crime Prevention Section of the Community Relations Division, 348-6870. Their main emphasis right now is Operation Identification. Each precinct in the city has engraving tools, decals, leaflets, and a specific number for each citizen to engrave his possessions with. Consequently, if the valuables are stolen, they can be traced anywhere in the country through a nationwide computer system. The Crime Prevention Section also has a slide presentation on residential burglary prevention, and two courses on self-protection for women.

### **"Ballet of the Streets"**

Jane Jacobs in Life and Death of Great American Cities has characterized life in the city as having the potential of dancing in the streets -- where neighbor meets neighbor in trust and joy. It's starting to happen in the instances cited above and perhaps in your neighborhood -- if not, you can make it happen. When more citizens walk more confidently and creatively into their communities and neighborhoods, then the burglar, the attacker, the rapist, the victimizer will discover that it's not his turf anymore. WHERE THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY GROWS -- THERE CRIME DIES.

I once talked a man out of shooting himself or the police which had surrounded the house. Afterward I said, "Love is stronger than guns." I still believe it. Maybe today we should say, "Community is stronger than crime." If I can be of any help in encouraging or organizing community residents to prevent crime, please call Ken Nelson at 296-4244 or 825-6667.

# COMMUNITY BUILDING

## People's Bicentennial Commission

The Bicentennial is coming. We have an electronic Paul Revere to warn us. CBS has started its daily "Bicentennial Minutes," a countdown towards July 4, 1976. Corporate America has geared up its advertising campaign. Care to buy a Spirit of America Chevrolet, a \$30,000 silver model of the Mayflower, a Jim Beam Bicentennial bourbon bottle, or a loaf of Continental 1776 Bread from I.T.T., the makers of Wonder Bread?

Sara Lee's chairman has offered to bake a national birthday cake for the President to cut - with miniatures for the citizenry, thus "allowing our citizens to share tangibly in our nation's birthday celebration." Sounds like the bureaucratic conception of citizen participation.

If you want a more tangible share, then perhaps the People's Bicentennial Commission is more suited to your taste. The PBC is trying to rescue American's Revolutionary heritage from this mindlessness. You may have seen the PBC public service ad on TV. It features George Burns, Robert Vaughn, and others reading from the Declaration of Independence.

Recently, I traveled to Washington D.C., to attend the first national PBC conference. I came away with the following impressions: the PBC is well-organized at the national level, its ideology is original and well thought-out, and its ability to attract support from a broad spectrum of political views is possibly unique.

This three-year-old organization is working to expose corporations and agencies commercializing and misrepresenting the Bicentennial and to publish materials which stress the true principles of the American Revolution and which can be used to community and service groups. While outlining these two purposes, I would like to concentrate on the resources the PBC offers local groups and to give one example of a local organization using their materials.

In their Bicentennial activities to date, corporate and bureaucratic America have taken the 200th anniversary of a revolt of local communities banded together against distant, centralized power, and transformed it into a promotion for Big Government and Big

Business as the American Way. The PBC publishes examples of corporate misuse of the Bicentennial in its magazine Common Sense. In addition, a PBC expose of mismanagement in the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission - which appeared in the Washington Post's Sunday magazine - resulted in the resignation of its director and in its replacement with the new ARBA (American Revolution Bicentennial Administration). PBC believes that the spectacle of General Motors and the Pentagon commemorating the Revolution is absurd.

The opposite side of the coin is the appropriateness of community, alternatives, and people's groups linking their causes with the American Revolution. PBC feels that such groups are the true heirs of America's revolutionary and radical heritage and that they could attract greater support if they publicized their ancestry. One of the PBC pamphlets asks, "Why not then borrow precedents from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the Bill of Rights - documents we were all brought up on - rather than from writers whom few people have read?"

To aid community groups in using the Bicentennial theme, the PBC has collected quotes from the writings of the Founders which local groups can use to put corporations and bureaucracies on the defensive and enlist broader public support. If for instance, the local bank is your target, try nailing the following quote to its door: "I sincerely believe, with you, that banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies" (Thomas Jefferson).

Going beyond quotes, the PBC monthly magazine Common Sense, named after Tom Paine's revolutionary pamphlet, relates the ideals of 1776 to contemporary issues. Its articles and editorials attack corporate power, give examples from around the country of local groups using the Bicentennial theme, and illustrate the real meaning of the American Revolution with the writings of the people who made it. One issue contains a "guest" editorial by Sam Adams on the issue of preserving our liberties.

