
common ground

Winter-Spring 1975

No. 4

\$1.00



THE WEST BANK: RESIDENT INITIATIVE TAKES ROOT

PLUS:

- A Women's Cafe
 - Chautauqua
 - Circle of the Witch
 - Payne-Phalen History
 - St. Paul Community Councils
 - Home Maintenance in Lexington-Hamline and Field-Regina
-

commonground

This is the fourth 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.

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.

community editorial board

To help us make Common Ground more accountable to Twin City neighborhoods and the people living in them, we have established a Community Editorial Board. We chose Board members on the basis of their active participation in a variety of community activities and because of their own expressed interest in the magazine. The Board will meet quarterly to discuss each issue and help evaluate how effectively we are reaching people. We also hope the Board will generate new ideas for format and content as well as developing our network of community contacts for articles and distribution.

why winter - spring?

Being straightforward folks, we've always dated our magazine for the season in which they are printed. But we're getting complaints that they're "obsolete" on the newsstand once the season changes--people won't look at a magazine labeled "Winter" when it's April, somehow. So, we're going to revert to a standard magazine practice, and date our magazine ahead. But just so you don't lose track, we're making the transition with this dual issue: "Winter-Spring." The next issue, number five, will be our Summer issue.

subscribe!

Common Ground is a reader-supported magazine. For us to continue publishing, we depend upon your support. Your subscription will enable us to rely on sufficient funds to meet costs. You will find subscription information on the inside back cover; please respond.

Common Ground is a publication of the New Vocations Project, part of Crossroads Resource Center, an independent non-profit organization. New Vocations Project also publishes resource publications (The Vocational Skills Training Directory), organizes community business (such as the Southside Community Garage) and acts as a resource group for people seeking better vocations. This issue costs \$1.00; or \$1.25 if mailed in the U.S.A.

Views expressed in this issue of Common Ground are not necessarily views held by New Vocations Project.

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letters to the editors

Letters to the Editors:

My congratulations to Rick White for his articles on the Legislating Community. No straight roads to Local Power.

The present City Council was selected to represent the people in their ward. Now all they are doing is sitting up there, collecting their wages (our money). This was in evidence in the recent decision on rent control. While the people were there, a decision for a study was made. Two days later the City Council decided it couldn't pass anyway, and killed the bill. This means that we have to go over their head to the Minnesota State Legislature and put on the pressue, if it means every day at the courthouse. When the City Council decides they are untouchable, it's time to quit and get someone else in office.

Respectfully,
Marjorie Ellen Bray
Citizens for Loring Park
Loring Neighborhood Assoc.

Dear Editors:

I'm sorry I cannot afford more than the \$4, but I would like to receive a second subscription to Common Ground so that I may have one to use for "keeping" and one for promotional purposes. I would very

much like this second subscription to begin with the back issue #1 Spring 1974, if possible.

It's so good to know there are still some people who are not too disillusioned to go on working for a better community/world. I guess we have to roll with the punches and just get on with our own "thing" in spite of what goes on elsewhere of an unethical and unjust nature.

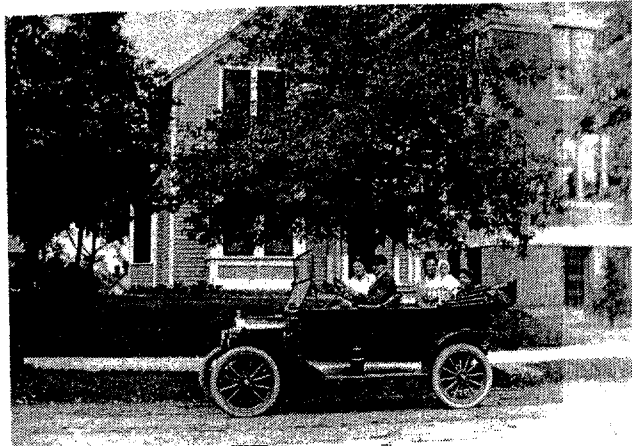
Take care--
Mary Gilbert
Richfield

Dear Editors:

I'm not sure if you remember me, but I was in Minneapolis this summer collecting case-study materials on Cedar-Riverside. Anyway, I'd like to receive Common Ground for a year. Enclosed is a check for \$5 to cover the subscription and postage. I wish I were there to take issue with some of the writing--e.g., that backyards are always workable or that the Cedar-Riverside plaza is a failure--but perhaps that can happen on some later visit. In any event, I'd like to get your magazine, and wish you success in publishing it.

Chuck Davies
Boston, Massachusetts

THE CITIES' BACKYARD



770 York in 1899 and 1915. Photos courtesy of Albert Munson and Minnesota Historical Society

PAYNE-PHALEN: A PICTORIAL HISTORY

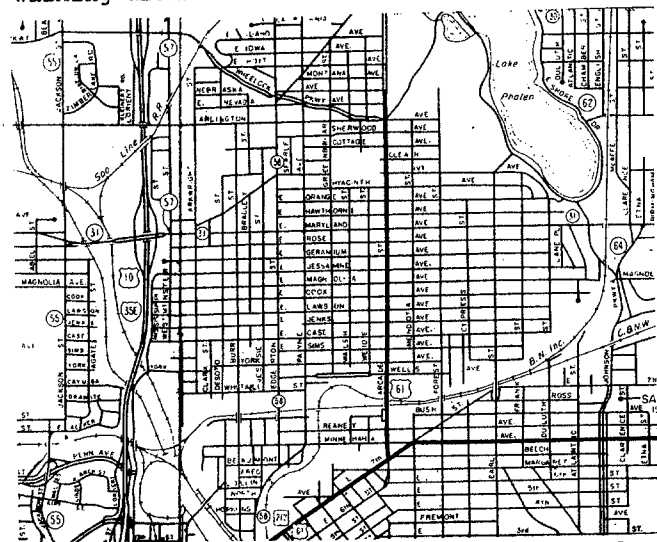
by Jim Sazevich

Jim Sazevich is a life-long resident of Payne-Phalen and since 1968 has been studying it's history and homes. He's responsible for identifying two historic homes: Brunson's and Eaton's.

The first officially recorded mention of the Payne-Phalen community comes in 1847 from a surveyor's notebook. Describing what is today Arcade Street, he wrote of an area which was "mostly open, scarcely populated, with large burr oak and cotton wood. The soil is second grade, and large and small marsh areas around." In 1858, the residents organized a township which they named New Canada. Most of what we call the Eastside today and all of the Payne-Phalen area was included. It was not until 1887 and St. Paul's annexation of the southern two-fifths of the township of New Canada that the Payne-Phalen area became part of the city.

"I remember the Payne Avenue streetcar. It travelled along Payne Avenue until reaching York Street. From there it continued along Greenbriar Avenue. Payne Avenue was the business street and was too crowded with people to make room for the streetcar. I sure was glad when the buses started using Payne Avenue because I never did like climbing the steep hill to Greenbriar, especially in the winter." Marion Olsen.

Today, Payne Avenue is crowded with cars prowling for parking spots and plans for parking lots are discussed at meetings of community leaders. Arthur C. Anderson has a different vision, however. "I'd like to see a walking city made of Payne Avenue from York to Lawson. That would bring back the memories of the Saturday night promenade when everyone was on the avenue having fun just walking around."



THE CITIES' BACKYARD



Today, the Brunson House is owned and occupied by a Hungarian immigrant family. John Szlavich, who bought the house 13 years ago, is a retired carpenter and easily recognizes a sturdily constructed home. He is proud of his home and likes talking to visitors about it. The Szlavich's have a garden in the same spot that Benjamin Brunson used as a garden 120 years ago. Photos by Jim Sazevich

Preserving Traces of a Fashionable Era

During the period from 1850 to 1880, the lower town area on the eastside was the most fashionable place to live in St. Paul. Among the more fabulous mansions, there were those of Amherst H. Wilder, Henry Hastings Sibley, George Loomis Becker, Horace Thompson and Judge Henry Hale. The 1880's railroad development in this area brought soaring land values as well as many immigrant workers and the hills of Summit Avenue became the new haven for the wealthy.

One of those who did not leave was Benjamin W. Brunson.

Benjamin Brunson was born in Detroit in 1823. He came to St. Paul in 1847 to assist his brother Ira in the surveying of the first town plat--the area which is now St. Paul's downtown district. In February of 1851, he purchased a large parcel of land known as Bilansky Point from Stanislaus Bilansky for \$1100. In June of 1852, Brunson surveyed and platted this land into town lots, streets and alleys, and it became known as Brunson's Addition. In November of 1854, Brunson erected a fine brick residence near the center of his addition. The home (bricks for which were brought by steamboat from Galena, Illinois) stands today, virtually unchanged, on the northwest corner of Kenny Road and Brunson Street.

In November 1974, the Brunson house was nominated for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination was voted upon unanimously and it was forwarded to the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C. where a decision is still pending.

Just recently, the Minnesota Historical Society placed another house on their inventory of historic sites. The house stands on the same block as the Brunson home and was built by Samuel S. Eaton in 1857. The house is an excellent example of "Federal Style" architecture, an era of construction style whose remains have just about vanished in this area. This house also has a good chance of being nominated for the National Register.



Payne Avenue 1903 courtesy Arthur C. Anderson.

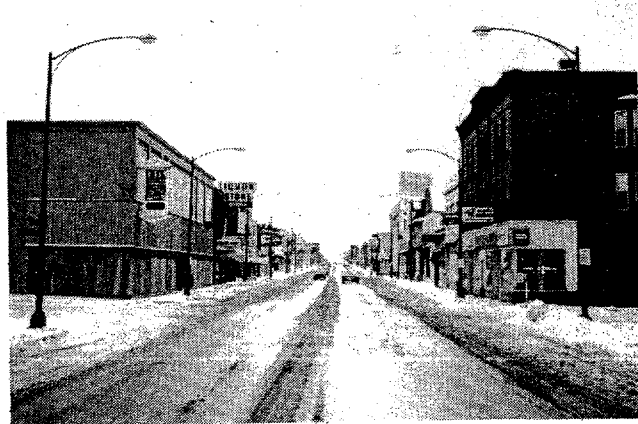


Harvest Festival Payne Avenue 1930. MHS



Payne Avenue 1932.

MHS Photo



Payne Avenue 1975.

Photo by Jim Sazevich.

Payne Avenue — Mirror of Area's Prosperity

By the turn of the century, the Payne-Phalen area had developed into a thriving industrious community, complete with churches, schools and recreational facilities. "A new era began to take form. A vision of great progress was beckoning to the businessmen. Their confidence manifested itself in the formation of the Eastside Commercial Club. It realized an early ambition in 1904, when the cedar block pavement was replaced by asphalt. I was one of the young boys who carried the discarded blocks to their home for the family stove." Arthur C. Anderson.

It was a working class neighborhood with at least two-fifths of its population employed by the railroad. Machinists, carpenters and engineers' homes were on elm-shaded streets and their prosperity was reflected by the flourishing Payne Avenue. From Minnehaha Avenue to Maryland Avenue, Payne Avenue was lined on either side with shops and stores where a person could buy all the necessities of the day. The community was also boasting four banks, seven community halls, three civic organizations and was being served by local newspapers: The Eastside Journal and Svenska Amerikanska Posten (the Swedish language daily).

The Depression of the 1930's brought a sharp setback to the area, a decline which has continued to the present. One of the major factors contributing to this decline was the decrease in railroad use (and the resulting lack of jobs in the area) both for transportation of goods and passenger travel. Another major factor was the sharp increase in the development of the city's outlying areas and with this came the development of shopping centers to serve the new communities. As more and more people of the Payne-Phalen community relied on the shopping centers to supply their daily necessities, the demand for these services lessened on the avenue. Today, a few of the strong, well-established businesses can still be found, but most have left. Replacing the grocers, butchers, and bakers are the antique dealers, second-hand shops and bars.

THE CITIES' BACKYARD



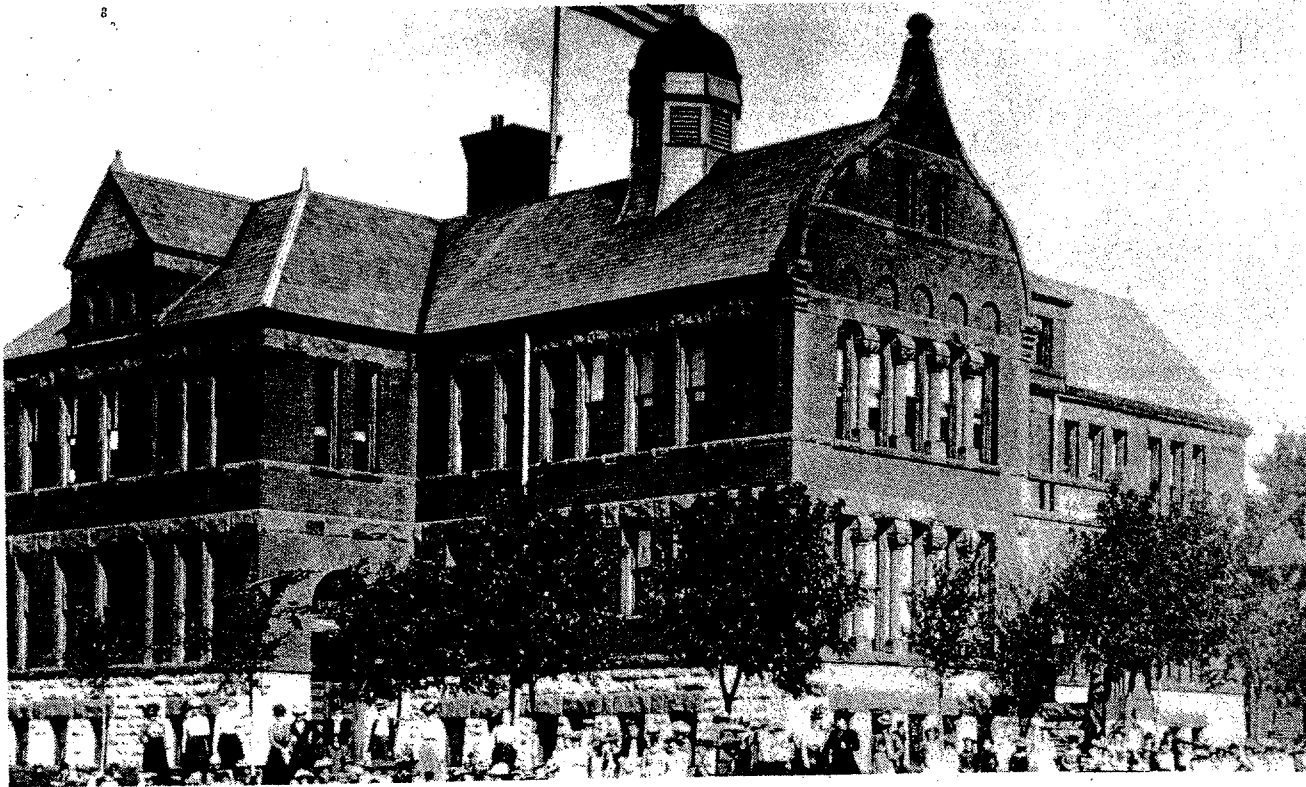
Photo courtesy of Albert Munson and MHS.

Free-roaming Space Shrinks as Community Grows

The open spaces of the Payne-Phalen neighborhood provided plenty of opportunities for summer and winter fun. Arthur C. Anderson recalls two stories of boyhood life in the early 1900's: "Before the streets were graded to the east of Earl Street, there was a tract of land consisting of rolling hills and studded with small ponds extending north from Case Avenue to Maryland. It was platted in 1907 as far north as Magnolia and from this point a road proceeded in a northeasterly direction. This was the favorite approach to the best swimming hole in the creek. It was just north of Maryland. For some reason not recognized by the boys, the railroad officials of that era objected to the presence of large crowds of boys enjoying the cool depths on a hot afternoon. At 4 P.M. each afternoon during the season, a mounted officer appeared upon the scene to drive away the boys. They retreated to the remoteness of the railroad tracks until he was gone."