In addition, the PBC publishes ideas on practical strategies for community groups. The pamphlet "Community Programs for a People's Bicentennial" contains detailed suggestions on unearthing tax inequities, campaigning for tax reform, researching local history, and conducting community patriotic celebrations. The tax reform ideas are

# COMMUNITY BUILDING

based in part on the experience of the Philadelphia-based T.E.A. (Tax Equity Action) Party, which fought a proposed increase in property taxes to meet school budget deficits by pointing out an alternative - raising corporate and securities taxes.

Locally, the Greater Minneapolis Day Care Association is using PBC-prepared materials in the Child Care '76 project, a campaign to establish community-controlled day care centers around the country by 1976.

The Day Care Association distributes a booklet entitled "Birthday Parties Are For Kids." It contains a Child Care Declaration of Rights which summarizes the case for day care in language imitating the Declaration of Independence. The logo is a silhouette of three kids standing with fife, flag, and drum - a child's version of the famous Spirit of '76 painting. Scattered throughout are quotes from the Founding Fathers and Mothers. The Declaration of Rights will also be used as a petition when the campaign is ready to go public.

Child Care '76 represents a potentially effective use of the Bicentennial theme. Although yet to be publicly tested, the Bicentennial theme is already proving useful - according to Ms. Eddie Hertzberg of the Day Care Association - in generating a remarkably enthusiastic reaction on the part of organizations asked to participate.

Use of the People's Bicentennial approach can broaden support for other groups as well, because the principles of the American Revolution represent a true "common ground" on which Americans of varied beliefs can gather. An example is the way the PBC has received praise from some conservatives, although its founder and some of its ideas have New Left roots. Conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick wrote, "Let me put in a small plug for the People's Bicentennial Commission . . . they are a lot closer to the true Spirit of '76 than the promoters, politicians and PR men in charge of the ARBC (the former Nixon Administration Bicentennial agency)." Locally, the Bicentennial could help unite divergent community groups, in the same way the Downtown Stadium issue did.

Finally, as a resource organization, the PBC hopes to invite community and service organizations to a national convention tentatively set for Philadelphia in 1975. This

convention would draw up a list of grievances against the government and corporations on behalf of the people, thus offering local groups a forum to publicize their causes and to symbolically link their causes with those of Revolutionary America.

The PBC would like to help local community groups get credit for being in the true Spirit of '76, rather than let credit go to Union Oil by default. The national PBC office publishes resource materials to help such groups use the Bicentennial theme in an historically honest and appropriate - yet effective - way. There is a local PBC chapter for anyone interested in studying Revolutionary history and principles or in becoming more involved in Bicentennial activities. We need and welcome you.

For more information on the PBC and the local chapter, write me:

Steven Keillor  
2211 Colfax Ave. So.  
Apt. 109  
Minneapolis, MN 55405

## Powderhorn Puppet Theatre

The Powderhorn Puppet Theatre is a collective of four people at the core and a number of others on the periphery. We use puppets and masks of all sizes (as high as 15 feet or more) in doing serious theatre for people of all ages (it is not only a children's theatre). The Powderhorn Puppet Theatre is just over one year old. It resides at the Walker Church Community Center in South Minneapolis. On November 1st, we will be opening a new show entitled "The Grass Will Grow and the River Flow" on the stage at Walker Church. It will run four or five weekends. We also do a number of smaller shows for touring and offer workshops in puppet-making for community residents.

The kind of thing we are trying to do with puppetry and its importance to the community is difficult to explain, but can best be summed up in two key words: "carnival" and "ritual". The way we see it, a community theatre is one that is in touch with the needs of the community. What does our South Minneapolis community need that theatre can provide? Carnival and ritual: communal play and ceremony.