"In the winter, on Edgerton from Magnolia to York was the best place to bob on. There would be two bobs and a long plank between them. It was enough room for a dozen or so boys. We had kids posted at all the corners and they would stop any horse carriages until we came flying past."

Nowadays, the places for play in Payne-Phalen are more carefully defined. As well as the small playgrounds which dot the area, the Eastside YMCA and Merrick Community Center are important centers of kids' activities.



Ericsson School 1900.

MHS Photo.

A Woman Returns to Jenks and Edgerton

Photo by Jim Sazevich.

The corner of Jenks and Edgerton has been the site for two community institutions. In 1889, the Ericsson Elementary School was built there. It was in use until 1969 and was demolished in 1971. In 1973, a senior citizen high-rise which houses 140 people was built on the site.

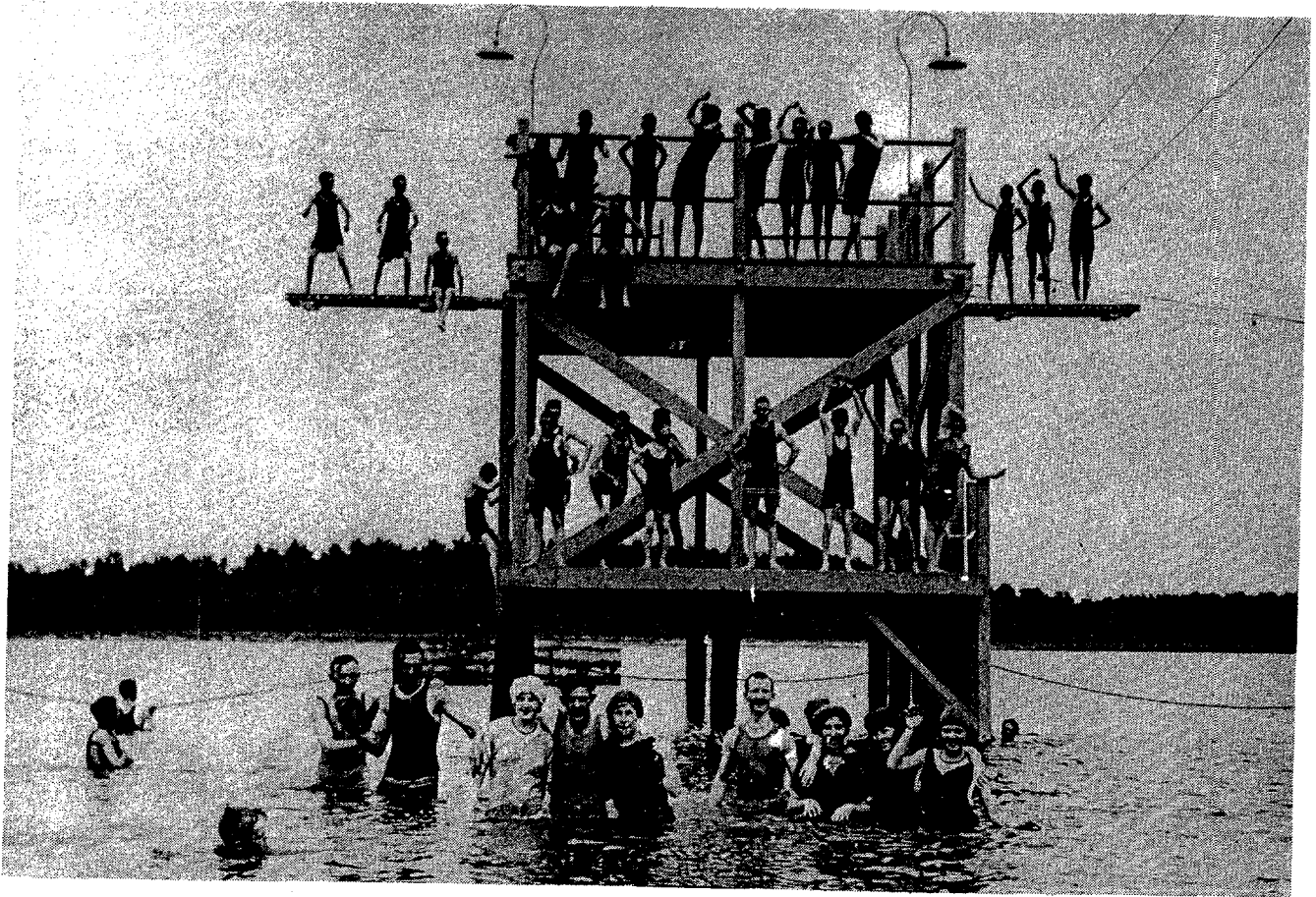
Marion Olsen went to Ericsson Elementary in 1905 and now lives in the high-rise. She talks about her life in both:



"Ericsson was considered a 'modern' school with electric lights and inside plumbing. We were not pampered in those days. School started at nine each day, so we were up by eight. Mom had to braid my hair and make sure my clothes looked just right. We wore only our best and our mothers made most of our clothes. Those were not happy days for me and I hated going there. You see, I had twin brothers that were always slow and I had to wait for them. I was late to school often and found myself staying after quite regularly. Sitting upstairs with that old principal wasn't very much fun. My punishment was always to write my spelling lessons over and over again on the blackboard and I soon developed into a very good speller."

"I like it here in the high-rise. Everything is so convenient. There are a lot of things I miss, though, like my cats and places to store things. I had to throw out just about everything in order to move here. I like the view from the balcony. The city looks like a palace all lit up. I asked for a room on this side and it was the last one they had left."

THE CITIES' BACKYARD



Lake Phalen 1917. Photo courtesy of PACC.

Residents Help Redesign Popular Recreation Spot

Lake Phalen was being used by the city of St. Paul even before it became part of the city. In 1868, after extensive and costly surveys, the St. Paul Water Company, under the control of Charles D. Gilfil, began the erection of buildings and the manufacture of 16" pipes on the shores of Lake Phalen. In August of 1869, the water was turned on for the first time, supplying a large portion of the city with "Phalen's" water. At the time, this water system had a purity which was better than any other U.S. city except Boston.

Through condemnation proceedings in 1894, the city began to acquire the lake and the surrounding land for use as a park. By the 1920's, Phalen Park was greatly improved and the largest and most popular recreation spot in the city.

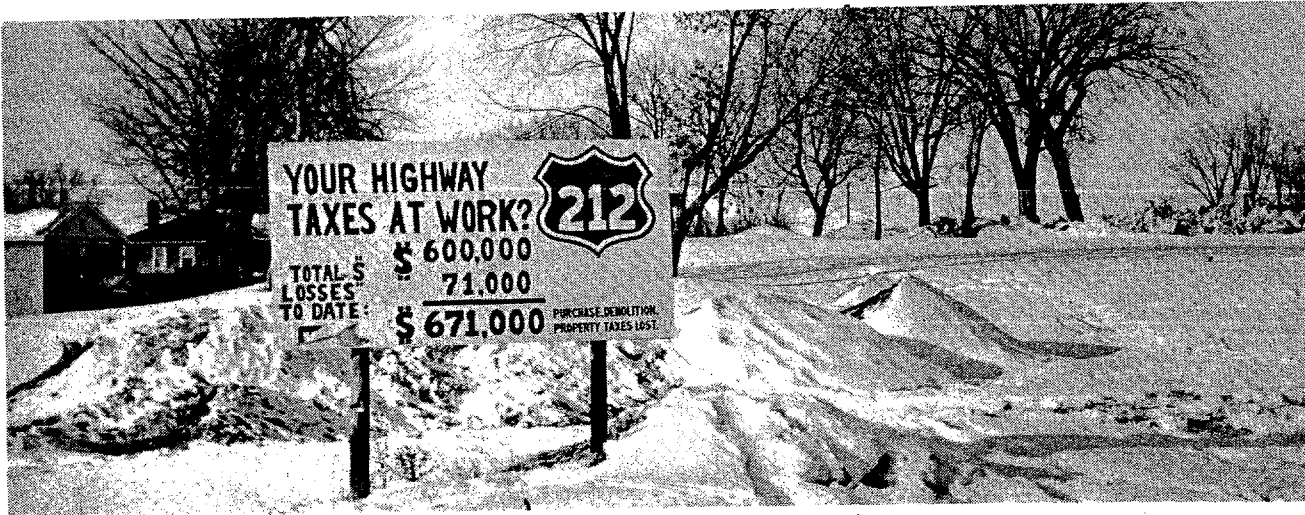
Today there are extensive plans for redevelopment of the park, a \$2 million redesigning which will, according to Park Superintendent Robert Priam, increase enjoyment for people using it for activities other than driving through it.

While the design for this redevelopment has not as yet been finalized, the residents of Payne-Phalen were very much involved in the planning. According to Morgan Tamsky, Chairman of Phalen Area Community Council's Park Redesign Committee, city officials sought resident input in October, 1973. Through a series of public meetings and discussions, a committee report was written containing ideas of the residents as to priorities and recommendations. Most of these have been incorporated in the city's plan. "The city came to us for help and advice and we're glad we can work with them now, rather than fighting a plan we don't like later," Morgan Tamsky said.



Volunteers with Meals.

Photo courtesy of PACC.



Sign erected by PMCC members in 1973 on land vacated for Highway 212 route. Photo by Ken Meter

Two Community Councils Help Form the Future

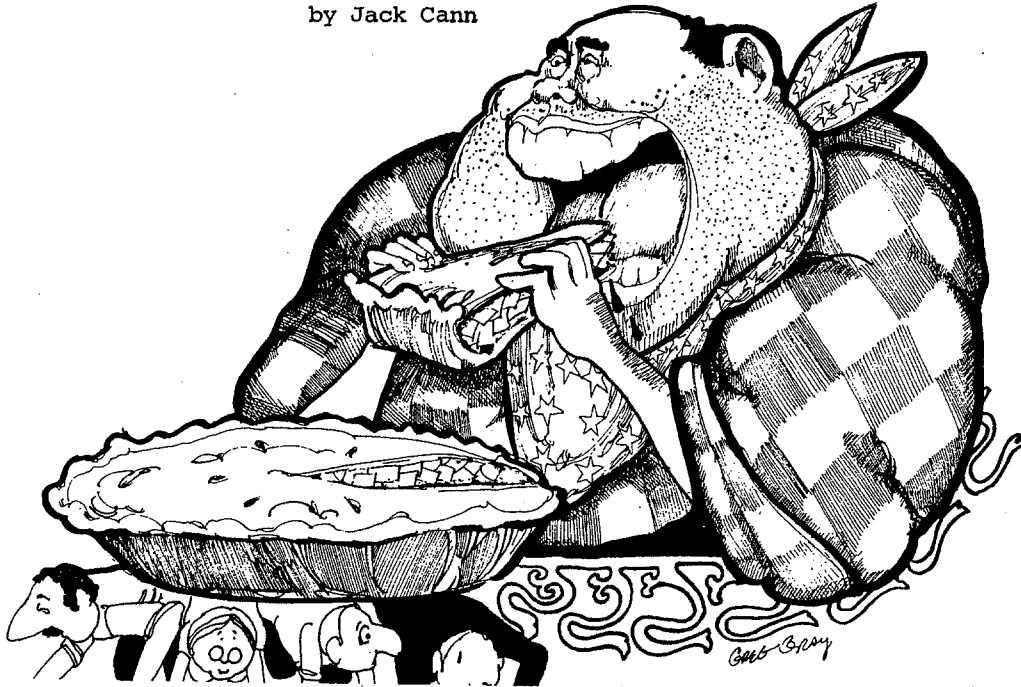
The vitality of the Payne-Phalen community is perhaps best expressed through the two Community Councils which serve the area. There are 300 active volunteers who work through the Phalen Area Community Council providing such services as the Volunteers With Meals program which brings hot meals to shut-ins. There are also a second-hand store Alley Shoppe, a historical committee which is working to preserve the history of the area and the Phalen Park Redesign Committee. Most visible, however, is the newspaper The Eastsider which, with the exception of two paid advertising editors, is all volunteer run. Past president of PACC, Angelo Rulli, sees the growth of The Eastsider as PACC's proudest accomplishment. "The Sun newspapers no longer publish an East Side edition because we can give such low ad rates and have such good distribution."

The Payne-Minnehaha Community Council serves the people of Lower Payne Avenue. Working with the Merrick Community Center (which was once Christ Child Community Center), it provides many services for both the elderly and the young. While these services are a major portion of PMCC's activities, the organization has been involved in major citizens' actions. The stoppage of Highway 212 left the lower Payne area with a huge swath of vacant land. The area has once contained housing and PMCC has developed a proposal for using revenue sharing funds to provide low and moderate income housing on the land. PMCC's new president, Caesar Marino, wants to make certain that "however the land is used, it meets the needs of the people of our community, not just those of people 'downtown.'"

Profits vs. Community

How Developers Make Money

by Jack Cann



Jack Cann has worked for the Minnesota Tenants Union, and now for the Cedar-Riverside Environmental Defense Fund. He is also a board member for the Findley Place Housing Corporation.

Taxpayers — Tenants Provide Investors Profits

✓ Newspaper accounts of CRA's huge financial losses have implied that everyone who invested in their project was primarily motivated by good citizenship rather than profit potential, and that they're about to lose their shirts as a result of their good intentions. They've further stated that the empire needs a large infusion of new capital--that the project's success depends ultimately on rich people willing to take a risk for a noble social experiment.

There's a little truth in both contentions--but not very much. Whatever the initial sources of capital for land acquisition and construction, these costs are paid several times over by the project's residents. Consider CRA's first development, Cedar Square West (CSW) which cost about \$30,000,000 in actual construction and land costs. Over the life of the buildings' 40-year mortgage, the costs of paying off the loans to buy the land and build the structures, operating costs and profit will amount to about \$157,000,000. CRA's investors will have provided about

1.5% of this, residents about 84% and taxpayers about 14.5% through interest subsidies.

These figures, of course, don't imply at all that CRA's investors aren't amply rewarded for their rather meager contributions. Once the project is 95% occupied (sometime this year) and proposed rent increases have been implemented, about 58% of the tenants' rent payments will represent profit--to the investors and lending institutions. The investors will be getting an annual return of 44% on their investment (declining to about 30% at the time they're ready to sell the project).

In the meantime, due to some initial miscalculations by CRA, a lot of bills aren't being paid. Thus the short term need for some new capital to stabilize the project until more costs can be transferred to the tenants or taxpayers.

Paradoxically, even though the project is presently losing large amounts of money and the investors are in real danger of losing it, it's still quite profitable for them. Once adjustments have been made so the project is stable, this actual profit rate will soar even further, although "profits" in

"Availability of tax shelters is the main reason for investing in all new rental housing."

the usual bookkeeping sense will be very modest. This is because the major sources of profit in Cedar-Riverside, as in any other rental housing development, have very little to do with the economics of operating the buildings. These sources of profit are discussed below.

Equity Build-Up

Virtually all new rental housing is built by borrowing most of the money for land and construction. The tenants then buy the building back from the lending institution for the landlord. This buying back process is called building up equity. It normally represents a larger annual profit to the landlord than cash flow (the amount by which rents exceed all costs). The profit rate from this source increases each year since a higher percentage of the mortgage payment represents repayment of principle, rather than interest, as time goes on.

In the case of CSW, equity build-up currently represents about an 8% return annually. By the time the owners are ready to sell (8-10 years), it will represent about 12%. This is compared to a 5-6% cash flow once the project is stabilized.