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Carnival. What do we have as a community that amounts to real self-expression through carnival? Practically nothing. When we think of medieval times with their fairs where craftspeople would display their wares; traveling troupes of actors, puppeteers, clowns and jugglers would do their farcical routines that mocked the establishment and its morality; and whole populations parade in the streets; we realize how much of a cultural void we live in. Carnival was a time when society's rules were put aside for a time. Authority figures could be mocked. Punch could knock a puppet bishop's head off and get away with it. For the duration of the carnival time a different social structure existed. Nobility and clergy were no better off than peasants within that structure. What this did was to make it plain to people that there was more than one model of laws and morality within which human beings could operate. When the carnival time ended and things got back to "normal," people knew that it didn't have to be this way. Change was possible. Carnival was a time of bold play and farce and pageantry. What do we have that compares to it? Is there a festival that is really ours, in which we express ourselves as a community. The State Fair is not ours. The Aquatennial is not ours. They belong to the promoters and the advertisers and the Jaycees. We just don't have anything that amounts to carnival-- collective play and celebration as an expression of what we are as a community. And we need it!

Ritual. Other cultures, especially pri-

mitive cultures, considered communal ritual or ceremony an integral part of their existence. Religious ceremony usually related to the important events of the life cycle of the community - planting and harvest rituals, rites of passage, fertility rites, birth and death rituals. Human beings need these times when they come together and publicly declare their common experience just as they need other staples like food and shelter. Here again, our culture is lacking. Somehow, we have lost the wisdom of our ancestors. Our religious ceremonies are vacuous. They serve to shelter us from change rather than to consecrate us to constant growth. We need rituals that celebrate the sanctity and mystery of life.

Theatre can begin to fill the void of carnival and ritual in our community. There are few examples to point to but it can be done. And puppets and masks lend themselves to it, especially large puppets. They can have a very spiritual quality if they're done right. Puppets and masks have their origins in religious ceremony.

This is a little bit of the philosophy of our theatre. The stuff we produce is probably instantly more understandable than the notions in this article. It's not as complex as it sounds. But it's difficult to explain it because it's feelings that we're talking about more than intellectual concepts. Think of the large figures on Easter Island or African religious masks and try to describe the feeling you get looking at them or being in their presence (I've only seen pictures). It is the mystery of life captured in a work of life. It touches the experience of all people.

--Ray St. Louis

## Seward Community Cafe

There has been a movement over the past few years, and a good one, I might add, towards more healthful eating and acceptance of more natural foods. There is a growing appreciation of the value of organically grown produce, whole grains, non-enriched and unbleached flours and pastas, and foods free of artificial flavors, colors, and chemical preservatives. In

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the Twin Cities, community oriented food cooperatives have been providing such foods at low costs, and at the same time, offering an opportunity for community involvement, and a more healthful approach to business. People are tired of paying unjustly high prices, allowing a few to make "the big buck," and also feeling as if their needs and desires are being ignored. Thus, most are finding this alternative refreshing and rewarding. The idea of cooperatively and/or collectively run business has expanded to hardware and dry goods, bicycle shops, etc., and is finally beginning to include restaurants.

Opening soon in my community, will be a collectively owned and operated restaurant, The Seward Community Cafe, Incorporated. It will be housed in the former home of the Fireside Inn, a 3.2 bar located at 2129 East Franklin. Upon opening, sometime in October, the menu will consist of mainly soups, salads, and sandwiches, served for lunch and dinner. The cafe will also offer 3.2 beer. Some meats will be included in the menu, although the bias will be vegetarian; proteins abound in other foods if prepared properly. Currently, meat is not raised, produced, and handled as healthfully and nutritiously as it could and should be.

The cafe will be open to suggestions regarding the menu and hopes that the communication will be good between the community, the clientele, and the collective. Depending upon the response and if finances allow, the

Balancing meat, vegetables, beer, and community atmosphere: Lynda Irish, Mary Pearce, and Howard Hickman. The Photo Collective-LS



tiny kitchen can be expanded, which would make breakfasts and larger lunches and dinners possible. The cafe is not existing to make "the big buck," but for the joy of people working together for something they all feel good about; providing the community - both young and old - with a warm, relaxed atmosphere in which they can eat healthfully and inexpensively, drink moderately, and socialize heartily.

The collective--Howard Hickman, Lynda Irish, Donna Finn, Tom Medly, and Mary Pearce--began to form in April of this year, when Lynda and Howard met while working and shopping in a food coop. They both were interested in starting a cafe, had similar ideas about foods, and both wanted to make a sincere contribution to the area. They like the idea of a collective and/or cooperative situation and began to attract potential members with community meetings and potluck dinners they held to discuss the possibilities of a cafe. They began to talk to friends and just people in general about the project and got positive feed-back. They sent questionnaires to homes in the neighborhood, asking residents how they felt about a cafe starting in the area and what kinds of things they might like to have on a menu, etc. The response and progress were encouraging. However, many problems were just around the corner.