Of course, this annual profit isn't translated into cash until the building is sold or refinanced. But on sale, it's taxed as "capital gain" at half the normal rate. If it's realized through refinancing, it isn't taxed at all.

Tax Shelters

Availability of tax shelters is the main reason for investing in all new rental housing. To stimulate investment in new housing, the IRS allows investors to assume that the value of the building decreases very rapidly in the first years of the building's life. This "accelerated depreciation" can be written off as a loss of income for tax purposes, sheltering other sources of an investor's income from taxation.

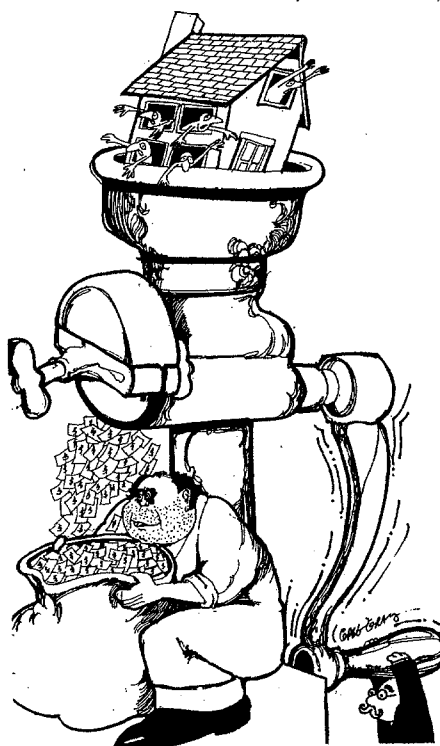
This year, for instance, investors in CSW can claim that the buildings have depreciated \$1,445,000. For investors in

the 50% tax bracket (as most of CRA's are), this represents \$723,000 in taxes that don't have to be paid. (Ordinary taxpayers, of course, have to make up the amount saved by rich people who can afford this kind of shelter.) This extra cash in hand after tax time represents a 32% return on investment. After 8 years, this return will have dropped to a mere 23%.

Even subtracting this year's large negative cash flow, equity build-up and tax shelters will provide CRA investors with about a 20% return. Next year when the project is stable, the return should be about 44%.

Land Speculation

The fundamental basis of CRA's New Community financing plan is land speculation. Basically, it works this way: in 1971, CRA owned \$19,000,000 in property on the West Bank, in which they had equity of about \$5,600,000 (most of which, of course, was paid for by tenants). They borrowed \$24,000,000 using this equity and HUD insurance of the loan (if they default, the taxpayers pick up the tab). The loan is used to retire existing debt on the land,



"If all goes well next year, our 'socially-minded' investor can expect a return of about 64% from all sources of profit."

buy another \$9,600,000 worth of land, and pay planning and administrative costs.

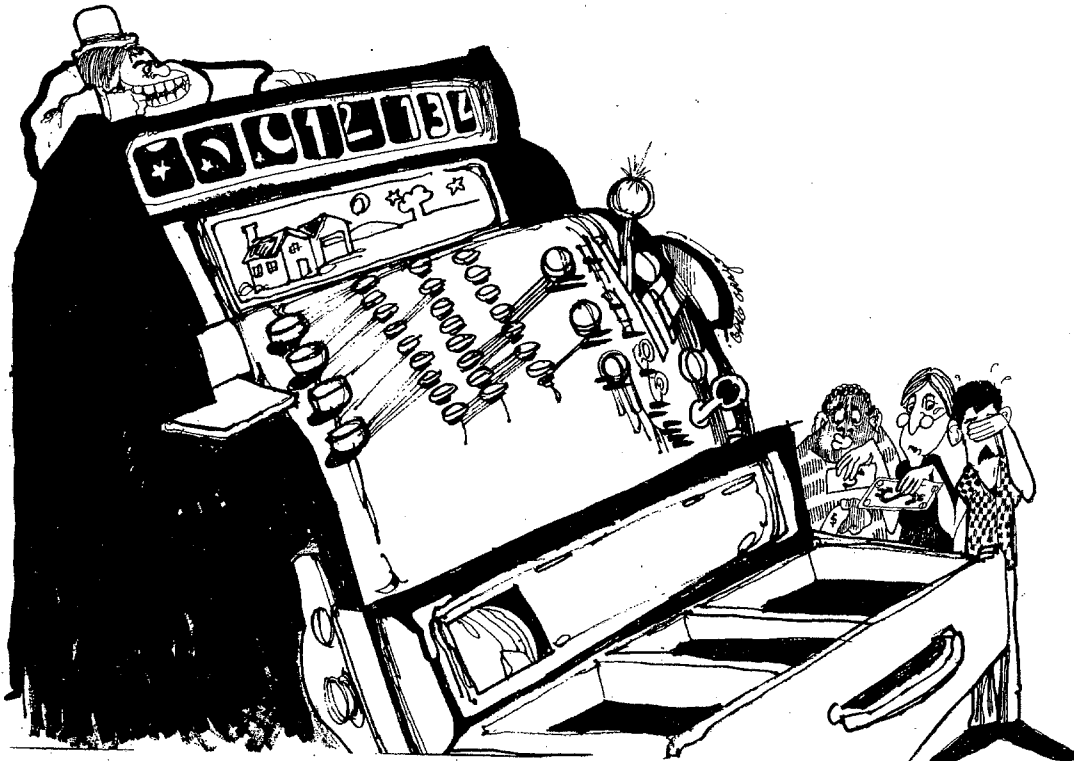
The \$28,000,000 in land is sold over the next 20 years for \$67,800,000. The land is purchased by subsidiaries of CRA using mortgage proceeds—meaning that residents pay for it. Subtracting the loan repayments and other land holding costs from this figure gives a net profit of \$22,300,000. This represents an average annual return of 20% on the original equity.

If all goes well next year, our socially-motivated investor can expect a return of about 64% from all sources of profit. All, however, will not go well. As shown above, CRA's empire is a house of cards. Virtually its entire value is borrowed and all the money to pay off the loans comes from the tenants. If the tenants don't pay, the developer loses the property. And why should they continue to pay anything more than actual operating costs, since to do so accomplishes nothing except to keep an absentee owner in control of their living environment? Should other renters in the city learn this rather simple lesson from Cedar-Riverside residents, we can expect

to see a lot of property falling into cooperative hands in the next few years.

For a more detailed discussion of this conflict, see Steve Parliament's article, especially the "Recent Actions" section.

Note: Information for this article came from two sources. The data on Cedar Square West is from HUD form 2264, "Project Income Analysis and Appraisal" submitted to HUD by the developer. These forms detail project costs, mortgage amounts, cash investment required and operating costs. With this information, tax shelters and equity build-up are easily calculated as is cash flow for the project operating on a stable basis. The estimate of present profit levels was made using the 2264 figures and their public statements that operating costs exceed income by \$75,000 per month. Returns on investment were calculated on the basis of cash investments shown on the forms. The estimate of total costs of the project over 40 years was based on present operating costs; if inflation were considered, the investors' contribution would be far less than the 1.5% calculated. Data on land costs came from the New Communities application submitted to HUD.



Developer's Dream Community's Nightmare

West Bank's Struggle for Resident Control

by Steve Parliament



Resident community history play at Peoples Center Birthday Party, 1973. Photo by Laneation.

"We hereby report to you the story of a journey,
Undertaken by those who exploit, and those who are exploited.
Observe the conduct of these people closely:
Find it estranging,--even if not very strange;
Hard to explain,--even if it is the custom;
Hard to understand,--even if it is the rule.
Observe the smallest action, seeming simple, with mistrust.
Inquire if a thing be necessary,--especially if it is common.
We particularly ask you--when a thing continually occurs--
Not on that account to find it natural:

LET NOTHING BE CALLED NATURAL." Brecht

This is a case study of the West Bank struggle. It is a way of looking at a neighborhood: looking at the contradictions between the way we ought to live and what we're forced to accept, the issues and actions that arise from our understanding of the contradictions, and the implications of strategies that we adopt for resolving those contradictions.

West Bank residents are working toward a community and a society in which people exercise increasing and equal control over their individual destinies, liberate themselves from the tyranny of the institutions they have created, satisfy their basic needs for food, housing and medical care in ways that are not profit motivated and are controlled by the people being served. We are finding pleasure in cooperative ventures instead of competitive ones.

Building such a community brought us into a confrontation with the major private developer and institutions (Cedar-Riverside Associates [CRA], the University of Minnesota, and the hospitals) which had their own expansionist interests in the neighborhood. The confrontation occurred on many levels.

Levels of Conflict

- Level #4: Decision-making processes
- Level #3: Abuse of public funds
- Level #2: Housing
- Level #1: Services

At each level, people in the neighborhood had a different approach than the developer/institutional interests. Looking back on these conflicting approaches, we can see fundamental contradictions between what

“ . . . we can see fundamental contradictions between what is required to build a healthy community and what the developers and institutions are doing.”

is required to build a healthy community and what the developers and institutions are doing. Of course, there are contradictions that are not antagonistic to the survival of the community itself; in fact, they give it life. All neighborhoods have differences of opinion and factions that create conflict. These differences can usually be resolved if we remember that our neighbors are not the source of our oppression. I am talking here about contradictions that can only be resolved through a basic change in the way things are currently being done.

Contradictions: Community vs. Developer

CONTRADICTION #1: The community wants cooperative, user-controlled services. CRA wants privately-controlled services.

We organized a community union and formed a health care center--the People's Center--that was controlled by its users. Cedar-Riverside Associates, as described in their draft Environmental Impact Statement, didn't understand user-controlled health care and would have relied on the private, profit-oriented medical system instead. We built North Country Foods, a cooperative food store, while CRA was moving out the only full-sized grocery store in the neighborhood.

CONTRADICTION #2: CRA and the University try to tear down inexpensive housing and raise rents on low income people while the neighborhood needs housing for low income people.

The West Bank Tenants Union organized a rent strike to keep rents lower. CRA raised rents as much as 50% in one month on many people with fixed incomes. WBTU is forcing CRA to keep units occupied instead of letting them deteriorate. The 1,200 new housing units CRA built are losing \$70,000 a month and require 13% rent increases across the board. Rents are already high, even in the "subsidized" units. Many tenants want to strike because CRA wants the lower income tenants to make up deficits resulting from vacancies in the luxury units. We are proposing a long term solution of converting all rental property to cooperatively-owned property.

A few years ago the community organized to prevent the University from tearing down housing. It wanted the land for a baseball field.

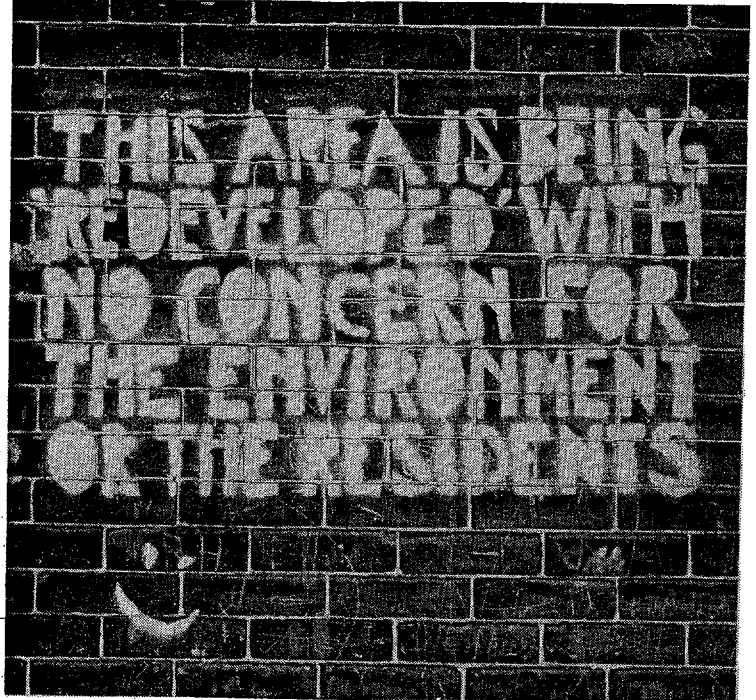
Low income people lose housing every year. The City has never replaced it on

BEWARE



SABOTAGE

A widely circulated West Bank poster



Resident graffiti.

Photo by Ken Meter.

“Private profit-making was the original and continues to be CRA’s motivation . . . Housing is not being built to meet a need. It is being built to make money.”

a one-to-one basis and doesn't intend to. The rationale is that Minneapolis should only have its "fair share" of low income families.

Poverty is not solved by forcing the poor to move to Burnsville or Roseville as the Planning Department and the Metro Council would have us do. Solutions are found in putting ownership and economic power in the hands of the people themselves.

If a developer wants to build housing for the middle and upper class to bring more downtown shoppers into the City, that's fine. But why should that housing be built at the expense of low cost housing that is needed?

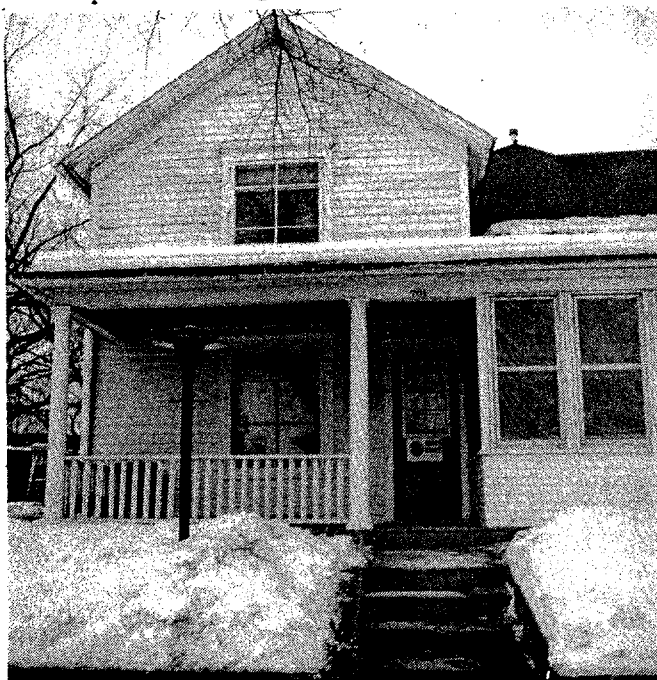
CONTRADICTION #3: When public money is controlled by the private sector, that money works for private interests and not for the public.

Private profit-making was the original and continues to be CRA's motivation. According to their own statements, "the purpose in acquisitions was investment and related income tax shelter." Housing is not being built to meet a need. It is being built to make money. That is why CRA is not

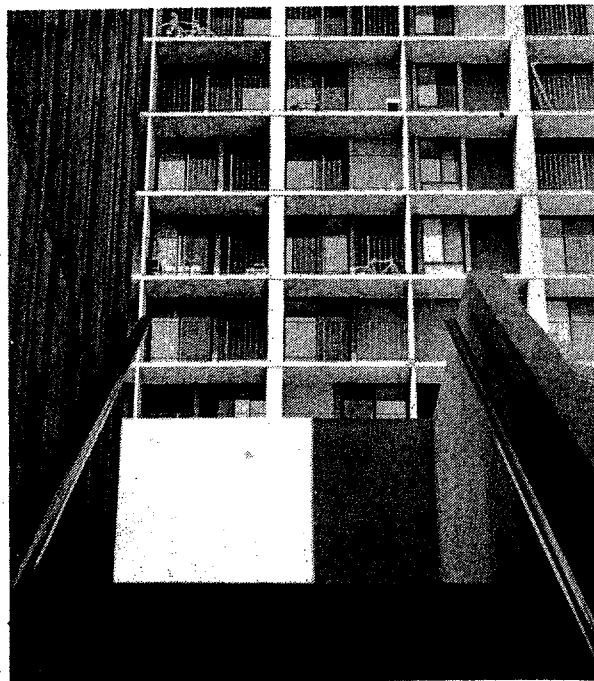
building low income family housing. They are building in response to the tax laws and incentives (see Jack Cann's article in this issue). The federal government has guaranteed \$52 million worth of loans for CRA so far. Profit from the use of this money goes to CRA investors. The renters, including the poor, who live in subsidized housing pay off CRA's loans. They get nothing for it. They are no better off after paying rent for years.