They wanted to remain flexible, to be responsive to the needs and desires of the community, and to keep the restaurant from being dominated by any particular person at any time. The latter, according to Lynda, was probably one of their biggest hassles. Next came the issue of meat -- should they plan to serve it or not? The Seward area indicated that they wanted it; the collective considered the matter, took a vote, and decided they would include meat. Consequently, they lost several members who were devout vegetarians. Then came the problem of trying to find the building that would become the cafe. The Miller's Truck Stop at 2229 East Franklin was up for sale, but both the collective and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) were interested in purchasing the property. When the owner stated the down payment that would be required, it was much larger than the collective could provide. The owner, therefore, preferred to negotiate with the HRA.

The Fireside then came into view. It was



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also for sale, but there were potential problems prevailing. It had a small kitchen and an owner, Vi Johnson, who was not totally enthusiastic about selling to a group of young people with new ideas and a different approach. But the group was able to purchase the property as a collective with a formally contracted loan from Howard, low interest loans from friends, and Seward community donations.

The atmosphere also needed to be transformed -- from that of a bar to a cafe that serves beer. They came up with some possible solutions, such as removing part of the bar space to make room for more tables (the dining area presently seats about 25 people) not allowing smoking, and also, during certain hours, not serving beer unless a meal is ordered. They hope that these measures will discourage patrons from regarding the cafe as a bar.

Most every member of the collective has had work experience in restaurants and each has some food specialty to explore and contribute. They were a bit weak, however, in legal and management details. They asked for advice from The Malt Shop, The Common Place, and The New Riverside Cafe, and help was given. The New Riverside was very generous, allowing the collective to use their facilities so that a benefit dinner could be held to raise money for the Seward Community Cafe, Inc. The altruistic actions and lack of competition between these organizations is truly admirable. This attitude could and should continue to flourish, eliminating some of the commercial garbage that seems to go hand-in-hand with any kind of "free enterprise" in America. I think that part of the responsibility lies within the community to make this concept work. We must share our feelings in a place where we will be heard, our ideas listened to, considered, and if possible, translated into action. We must also be supportive and patient, because social change is sometimes slow and frustrating.

--Sue Bartell

## Clearview Cooperative

Many people know what a cooperative food store is and are enthusiastic about the idea of sharing the work of operating a store for the purpose of being able to buy wholesome

food at a reasonable cost. Not as many - probably only very few people in Minneapolis - know that the idea of a cooperative in the field of housing, has been in practice here for many years, though on a very limited scale.

Clearview Cooperative is a well-built brick apartment building on the north side of Powderhorn Park, which has been organized as a cooperative since 1948. The idea is the same as for a food cooperative: the building is not run for a profit, but for the well-being, comfort and happiness of its residents, who own the building. There are 18 apartments in the building and each apartment-owner-occupant has an equal amount of common stock and one vote. A board of directors is elected at an annual meeting, and the seven board members then elect officers. These officers, with the help of the other board members, run the affairs of the cooperative. It is often a time-consuming job and there are occasional frustrations, as controversial issues surface from time to time. But the enthusiasm, dedication and hard work of the board makes it possible for the 18 apartment-dwellers to live in a home-like atmosphere, without the headaches and staggering costs involved in running a home these days.

Each of the 18 one-bedroom apartments is assessed a nominal monthly charge - \$53.00 for the front apartments which are larger and offer a pleasant view of Powderhorn Park, and \$45.50 for the middle and rear apartments. These monthly assessments cover all the costs of operating the building, including taxes, insurance, heating, water, etc. The only additional cost for each apartment-dweller is his or her telephone and electric bills. The cleaning of the halls and staircases, the cutting of the lawn and the shoveling of snow is done by a caretaker, a University of Minnesota student, who with his wife gets his basement apartment free of charge in exchange for these services.

There is a small grocery in one corner of the basement, operated by a man and his wife. They pay the cooperative a nominal rent for the use of the store, but lately, the store owner has made himself so useful in repairing broken windows, painting and doing other repair jobs, that it is not certain who owes whom money at the end of the month.