Neighborhood Development Program money is used by CRA for footbridges and decorative street lighting where there was an immediate need for it in Model City and Willard-Homewood for rehabilitating housing for lower income people. An especially outrageous use of public funds is MHRA's recent \$200,000 purchase from CRA of the air rights over two CRA buildings (see center-fold in this issue).

A current Commissioner of the Housing Authority Board has stated that the Authority exercises very little supervision over CRA. The Mayor's office and the Alderman are finally becoming very concerned about the situation. As the neighborhood forms its own community



CRA plans: replace homes like this...
Photo: Mary Kay Johnson



...with concrete hi-rises like this.
Photo: Ken Meter.

“Public officials . . . get very upset with the idea of community control by democratically elected councils, but are not upset at all by a private corporation controlling a community.”

development corporation, a cooperative resolution of the contradiction could emerge. Such a resolution would help to solve the final conflict.

CONTRADICTION #4: A highly diverse, heterogeneous neighborhood must have a democratic, decentralized decision-making process for all points of view to be represented. But CRA retains total control in a small Board of Directors who are responsible only to the investors. The West Bank is a company town.

CRA retains control of the West Bank community. Public officials, especially certain Aldermen, get very upset with the idea of community control by democratically elected councils, but are not upset at all by a private corporation controlling a community. It is disturbing that the Council has such little faith in the very people who elect them. Those who oppose democratic community control have never been pressed to explain their support for private, absentee community control.

A private corporation is inherently incapable of representing a heterogeneous population. Bill Finley, CRA president,

has said that the investors are his most important constituents. How can he make decisions for the residents?

A decentralized, democratic structure for decision-making is essential. There are many points of view on the West Bank, some that have not been expressed in any form, that must be represented.

CRA, however, is a highly centralized organization. CRA relies on professional consultants over the wisdom and common sense of West Bank residents. CRA has pulled together the intellectual/planning establishment, pieces of the authority structure, and upper class investors in a confluence of power to protect its anti-democratic position. These people do not have to live in what CRA builds. They do not experience the physical consequences of their actions. That is why people should do their own planning.

Citizen participation mechanisms, though useful for information, strategic delays and recruitment are advisory only and cannot directly challenge or in any way balance off the confluence of power in a private corporation like CRA.



Rent Strike march, 1974.

Strategies

Cedar-Riverside Residents Respond

As these four contradictions emerged on the West Bank, CRA seriously miscalculated their resolution. They assumed that all of us who objected to the urban renewal plan in 1968 would go away.

First, CRA thought we would be happy to leave. But we had a different vision of the future, so we stayed. Then they thought they could win us over one person at a time, but we forced them to deal with us as a collective of individuals and as equals. Then they thought we would go away through attrition, but we have become stronger. We now have our own plans for the future, based on cooperative ownership, rehabilitation and community-based development.

The movement toward these goals is sometimes fragmented, decentralized and to outsiders can appear chaotic. That is where it gets its strength. If we tried to replicate CRA and compete with it as one corporation against another, we would lose the whole purpose of the movement.

Finally, the movement responds to real frustrations. Issues do not have to be

invented. They will arise from the peoples' awareness of contradictions.

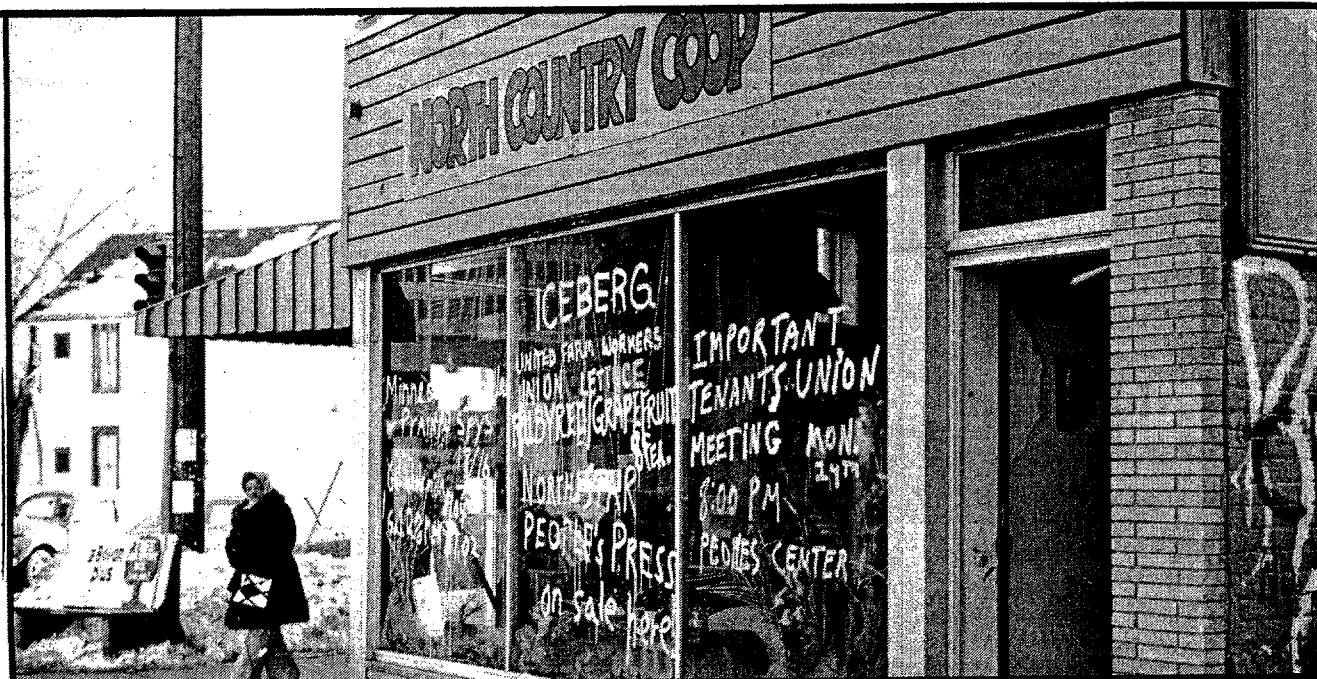
From these four contradictions emerged issues around which our actions were organized. The combination of specific issues and actions reveal underlying strategies. These strategies were only vaguely formulated a few years ago. They are partly the result of conscious action, partly the result of hindsight.

I have two cautions before proceeding with a discussion of strategies:

1) These strategies and actions are not models, but rather catalysts for strategic innovations in other neighborhoods.

2) Analysis is useful, but too much analysis is deadening. Strategies evolve through experience because it is impossible to foresee every problem in advance. Strategies must, therefore, be infinitely flexible.

By 1970 the community was mobilizing. As a clear response to community needs, the energy of the people was transformed into institutions of their own creation. Thus the first strategy emerged.



The food coop built by residents while CRA displaced the neighborhood's only full-sized grocery store. Photo by Ken Meter.

Strategies

STRATEGY #1: DELIVERING SERVICES THAT ARE RUN BY RESIDENTS

Actions

*The Cedar-Riverside People's Center, a community-controlled social service, medical, legal, and veterinary center.

*North Country Foods, bookstore, dry goods, and hardware cooperative stores.

*Relocation payments. The Community Union with other groups blocked the City's Workable Program, passed out relocation information sheets, and has secured relocation payments for many displaced persons on the West Bank.

*Ecology Day: neighborhood cleanup, garden roto-tilling.

*YES line for emergency problems.

*The New Riverside Cafe collective, delivering food based on ability to pay.

*Pharm House; The Bridge: drug treatment, runaway youth counselling.

Implications

1) These are basically community-building and defensive actions. They bring a community together, solidify it, and insure that basic needs are provided.

2) Services represent concrete accomplishments. They are things that people will fight to defend.

3) Community-based institutions are a good place to recruit people for further actions. Especially in a transient neighborhood, it is important to be able to recruit people regularly.

4) Because these institutions are so successful they pose a direct challenge to centralized, profit-oriented institutions. However, they require tremendous amounts of volunteer and near-volunteer time.

-18-

5) Without these services the movement would not survive. They are our backbone, though many of us often take them for granted.

STRATEGY #2: PREVENTING THE UNNECESSARY DESTRUCTION OF HOUSING

Actions

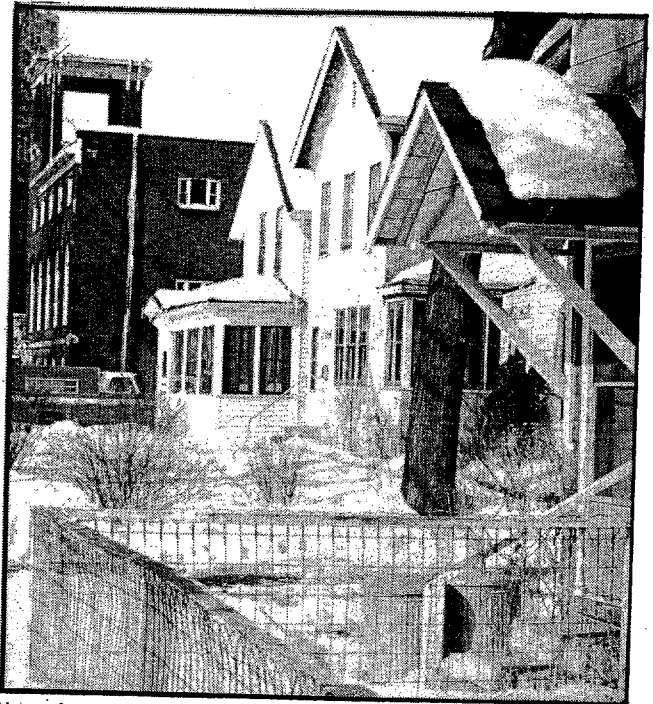
*Community Union prevented University from demolishing houses.

*All tenants in University housing received relocation expenses when they were forced to move.

*Community Union, Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church and homeowners filed suit stalling condemnation of houses by University, forced new assessments.

*Condemnation of houses by Fairview Hospital prevented.

*West Bank Tenants Union is currently preventing CRA from boarding up houses that they don't want to repair.



Housing kept from University destruction.
Photo by Ken Meter.

Strategies

Implications

1) This is basically defensive strategy, but instead of alternative institution-building it more directly confronts landlords. It is therefore more immediately offensive and lays the foundation for a more organized attack on absentee ownership.

2) It illustrates that collective action works. It saves homes.

3) Many of the actions are successful, and do not require unreasonable amounts of time.

STRATEGY #3: CHALLENGING CRA'S FINANCING AND PLANNING

Actions

*Community Union prevented use of NDP money for writing down the cost of CRA's land. The money could be used better in low income areas for rehabilitating older housing.

*The community protested the dedication of Stage I (Cedar Square West) by Secretary of HUD George Romney. Two weeks before the dedication, he was in Minneapolis as a spokesman for Nixon's foreign policy. The dedication was to take place the day after Nixon announced the blockading of North Vietnamese ports. CRA was not "aware" of the community's resentment toward Romney's presence.

*The Cedar-Riverside Environmental Defense Fund filed a law suit against CRA, the Housing Authority, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

*The West Bank Tenants Union formed after massive rent increases were announced and a two-month rent strike was organized.

Implications

1) Forming coalitions with other community groups can be extremely helpful in confronting the City. We should not allow the City to approach each neighborhood differently and divide us against each other. We have formed coalitions for various pur-

poses with Model City, Nicollet Island, Willard-Homewood, the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, the Seward PAC, the anti-war movement, and many others.

2) The Environmental Defense Fund is challenging the legitimacy of CRA's planning. The best sociological literature and hard research points to serious problems in the use of high-rise design, especially for children. People who feel that high-rise housing is the end of the line for them will be extremely dissatisfied and frustrated, but the City continues to build high-rise subsidized housing. CRA's own research, when released, will probably substantiate these findings.

The environmental law suit also demonstrated that CRA and HUD will carefully follow the tax shelter laws, but ignore environmental law. The suit also indicates the arrogance of private power when supported with public money. The first time around, CRA wrote the environmental review of its own project.

Law suits, however, have inherent limits on their usefulness as organizing actions. They can easily become lawyers



Environmental Defense Fund logo.

Strategies

fighters. It is hard for community people to participate in legal action and the arguments often become too complicated to explain to people. Legal action can also have serious consequences--payment of opponents' lawyers fees, counter-suits, huge expenses for yourself--that must be evaluated.

But they are also powerful. This suit forced CRA to evaluate what it was doing at a time when they wanted to keep expanding.

A final problem with environmental legal action, as emphatically pointed out by our allies in Toronto who are engaged in a similar struggle, is that people might lose track of the essential economic character of the challenge to CRA. We must emphasize over and over that even if CRA were to follow all environmental laws and build accordingly, the way they make money is a drain on the neighborhood, and therefore has environmental consequences. Private capital is damaging to the people in the neighborhood. Community ownership is not.

*A rent strike is not simply a statement that renters do not want to pay more rent. A rent strike says: "These units are ours because we are paying for them. You cannot take our money and make a profit with it when our units are not being maintained."

Rent strikes present many problems:

*They involve considerable risks. There must be enough ideologically committed people to begin with that everyone will see that the group is going to survive and that it will force the landlord to negotiate. When non-participants see that, they will join. Once a significant number join, then everyone wants to join. The benefit for each person increases as the size of the group increases.

*CRA tried to subpoena lists of all union members. To protect the union, the members should pass a resolution authorizing the release of any information only on the majority vote to the entire membership.

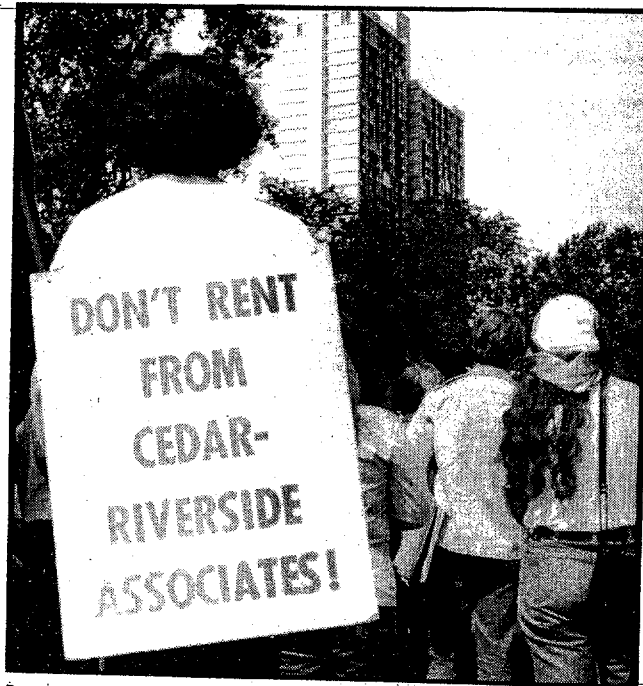
*To avoid legal action against leaders of the union, no official leaders should be selected. Pick the legal battles you want to fight.

*The union should be organized in the most democratic way possible. For example, the union should collect rent from its members and place it in a safety deposit box. Members should pay their rent to the union in the form of cashier checks that must be signed again by the member before the check is sent to the landlord after settlement of the strike. This allows each member to decide if they are satisfied with the settlement.

*Rent strikes work when they are preceded by education. Years of leaf-letting the neighborhood paid off. People know that CRA is not simply a hard pressed and benevolent landlord.

*The strike was not an end in itself. It is the basis of our block organization. It still distributes newsletters. It has formed a grievance committee to settle disputes over right to tenancy, rent levels, and condition of housing. It is preventing CRA from boarding up houses.

*More strikes are very likely. CRA is currently announcing increases in Cedar Square West and other buildings.



Rent Strike Demonstration, August, 1974.
Photo by Gayla Wadnizak.

Strategies

*Settlements should be applicable to units, not members. Union members will move eventually and the landlord will then increase the rent on the unit. Keep the unit regulated by the rent settlement.

*Rent strikes are political actions, not legal ones. The strength of the strike is in numbers, not in legal arguments.

STRATEGY #4: CREATING OUR OWN FINANCIAL AND DECISION-MAKING INSTITUTIONS

Actions

*Project Area Committee (PAC). The Community Union joined with other City groups to file an Administrative Appeal of the City's Workable Program. One result was that HUD required the City to set up a PAC in Cedar-Riverside.

*Community Development Corporation (CDC). At the Environmental Impact Statement hearings in 1974, the Environmental Defense Fund and Ed Kirshner of the Community Ownership Organizing Project in Oakland, Calif. called for the formation of a community

development corporation as an alternative to CRA.

*A Community Development Conference was held in January, 1975, and a steering committee is now in operation.

Implications

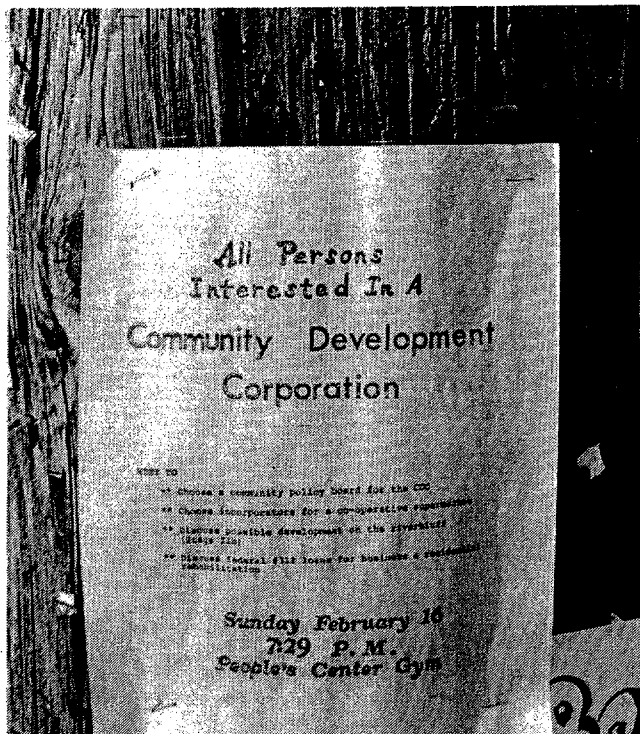
1) Decision-making power and the control of property must be democratized. New institutions like a community development corporation that is democratically selected and community controlled--but can include public officials and others--must be set up.

2) We must change from a veto group to a decision-making and mobilizing group. There are two problems in this transition: (a) our attitude of opponent must slowly change to an attitude of proponent without losing our vigilance; and (b) we must not let other people set our agenda for us. We must stick to our own goals and achieve them at our own pace. CRA's weakness might encourage action at a certain time, but the decision to act should be ours.

3) The Community Development Conference tapped the imagination and common sense of the neighborhood. The people at that conference stated that we should strengthen what we have, fix up the older neighborhood, build another grocery store, and keep expanding the movement by bringing in more people.

4) Existing structures must be carefully related to the cultural, political, economic, social and architectural history of the neighborhood and the city. Our friends and allies on Nicollet Island have some good suggestions in this regard: survey existing structures with the idea in mind of restoring them where possible, adapting them to new uses, reconstructing major portions where necessary, and stabilizing for later restoration.

5) Citizen participation structures like the PAC require enormous amounts of energy just to maintain, but they have almost no power. They can be useful as a public forum, for education and information, and many people become interested in community politics through the PAC.



"In the long run we cannot lose. We have the persistence and the energy of the people on our side."

Conclusions

Defense + Offense. We must build our lives the way we want them. We can control the forces that rage around us. Emma Goldman discusses the oppression of biblical tales which deal with "...the relation of man to God, to the State, to society. Again and again the same motif, man is nothing, the powers are everything." We can exert our freedom from those powers by challenging them, especially the powers of government and property which are so intimately tied together.

Defending what we have is necessary, but an incomplete strategy in itself. An offensive strategy is its complement, not its opposite.

Recruitment. People will join a movement because they are asked by a friend, they enjoy what they are doing, and know that what they are asked to do is important. They also must know that their participation is essential for success and that they will receive a benefit that they could not get otherwise. Not everyone is motivated by ideology.

Coalition formation. We have not formed coalitions to gain power. Power must come from inside the movement. Coalitions can dilute what you are trying to gain. We form coalitions from a position of strength for the purpose of explaining our goals to more people. If they share those goals, then we have found allies and the movement expands.

We have found many allies. In addition to the ones mentioned above, we have visited and talked with people in other cities where similar movements are alive:

Chicago: The North Lawndale Community Development Corporation stopped a proposed New Community from building expensive apartments, secured the support of the City, and formed a community based development corporation. Tenants unions, food coops, rehab projects, and commercial development are in progress.

Toronto: An anti-high rise movement stopped the spread of high-rise apartments that were moving toward older neighborhoods. They published a book entitled Highrise and Superprofits and were able to get an ordinance passed that limited new construction to four-story buildings. Anything taller needs a special permit from the City Council. There are many well organized, preservation-oriented neighborhoods in Toronto.

San Francisco: The Yerba Buena project was a massive downtown redevelopment effort that was stalled for four years by "powerless and obscure people" who challenged the "confluence of powerful and influential people acting in their class interests." Chester Hartman, who recently wrote a book on Yerba Buena (reviewed in the January 20 issue of the Minnesota Leader) is an advisor to the C-R Environmental Defense Fund. The San Francisco Study Group participated in a major challenge to high-rise development that is ruining the beauty of the old city.

In the long run we know we cannot lose. We have persistence and the energy of the people on our side.

End Note: The events discussed here were made possible by the work of a few thousand people. I am only recording those events. The analysis, however, is my own and will no doubt be open to further argument. Joyce Yu Parliament and Lynn Hinkle helped to clarify by obfuscations.

"So ends the story.
You have heard and you have seen.
You have seen what is common, what continually occurs.
It is not just happening here,--it is happening everywhere.
But we ask you:
Even if it's not very strange, find it estranging.
Even if it is usual, find it hard to explain.
What here is common should astonish you...
What here's the rule, recognize as an abuse...
And where you have recognized an abuse, provide a remedy." Brecht.

Recent Actions

Rent strike called. A rent strike is called for March 1st.

*Rents were increased for low income people in Cedar Square West and decreased for the luxury units.

*Rent increases were announced on many older apartment units.

*CRA is trying to destroy the last strike settlement.

Peoples Center
Union Meetings: 20th and Riverside
Mondays, 7:30 PM
332-4973

Community Development Corporation formed. On February 16 nine community people were selected to the Board of Direc-

tors of the Cedar-Riverside Community Development Corporation. The Board will:

*work on a cooperative grocery store for Cedar Avenue.

*work with city officials, residents, businessmen on amendments to the Cedar-Riverside Urban Renewal Plan focusing on environmentally sound planning, more rehabilitation, open space and community decision-making.

*initiate cooperative housing and other commercial projects based on community need.

Peoples Center
CDC Meetings: 20th and Riverside
Wednesdays, 7:30 PM
332-7950

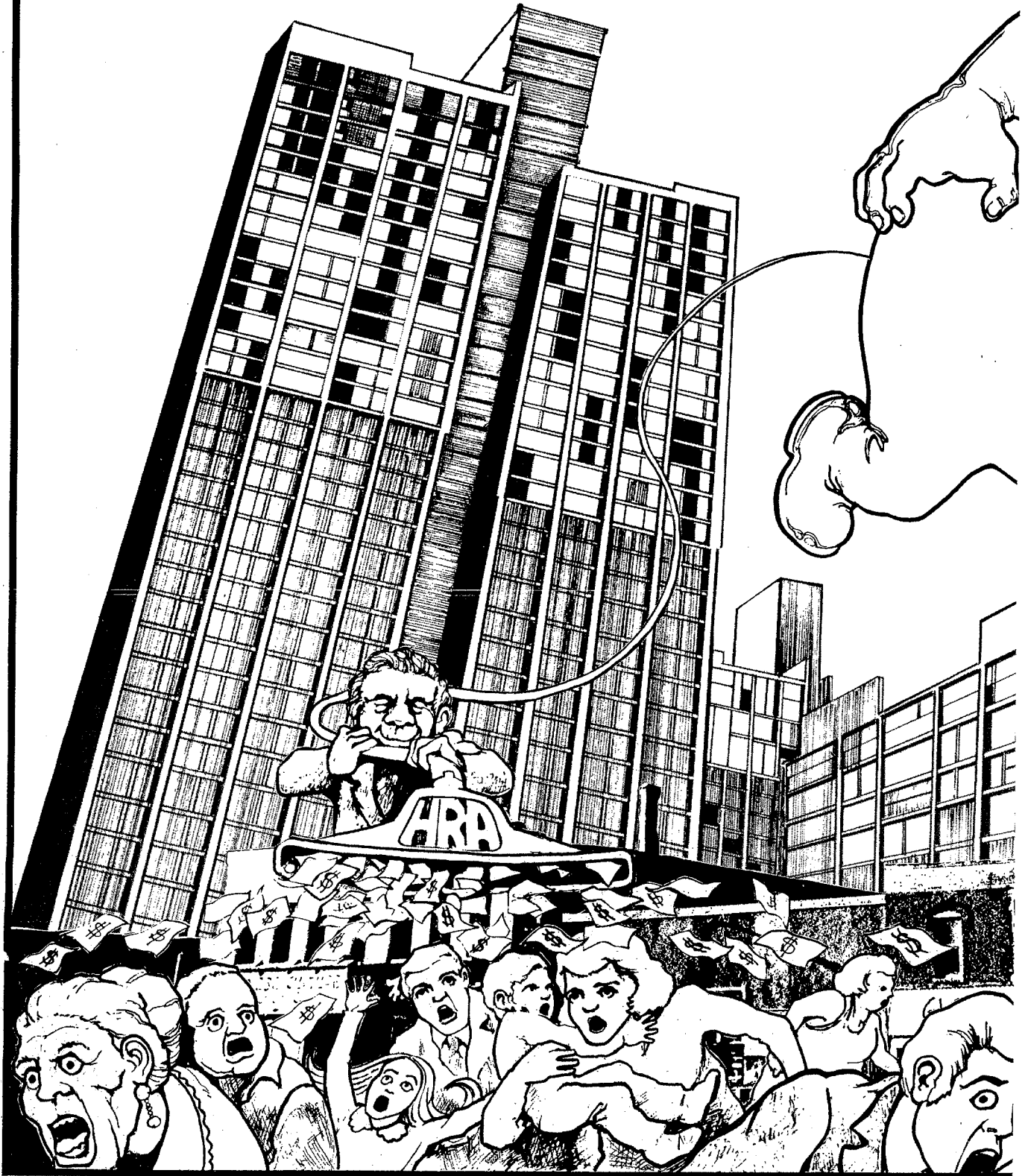


WEST BANK TENANTS UNION



West Bank Tenants Union members discuss a rent strike. February 24, 1975. Photo by Ken Meter

Cedar Riverside Associates, in collusion Housing and Redevelopment Authority, p



Note: On December 11, 1974, at a meeting of the Minneapolis Housing and Redevelopment Authority, the Com