The age of the residents ranges from the

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Standing in front of the building they own, l to r: Elizabeth Hawn, Marie Oliason, Elizabeth Challberg, Ida and Larry Walden, and Helen Bremmer. Photo Collective-LS

twenties to the eighties, with the majority falling into the senior citizens category. Two married couples are making the cooperative their home at the present time; the others are single. Some have lived in the building for a decade or two, and most only leave, very reluctantly, when forced to do so by ill health. Because the majority of the residents have lived in the building for many years, they have formed enduring friendships. Their relationship can be compared to that of an extended family, sharing each other's joys and sorrows. They are concerned about each other's health and welfare, bringing chicken soup or beef stew to an ailing neighbor, or sharing a delicious cake or cookies over a cup of tea.

On summer evenings, groups gather on the balconies overlooking the park, to chat, read the paper or watch the excitement of a ball game in progress, while enjoying the cooling summer breezes. (Visits to other apartments to chat or assist a friend who is ill or otherwise needs help, are common.) Those who have to leave for a week or a month's vacation do so without misgivings: they know that upon their return, they will find their house plants watered, their belongings watched and safe from burglars.

While living together for so many years has developed some lasting friendships, disagreements occur occasionally, as they do

in most families or other human relationships. However, a strong bond of shared concerns and a feeling of belonging have developed over the years.

Clearview Cooperative is a non-profit organization, formed under Minnesota Statutes, Section 308.05 to 308.18. As a cooperative, the apartment owner-tenants are entitled to the same homestead exemptions of real estate taxes as are homeowners. The board of directors of the coop has to approve the buyer of an apartment, who then becomes a shareholder and member of the cooperative. Some apartments have been rented out rather than sold during past years, but the board is discouraging this practice, as they feel that the owner of an apartment has a firmer commitment to the ideals and goals of the cooperative and is a more stable resident than a person who only rents. At the present time, no apartment in the building is rented out.

Members of the coop agree to be governed by by-laws, which protect the well-being, safety and individual freedom and privacy of each person. The FHA loan to purchase the building was paid off a few years ago, and at the present time, the building is free of mortgage. A major expense last year was the rewiring of the building to bring it up to code, and for that purpose a bank loan had to be obtained. However, because there were no other major expenditures, the monthly assessments were not raised. The officers of the cooperative feel a great deal of pride that they were able to keep the cost of running the building so low; assessments haven't been raised for over five years. In view of rising costs in all sectors of the economy, they consider this a major achievement. In spite of keeping costs low, flowers, shrubs and a tree were planted to beautify the building and its grounds.

An indication of how the residents of Clearview Cooperative feel about their building, is how eager and willing they were to defend their life-style against the encroachment of a high-rise building in the neighborhood. Even though some are quite old and have difficulty walking, they turned out in force at a recent downzoning meeting to voice their enthusiasm for the preservation of their current life-style and their strong disapproval of any project that might disturb it.

--Helen Bremmer

# back issues:

If you missed Common Ground #1 and/or #2 you can still get copies! (See Subscription Form Below)

Our first issue, "The Cities' Backyard", examines history from the viewpoint of people who live and work in nine different neighborhoods in the Twin Cities: Powderhorn, Phillips, Beltrami, Seward West, Skid Row, Nicollet Island, and the West Bank in Minneapolis and W. 7th Street and the early Black Community in St. Paul.

Common Ground #2, "Playing for Keeps", focuses on neighborhood parks and open space planning. Issue #2 also contains articles on vacant lot playgrounds and gardens, the history of South St. Anthony Park in St. Paul, and descriptions of a new bike co-op and a new cafe.

Common Ground #1 or #2 are highly readable, useful resources for anyone interested in neighborhood histories or neighborhood parks and open space.

## CORRECTIONS:

There were two incorrect listings in last issue's "Community Newspapers" section (p.41). Many Corners has split away from CRA, and is a totally independently-owned and managed newspaper. Our listing was incorrect in mentioning CRA. ECCO News, of the East Calhoun Community Organization, was listed under an old and inaccurate name. We apologize for these mistakes.

# coming next:

We will continue our coverage of Community Councils with an article by Todd Lefko, who worked in the Mayor's Commission to study citizen participation in St. Paul. It's an insightful view of how the powers in the city lined up for and against community councils. Todd's article was ready to use but we didn't have space to print it; look for it in the Winter, 1975 issue.

Also, we will continue our series "Playing For Keeps", that was started in Common Ground #2, with an article by Anne Barnum on Luxton Park (in Prospect Park). She reports on an instance of cooperation between designers and residents.

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