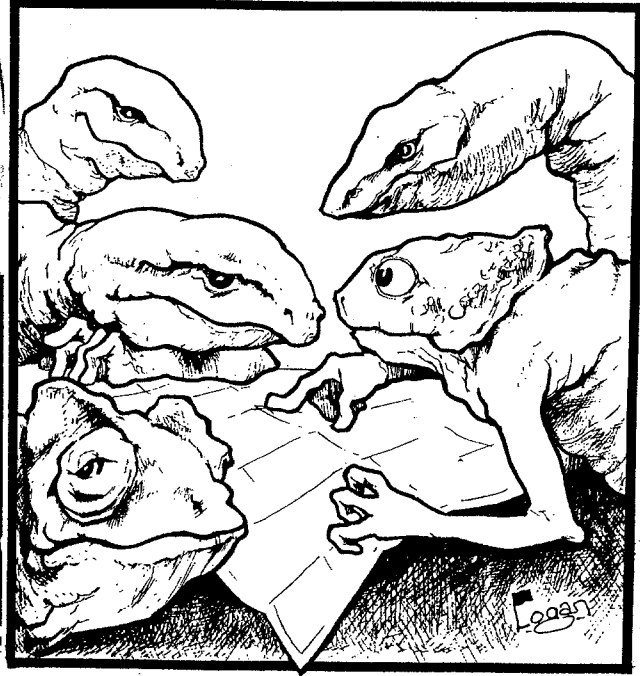
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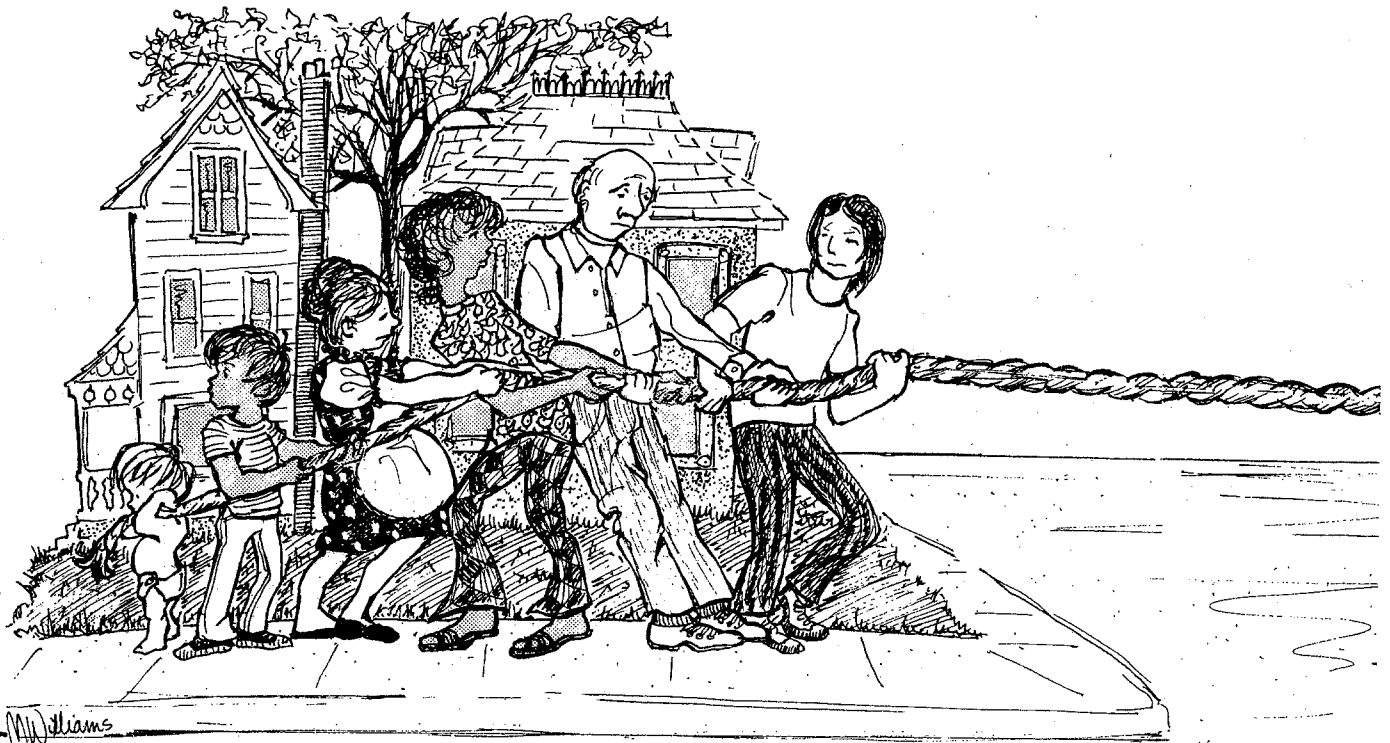
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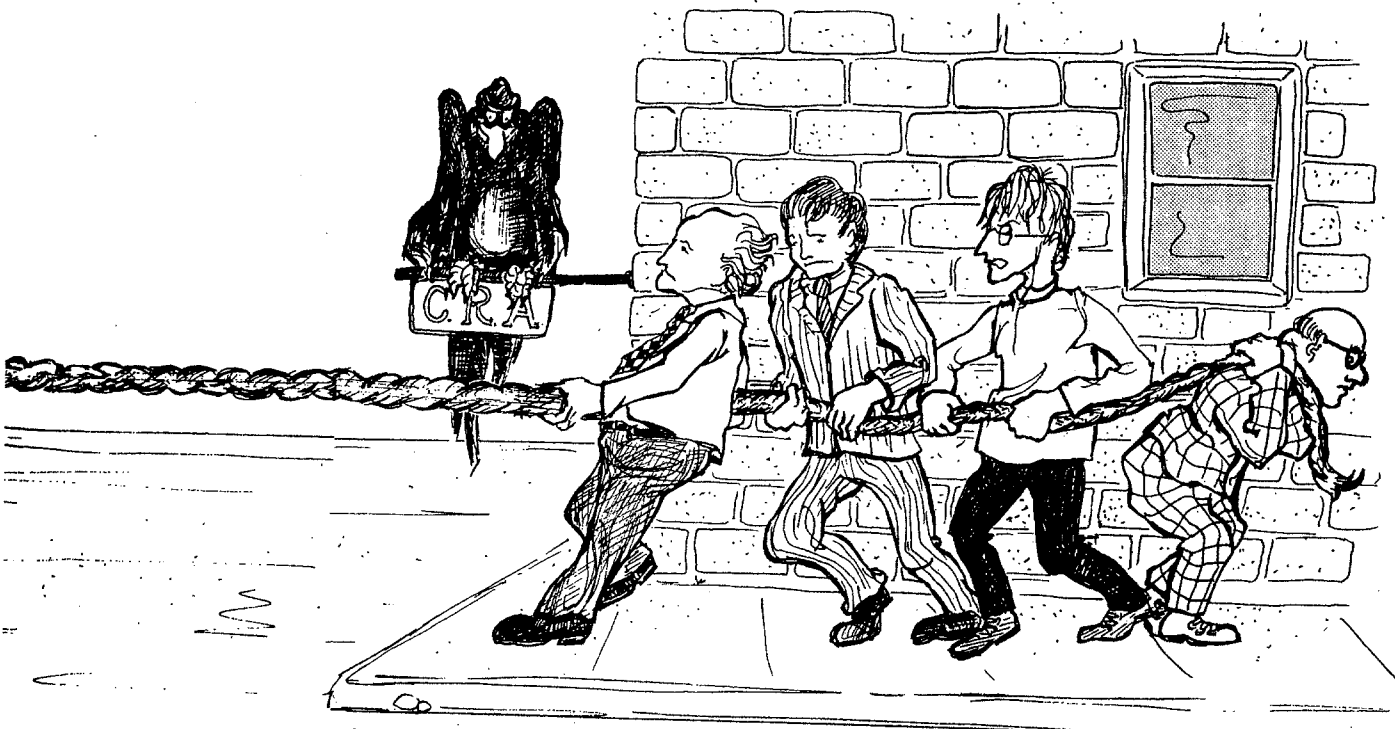
oners purchased the air rights above a parking lot in Cedar Square West for \$200,000 in taxpayers money.

Chronology of the Struggle on the West Bank

- 1958 University of Minnesota expands to the West Bank
- 1961 Keith Heller forms small real estate purchasing group
- 1962 Keith Heller-Gloria Segal partnership formed
- 1962-67 Heller-Segal planning starts
- 1968 City Council hearings on Urban Renewal Plan, Augsburg College
Cedar-Riverside Urban Renewal Plan approved by City Council
- 1969 Cedar-Riverside Associates (Heller-Segal) forms association with
Henry T. McKnight
Larry Schwanke runs against incumbent Alderman Jens Christianson
(wins West Bank; loses election)
- 1970 Community Union formed
Cedar-Riverside Peoples Center opens
Community Union demands formation of a Project Area Committee
*joins Administrative Appeal of Mpls. Workable Program
*files law suit against U. of M. to prevent acquisition of
houses
Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires City to
form Project Area Committee (PAC) as result of Workable
Program appeal
North Country Foods opens
- 1971
- May Mpls. Housing and Redevelopment Authority (MHRA) passes citizen
participation guidelines
- June 17 First PAC election
- June 28 HUD offers \$24 million New Community loan guarantee to CRA
- June 29 Draft Environmental Impact Statement on CRA's New Community files
in Washington, D.C.
- Aug. 12 PAC requests 30 days to review CRA's Stage I proposal



- Aug. 13 MHRHA denies review request; approves CRA's Stage I contract
 Aug. 30 Final Environmental Impact Statement accepted by Council on Environmental Quality
- Nov. Community Union learns of Environmental Impact Statement's existence
 Dec. HUD officially notifies Community Union of Environmental Impact Statement
- 1972
 April PAC approves administrative appeal of Environmental Impact Statement
 May Secretary of HUD, George Romney, comes to dedicate Stage I: demonstrations
 Oct-Dec. Community Union and Minnesota Public Interest Research Group attempt to reach negotiated settlement with CRA over illegal Impact Statement
 *negotiations unsuccessful
- 1973
 June Last Minute Theater Company presents a play on neighborhood history, "Living at the Center of Life; or What Goes Up Must Come Down" at the 3rd birthday party of the Peoples Center
 Sept. Cedar-Riverside Environmental Defense Fund incorporated (CREDF)
 Dec. CREDF files environmental law suit against HUD, CRA, MHRHA
- 1974
 Defendants motion to dismiss environmental law suit denied; Stipulation requires new Environmental Impact Statement, hearings
 June CRA announces rent increases in old neighborhood
 West Bank Tenants Union formed
 Aug-Sept. RENT STRIKE
 Sept. PAC opposes CRA's commercial centrum proposal to MHRHA
 Oct. MHRHA issues letter of intent for commercial centrum
 Stern Fund awards grant to CREDF
 Nov. Environmental Impact hearings, community development corporation proposed
- 1975
 Jan. Community Development Conference held; Steering Committee formed
 Feb. CRA announces more rent increases



What Does Cedar-Riverside Mean To

Powderhorn Residents Take Initiative

by Lynn Hinkle

Residents in the Powderhorn Park area of South Minneapolis are interested in developing their neighborhood, but not the way Cedar-Riverside Associates (CRA) has attempted to develop the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood. Time and again, at neighborhood meetings held by Powderhorn Residents' Group (PRG) to discuss downzoning, residents would gesture toward the West Bank and express their fear that investors and land speculators like CRA would create a "New Town in Powderhorn" unless residents took the initiative on land-use planning in the neighborhood.

Some Principles for Development

Out of these meetings came a number of suggestions for neighborhood development in the Powderhorn neighborhood.

*Land development in the neighborhood should help keep resources in the neighborhood, rather than help stuff the bank accounts of real estate investors.

*The neighborhood should develop or convert to cooperative housing (such as Clearview housing cooperative north of Powderhorn Park [see Common Ground #31]) since owner-occupants tend to maintain their property better than absentee landlords.

*For-profit housing developments should be avoided since such developments provide either poorly constructed inexpensive housing or well constructed luxury units in order to insure investors' profits.

*Neighborhood development should be resident controlled.

*Neighbors around Powderhorn Park should begin planning for neighborhood redevelopment now.

*We should build coalitions with other neighborhood groups who support our struggle for neighborhood development.

These suggestions formed the basis for positions taken by PRG on downzoning and prompted creation of plans for a program to convert multi-unit dwellings in the neighborhood from private to cooperative ownership.

PRG Fights for Control

The struggle for downzoning in the Powderhorn Park area began well before the July 24th hearing in the park when over 150 neighbors turned out to tell the City planners how we felt about their new land-use plan. One of the planners told us that up-zoning north of the park would say "Come on in developers." Our response came in a PRG resolution which called for downzoning the entire neighborhood and more control of the planning process. It passed unanimously. PRG was saying "Stay out profiteering developers and land speculators."

On August 22nd, about 500 residents from around South Minneapolis converged on Powderhorn Park for a "wrap-up" hearing on the proposed land-use plan before the Planning Commission. Again the resolution:

1. We want direct control over the planners so that we in Powderhorn Park neighborhood and the residents of all other neighborhoods can begin steps to control our neighborhood's future.

2. We want high-rise building stopped throughout the city (including Cedar-Riverside) until the residents can decide what they want.

3. We want rezoning in the Powderhorn Park neighborhood to reflect current land-use.

4. We want elimination of the state law which allows property owners to seek increased zoning density for their property

Other Neighborhoods?...What Does Cedar

without consent of their neighbors for 10 years after a comprehensive rezoning.

Again the residents voted unanimously to support the resolutions while the Minneapolis Planning Staff and Commission sat stunned by the opposition to their plans for our neighborhoods. The Planning Commission responded to this "final" hearing by conducting further separate negotiations with individual neighborhoods. However, the Comprehensive Land-Use Plan recently approved by the Planning Commission incorporates almost all of the changes suggested at that August 22nd hearing.

PRG, as well as other South Minneapolis neighborhood groups, are currently in the next step of the downzoning process: actually re-drawing the zoning maps of our neighborhoods. PRG supports rezoning based primarily on current land use in order to insure that Powderhorn Park residents (rather than real estate investors) will have the opportunity to determine what sort of housing will develop in the neighborhood.

Some Lessons

PRG's success with land-use planning and housing issues and its promise as an effective advocate for community control in the Powderhorn Park neighborhood seems based on:

1. Developing a strong network of contacts throughout our fairly diverse low-income neighborhood.
2. Developing coalitions with other neighborhoods in order to avoid being played off against other neighborhoods.
3. An understanding that our neighborhood contacts and coalition building have been facilitated not only by our interest in resident controlled planning, but community ownership of property.
4. A willingness to press for the interest of our neighborhood even to the point of confrontation with those who represent developers' interests.
5. An awareness that by beginning now to control our neighborhood's development, we may be spared the kind of "come from behind" struggle of our neighbors in Cedar-Riverside against a developer like CRA.

Preventative Medicine

by Ken Meter

There seems to be little reason to repeat the Cedar-Riverside "experiment." The stark, sheer concrete walls are only the unsightliest of the visible scars. It is much harder to notice the more subtle damage: the devastation of working class and Scandinavian immigrant heritages and the eradication of their homesteads, the wholesale eviction of a community from their homes, the inertia of a society which guarantees profit to those who invest into an effort to replace decayed housing with sterile housing.

The wounds were not inflicted only by Cedar Riverside Associates, Inc. The process was begun long before, when people stopped repairing their homes and sold out to absentee landlords, when the neighborhood folks realized they were powerless to influence the governing of their own community and responded by giving up.

They gave up, to the federal government, to the state, to the city council, to absentee owners. They left it to someone else to decide what was good for their land. Washington was far too busy, but they offered to contribute money through Urban Renewal. The state was too busy handling matters of state-wide importance, but they also chipped in. The city fathers were also too busy, but when they heard about CRA, they were eager to grant them the rights to renew the West Bank. (If you want to read a more complete history, see Common Ground #1.)

As the city fathers seem to have understood it, there wasn't any community, so a new one had to be built. Now, we know the West Bank didn't have a sharp lobbyist, they didn't hire a planning staff, they didn't have an alternative to suggest when the CRA presented their plans. They didn't even have much land left, because CRA owned much of it by 1967. But the city fathers should have guessed that since there were people living in the West Bank, there was a community to protect.

Riverside Mean To Other Neighborhoods?

How can we make sure that residents will have a clear plan, and that the city will hear them once they do? One of the likeliest methods now being discussed is a strong community council.

On the neighborhoods' side, we need to respond better than did the former residents of Cedar-Riverside. We need to examine the lead which the West Bank Tenants Union and CREDF have presented. Rather than giving up, they have fought hard to strengthen their voice.

They have understood that they can unify residents by providing needed services (like food and preventative health care) much better than CRA can with rhetoric and elegant facades. They have met the challenge of fighting on several fronts at once. And, they have begun to develop a network, for governing and economic development, of their own neighborhood.

The city needs to practice alot more, until they can hear the people who live in the neighborhoods of the city. In fact, these residents have alot more right to decide local policy than do the city fathers. They are in a much better position to know what they need, as a neighborhood. Such planning requires the help of professional planners, who could be hired by the neighborhood instead of by the city. But helpful planners won't try to tell the neighborhood what it needs, they'll try to help the neighborhood get what it knows it needs.

Creating Community Councils

In light of all this, I'll make some recommendations for consolidating local control through Community Councils. If other neighborhoods will act now, we can save ourselves alot of struggle and concrete.

1. Community Councils should be the governing bodies over neighborhood affairs. All local policy, from zoning to park design to home rehabilitation, would be set by the Community Council. This would require us to work for enabling legislation at the capitol.

2. Clearly, the neighborhood boundaries should be set by the residents themselves.

3. Any new development would need to be cleared first by the CC. Open hearings should be held to consider the needs of the residents, and of other neighborhoods, that may be affected by new development.

4. A full-time group of staff will be essential to sustaining the CC.

5. CC's would be empowered to own property and businesses, by themselves or through a community development corporation. This would enable profits to be plowed back into the community.

6. CC's would collect rents or property taxes, and then bargain with the city for services such as police, fire, and snowplowing. This would greatly improve accountability over tax moneys.

7. The city would work to coordinate and serve CC's--by providing technical expertise and assistance, planning money or staff, and secretarial/communications help. The basic underlying drive would be to ensure the strength of local Community Councils.

8. CC's will be ineffective unless there exists a strong fabric of local community. Al Wroblewski's article (Common Ground #3) develops the need for a local fabric well, although he disagrees that there is a need for community councils.

9. Metropolitan-wide services such as transit would still be coordinated by the Metro Council but with the addition of much stronger local input.

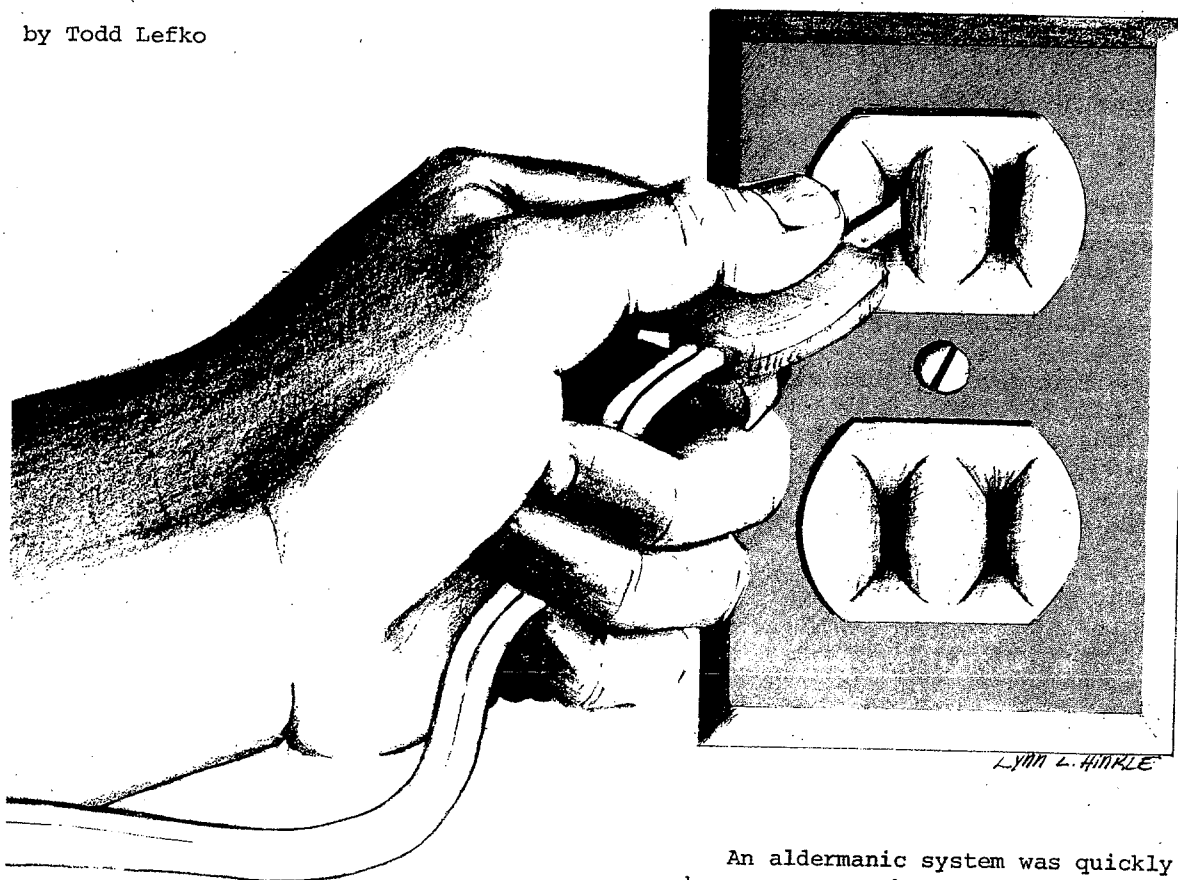
This is clearly a long-term proposal for an ideal of local control. The best short-term strategy will have to be decided by those of us who actively work to empower neighborhoods. (Common Ground #3 has more background information on Community Councils.)

If Community Council legislation advances neighborhoods towards this kind of decentralized government, it can be effective. If the only result is to establish weak boards with no responsibility, residents will be correct in losing interest, and the cause will have been harmed.

An ounce of prevention can save tons of concrete.

PLUGGING ST. PAUL NEIGHBORHOODS INTO CITY HALL

by Todd Lefko



It has been observed that while Minneapolis is a city, St. Paul is a state of mind. A new state of mind is developing in St. Paul which supports a Community Council process. Much of the shape of this process was developed by the Mayor's Committee on Citizen Participation.

Charged by the Mayor with studying participation, the committee began with a belief that participation was the essence of democracy. After all, who could be against citizen participation. The world takes on a different hue when you know that while God rested on the seventh day, it was only so he would have his strength to create citizen participation on the eighth day. As Chairman, I began with near perfect naivete as to the size and difficulty of our task and this naivete, as to existing interests, formed a short-lived, but key factor. We began to believe that the questions on participation were endless and during periods of mental depression, unanswerable. The key problem was definitional. Everyone was for participation as long as you didn't define what it meant.

An aldermanic system was quickly rejected because we sought to balance neighborhood interests with citywide coordination and to us, Minneapolis city government didn't appear as the example of heaven on earth.

We attempted to establish guidelines through questionnaires and public hearings covering issues such as need, functions, relationship with existing groups, elections vs. appointments, boundaries, and staffing. A division existed between those that viewed community councils as an operating decentralization of the city and those who perceived of them as advisory bodies. Our belief that existing groups would strongly support the concept was quickly shattered. Instead of support, many groups felt threatened by a new form. Some neighborhoods had little tradition of local activity while others felt their essence of volunteerism would be destroyed by professional staff and city funding. Different areas had different needs, resources and traditions of protest, and viewed committee action as either too weak and compromising or too strong and disruptive. (It was as if in our traumatic crusade we had rescued the fair damsel with great effort, only to find she had grown fond of the monster.)

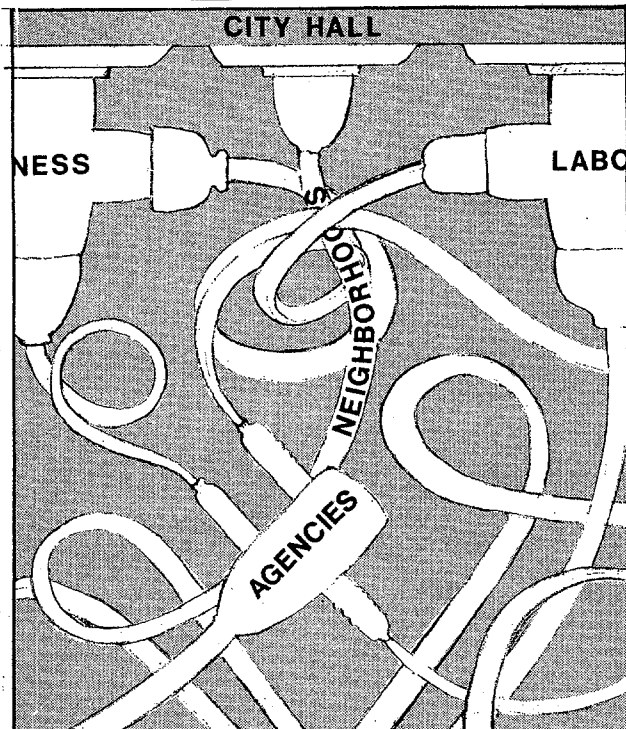
"The choice is whether to develop a structure which seeks to build upon existing groups or moving toward either elected subdistricts or strong regional federations."

The City Council, while officially favoring "participation," was nervous about cost and a lessening of its power. Former Council President Rosalie Butler believed a series of polls presented a better alternative. The St. Paul newspapers strongly opposed the entire concept, believing that participation came in the regular election. City wide groups, such as organized labor, felt left out, so to appease them we created a city wide structure which would have been of questionable value. The Chamber of Commerce, feeling less insecure, believed they would continue to have their City Hall input. The League of Women Voters, perceiving the new charter as their Godchild, viewed a system of councils as possible disruption of the principles of central planning for which they had long toiled.

The Planning Board Chairman viewed councils with alarm since council presented a perceived threat to the Planning Board.

When the City Council specifically cut the line item from the budget covering citizen participation, we got the feeling they were telling us something.

But Hallelujah, when all looked darkest,



two events occurred. First, a new election produced Bob Sylvester, Dave Hozza, and Jack Christensen, all of whom believed in strong neighborhood participation. Second and most important, passage of Community Development Revenue Sharing whose regulations strongly encouraged an organized process of participation. There is nothing like federal money to bring religion to City Hall.

St. Paul is now beginning to develop a citizen participation process in public meetings. While the final outline of the process is not complete, one problem has become clear. For adoption, a choice shall be made between pure legitimacy and political necessity. For that choice is whether to develop a structure which seeks to build upon existing groups or moving toward either elected subdistricts or strong regional federations. These latter alternatives will pose threats to the existing groups, even though in some cases they are sporadically effective and their ability to represent the neighborhood is questionable. But the important point may be the establishment of the system, realizing that it is an evolutionary process. My preference is working through and seeking to build the existing groups. But the central point is for the system's establishment, more than for the finality of its form. As the process begins, suspicion of the city's motives are evident with many not realizing the true sincerity of Councilmen like Hozza and Sylvester to see a process developed. St. Paul's favorite parlor game has become speculation over everyone else's motives. Whether we will learn to trust each other and decide that adoption of a concept is crucial remains to be seen. Much of this will be determined by who remains involved. If many believe the process is stacked against a rational choice, or certain groups are dominating the decision, they will withdraw. The necessary but difficult thing to develop is an atmosphere that all are working toward a better system of citizen participation and that some compromises may be necessary. We are beginning, and that in itself is a hopeful sign.

Todd Lefko was Chairperson of the Mayor's Committee on Citizen Participation (St. Paul) and is currently President of the Association of St. Paul Communities and a member of the Metro Council.

MAINTAINING HOMES TOGETHER IN LEXINGTON - HAMLINE - PART II

by Steve Madole

This is a continuation of the article on group contracting which began in the Fall issue.

Residents of the Lexington-Hamline Community in St. Paul have been working together to maintain and improve their homes. Working through their Community Council, they created a program whereby people who wanted a similar service would try to jointly contract for that service. Their program appears to be one of the first successful attempts at this approach to the problem of housing maintenance in the central cities. The residents had two objectives for their program: first, to save themselves money by "packaging" their individual projects in order to take advantage of "economies of scale;" and second, to have a greater impact on upgrading their neighborhood.

The residents of Lexington-Hamline encountered several difficulties in setting up their program, not the least of which was finding a way to weld individual's self-interest together for the benefit of the group. When I wrote about their efforts in the last issue, no one had actually had any group-contracted work done and it was unclear if the program would succeed. Since that time, however, six homes have been re-wired through the program, saving each of the home-owners between 20 and 40 percent. The six home-owners feel the program was a success and plans are now underway for another effort involving more people and more types of work. In this article I want to relate the recent events in the program and discuss some of the problems you might expect to encounter in setting up a similar program.

The first thing that needed to be done was to refine the idea so as to make it acceptable to all of the community.

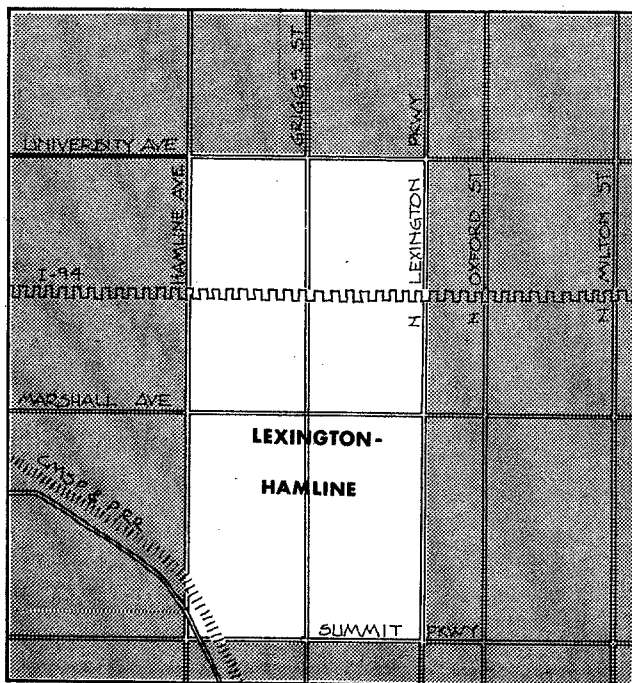
"...I don't think that they, the residents, felt confident that the contracts would be on an individual basis. They were afraid that they might be held responsible if someone else forfeited or denied pay for the work that had been contracted. And I also wonder if the privacy factor weren't part of it. The fact that everyone would know what had been

done and how much they paid for it..."
--Anne Conley

The approach that was settled on was to offer contractors a "package" of several individual jobs asking them to submit individual bids, but with the understanding that all the individual contracts would be awarded only to the one contractor the group selected. This type of approach has its problems, but the residents did make it work.

Next, the neighborhood was polled to determine the most needed types of work. Painting, re-roofing and re-wiring were selected. Groups of residents wanting each type of work were then organized.

At this point, people were asked if they would commit themselves to participating in the program. Many people were willing, but had no idea of the cost of the work they wanted. Many of the people in the wiring group simply wanted their homes brought up to code, but did not know what this involved.



"I think that contractors are willing to lower their prices somewhat to work with a group."

The city inspector's office was asked if they could write up a list of the necessary work. They could, it was learned, but there would be a fee for this evaluation which could offset the savings that the residents hoped to achieve. Furthermore, the inspection would, of necessity, require that citations be issued and the work would become mandatory, regardless of the resident's ability to pay. Also, inspection approval of any work is often contingent on the whole house meeting code. Chester Zimmewicz's experience previous to the joint contracting program is illustrative.

"I had new electrical service put in. That's all I wanted. Now that's good and the city would tell me that's good. The first thing the electrical inspector did--in fact, he didn't even open the service box--he said, 'Let me look at the rest of the house.' He said, 'You need a new grounded outlet there. You need a new light there. You need to ground the fixture in the attic. You need to ground the air conditioner.' It cost me two hundred more dollars because this guy--and I'm not sayin' what he said isn't good; eventually I was going to do all that,

but I was going to do it at my own pace--he wouldn't give final inspection on my service until I had all this other junk in. That's what they're doin' to these other people. I can see if you go to some older people in the area and add that much to their house, what's gonna happen. The same thing happened with plumbing. I had one item I wanted inspected. That was all I could afford at the time, and they wouldn't approve it 'til I did five other things."

Chester's experience concerned some of the group and further inquiries were made. We were told that the policy was to inspect only the work that had been done. When Chester's experience was related to the city, it was passed off as the work of an over-zealous inspector. However, most electricians have a good idea of what is necessary to meet code.

The cost information problem was solved by asking for preliminary estimates from a general contractor. It turned out that some of these "guesstimates" were way off because the contractor had not visited all the residences and gotten a clear understanding of



"The point of block organization is to increase participation in the Community Council. Already we've interested people in coming to the Council meetings. You can't have a good community council without having a good base of support in the neighborhood." --Larry Conley, with (l to r) Georgia, Anne, & Daniel Conley, & Billy Boulger. Photo: The Photo Collective--EH

"Six homes have been rewired through the program saving each of the home-owners between 20 and 40 percent."

what was to be done.

As crude as the preliminary figures were, they did help some people decide they just couldn't afford the work. Others were sure they could, while a few decisions were contingent on the amount of savings that joint contracting would bring.

The next question was how to choose contractors for the bidding and avoid the home repair rip-offs. Obviously, going through the Yellow Pages was not good enough. Each member in the group brought different ideas and points of view and this turned out to be one of the program's strong points.

"Many of the people here need work done and they're just numb as to who to go to. My brother-in-law, they went to a contractor simply because they knew someone else who had had him do some work, but they didn't know if it was a competitive bid,

if they were being stuck high or low or in between or if the guy was doing good work. At least here, in a group, there is enough interest for people to go and dig around and find out what's going on. There is enough variety in employment that they have enough contracts, whether it be through city hall or what, that they can get a reasonable idea of what to expect..."--John Steiner.

Someone knew of a list that the Housing and Redevelopment Authority kept of contractors they approved. The list was used, although other criteria could have been developed.

When the contractors were asked by mail to indicate their interest in participating and later in bidding, the response was less than overwhelming. The group learned that few contractors understood what they were trying to accomplish. Also apparent was the need to follow up letters with telephone calls.

Of seventeen interested electrical contractors, five were asked to bid. Only two did so, and another four were asked to bid. Only two of these did so. Members of the wiring groups also got bids on their

own to use as a check on whether the "packaging" of jobs was netting any savings.

When they sat down, each member with his five bids, it was obvious that the joint program did offer a savings. However, there was one small problem. Ralph Tieso of Tieso Electric, 1200 Larpenter, was obviously the low bidder on four of the jobs, but not on the other two. Charlie Sanft had one of the two odd bids for wiring his garage and he describes what happened.

"I was going to just drop out 'cause it would have cost me extra money, I think, or at least the same as anywhere else. Then I suggested that we give him (Ralph Tieso) the idea or ask him if he wanted to lower the other two bids. Then Marshke (Housing Committee Chairman) called him and didn't really say that the others wouldn't go if he didn't come down, but I guess he conveyed that idea and right away Tieso called me. I think that alone signifies that contractors are willing to lower their prices somewhat to work with a group." --Charlie Sanft



Kathie Sanft: "It's encouraging people to invest in their homes." Photo by Ken Meter

"I think if a person does something in a group like this and one family gets the wrong end of the stick, there is going to be a bigger riot screaming about it than if it's one person. I think a contractor is less likely not to do something he agreed to and try to get away with it."

Tieso was chosen to do the work and a party was held at Charlie Sanft's home to sign the contracts and celebrate. The work was commenced shortly thereafter.

Perhaps the group was lucky that Tieso was willing to negotiate. When I talked to Ralph Tieso, he told me that he lost money on one contract, he almost broke even on the second, and made up his losses on the other four. He said he was able to bid so low because he put an electrician on the job who was very experienced at this type of work and because his firm was big enough that they had lower material costs. He also said he would not have done the two money-losing jobs if they hadn't been tied to the rest. Mr. Tieso said he thought the program was a good idea and would be glad to do it again.

What would the group have done if Mr. Tieso had not re-negotiated? Well, they could have subsidized the difference in bids, or they could have cut off the two odd bids and left those people to their own devices. However, each of the people I asked said they would have been willing to pay some extra money if their bid had been the odd one, in order to maintain the group's solidarity. They realized that even the second lowest bid was still better than they could have done on their own.

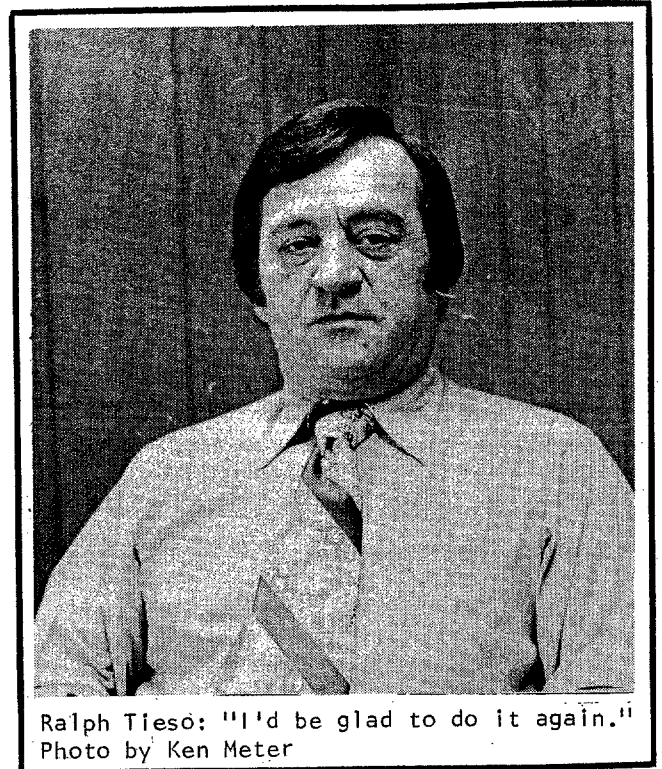
There were some general problems the group had. Because the committee chairmanship changed hands, and later the new chairman was away on a long vacation, the project sometimes suffered for lack of firm leadership. This, combined with the newness of the program, caused things to drag out until winter came and it was too late to paint houses or put on roofs. Fortunately, wiring can be done in the winter or the whole idea might have failed. Having learned their lesson, residents are making plans now so the new contracts can be let when spring comes.

Looking back on the work which is now completed, we can ask if the residents accomplished their goals of saving money and improving the neighborhood. Terry McGibbon, whose house was rewired, said, "I'm pretty confident we saved money. The one we called on our own was considerably higher."

Another bid that McGibbons got through the program was \$200 more than Tieso's bid. Another family found their low bid to be \$82 and \$194 lower than other bids from the program. Charlie Sanft said, "We had someone in here before when we were having trouble with the hot water heater and he gave us an estimate of \$150 or \$160, but that was just for wiring the garage. We had alot more done than that."

Said Kathy Sanft, "His [Tieso's] original bid was \$150. Then we had another at \$175 and another at \$240 and the lowest was \$115. He asked us what our lower bid was...but that was by a non-union contractor. He said he really didn't want to go down to \$115, but he'd go down to \$130 and that satisfied us."

The program definitely saved money, but not necessarily in the ways the participants expected. They thought that "packaging" their jobs would allow a contractor to buy materials in quantity and save travel time between jobs. The electrician who did the work said that the small quantity of materials involved wasn't significant, but



Ralph Tieso: "I'd be glad to do it again."
Photo by Ken Meter

"Residents are making plans now so the new contracts can be let when spring comes."

that the packaging had instead made the job large enough to be attractive and stimulate bidding. Whatever the reasons, the money saved was only one of the benefits.

Security was most frequently mentioned as one of the program's pluses. For John and Judy Steiner who had had a frightening experience with a siding contractor whose salesman had misrepresented him, this was especially important.

"Yes, I think we saved some money, but I think the biggest advantage is the security of having the job done and having it done well by a reputable firm."
--John Steiner

"I think if a person does something in a group like this and one family gets the wrong end of the stick, there is going to be a bigger riot screaming about it than if it's one person. I think a contractor is less likely to not do something he agreed to and try to get away with it."
--Judy Steiner

Terry McGibbon pointed to the group



"I think the biggest advantage is the security of having the job done and having it done well by a reputable firm."
John Steiner, with Judy Steiner.
Photo by Ken Meter

interplay as being helpful in choosing the contractor. When people shared their subjective impressions, some people who had felt Mr. Tieso was cold and impersonal considered other views that he had been more business-like, complete and detailed in his bid. Terry McGibbon said, "Actually we didn't pick the lowest bidder in terms of what we had done. The reason we went along with Tieso was he impressed us with his competency. The other bids were indefinite or incomplete."

As far as strengthening the neighborhood, most participants agreed that they would have put off having the work done if the program had not come along. Some other comments were:

"It's encouraging people to invest in their homes."
--Kathie Sanft

"It's good for the neighborhood. I had a feeling there was community spirit. I got interested in it last year and this year, I volunteered to be on the Housing Committee so my interest carried through."
--Charlie Sanft

Looking ahead to this year's planned maintenance program, Lexington-Hamline residents may find a new twist. It appears that the City of St. Paul will get around to distributing its rehabilitation loan and grants money. The program calls for re-hab counselors who will write up code items that need to be fixed. Financial counselors will help obtain preliminary estimates, as well as help in setting up the bidding and obtaining loans. The program even provides for legal advice. The low interest loans should encourage more people to fix up their homes. The program might even "help" Lexington-Hamline's group effort out of business. Then again, it might free up enough of the Housing Committee's time so that they can go on to other things like tool banks, do-it-yourself home repair classes, and labor pools. We'll just have to wait and see.

Steve Madole is a four-year resident of Lexington-Hamline and is a member of the LHCC's Housing Committee.

GROUP CONTRACTING IN FIELD-REGINA

by Mary Ellen Grika

At the same time that Lexington-Hamline, in St. Paul, was conducting its Group Contracting for Services project, a similar one was going on in Minneapolis in the Field-Regina neighborhood.

The housing committee of the neighborhood association decided to concentrate its efforts in a four block area. Flyers were distributed door to door, announcing the project and giving a list of suggested home improvements. Residents were encouraged to check several and return the list at a scheduled meeting.

However, the news spread through the neighborhood and when the meeting was held, people outside the four block area asked to be included. The housing committee felt that any group asking for bids should have at least five members. When the check lists were tabulated the results showed that three services had the greatest appeal—roofing, cementing and exterior painting.

Several months were spent on the mechanics of finding contractors, getting bids and comparing results of group bidding.

When the final contracts were signed, three houses got new roofs and exterior painting, one house had exterior painting only, two houses got new cement walks and steps and one house got all three services. The savings to individuals, because they were part of a group, averaged 15%.

Lexington-Hamline will soon be organizing another program, using and improving on what they learned from their first effort. This time a mass mailing will go out to the entire neighborhood.

Lowry Hill East, in southwest Minneapolis, is conducting a trial run in one block. Three homeowners in the block have received low cost loans under the local housing assistance program. Code items will be rehabbed with the loan money. In the spring, a concentrated effort will be made to replace and repair all cement in the block as a single project.

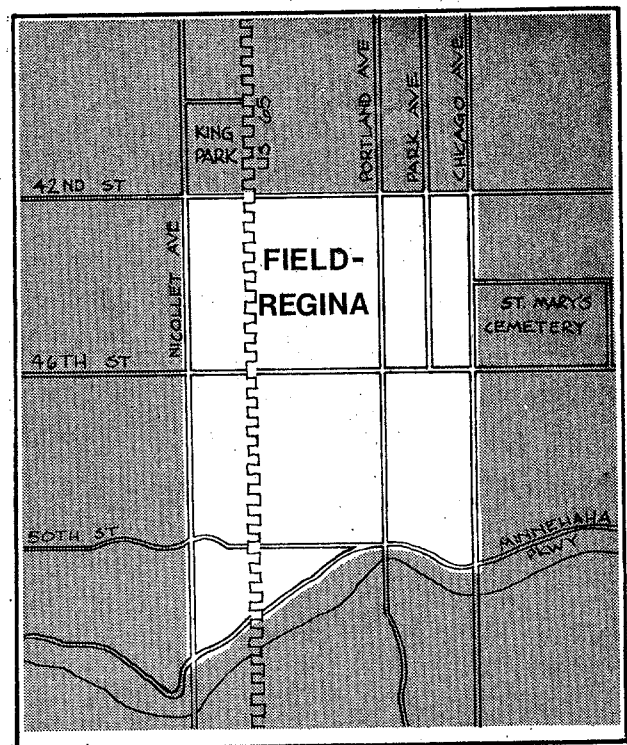
The Citizen's League, in an effort to help restore confidence in older neighbor-

hoods, has undertaken a project financed by the Minneapolis Foundation to package a set of sample contracts. These were written by James Stolpestad, in St. Paul and are another tool a neighborhood group could use in dealing with the group contracting concept.

They include -

Construction agreement and letter of credit: These documents are designed to cover the situation where a number of homeowners desire to jointly contract for improvements to their homes such as roofing, siding, and painting. The agreement is between the neighborhood association, acting for the homeowners, and the contractor. To help alleviate concerns of contractors over payment a sample Letter of Credit is also included.

Maintenance agreement: The sample maintenance agreement applies to maintenance activities in which neighborhood associations may become involved such as snowplowing, grass-cutting, and trash pick-up. It is contemplated



"Savings to individuals averaged 15% because they were part of a group."

that the services would be financed out of the association's general revenues.

Pledge agreement: The pledge agreement was meant to be a tool which neighborhood associations could use to help stabilize their income pictures and be better able to plan various activities. It provides a more formal way by which members of an association pledge a certain contribution to the association's activities over a prescribed period of time.

Owner's declaration and masters declaration of covenants and restrictions:

These sample documents convert a voluntary neighborhood association into a mandatory one which might require certain architectural standards or contributions for certain maintenance or rehabilitation services provided to homeowners in the area. It sets up a situation similar to mandatory associations which are found in many townhouses and condominium developments.

Copies of the sample contracts and agreements are available from the Citizen's League office. Sample flyers, to be used in a neighborhood, to organize for group

contracting are also being developed with the help of the Association of General Contractors. Asking the right questions is important to the success of such a project.

Citizens League, along with neighborhood leaders in both cities, has continually attempted to interest HRA in including the group contracting concept in the guidelines for their local loan and grant programs. In addition to saving residents money, it stretches the public dollars and creates concentrations of visible rehab in the city. The latest effort, in this direction, is an attempt to get the enabling legislation, that created the loans and grants, to speak to the importance of using the group contracting approach.

For more information contact:

The Citizens League
530 Syndicate building
84 S. 6th St.
Minneapolis, Minn. 55402

In May 1975, Mary Ellen Grika will complete a year long assignment with the Citizens League, where she has been responsible for helping implement the recommendations contained in the League report "Building Confidence in Older Neighborhoods".

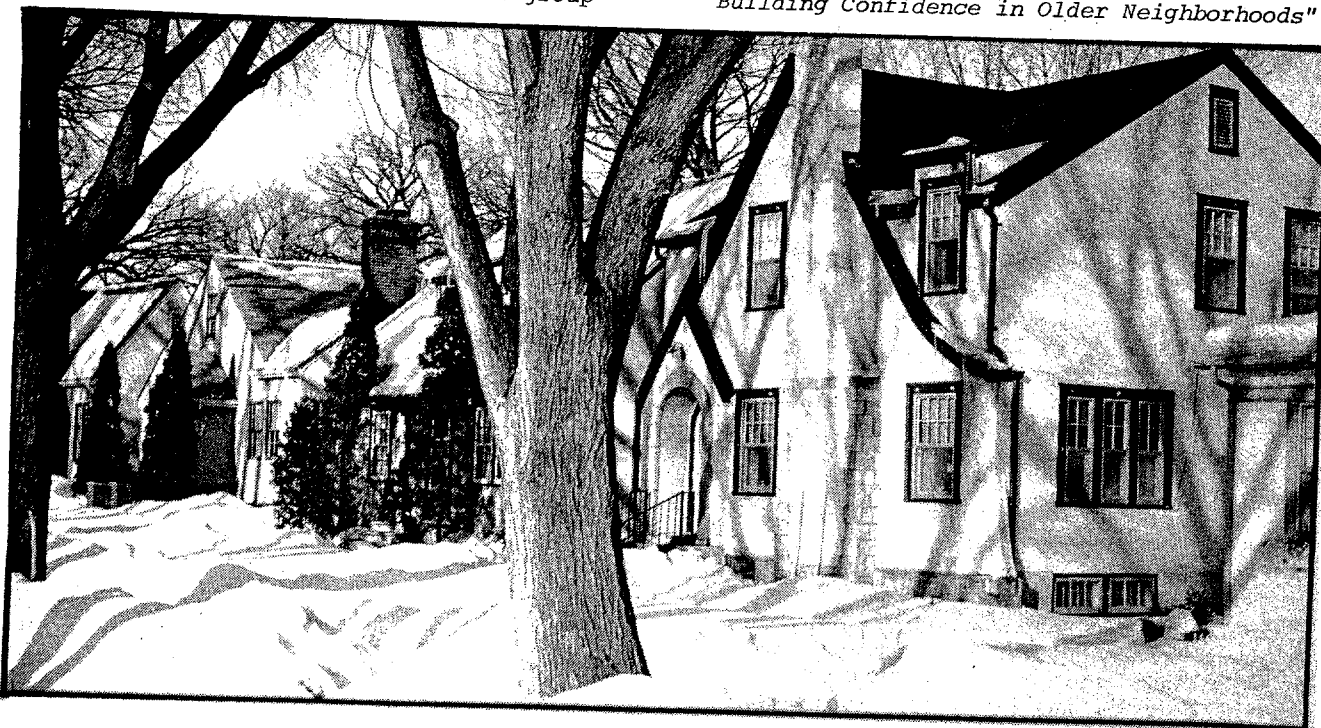
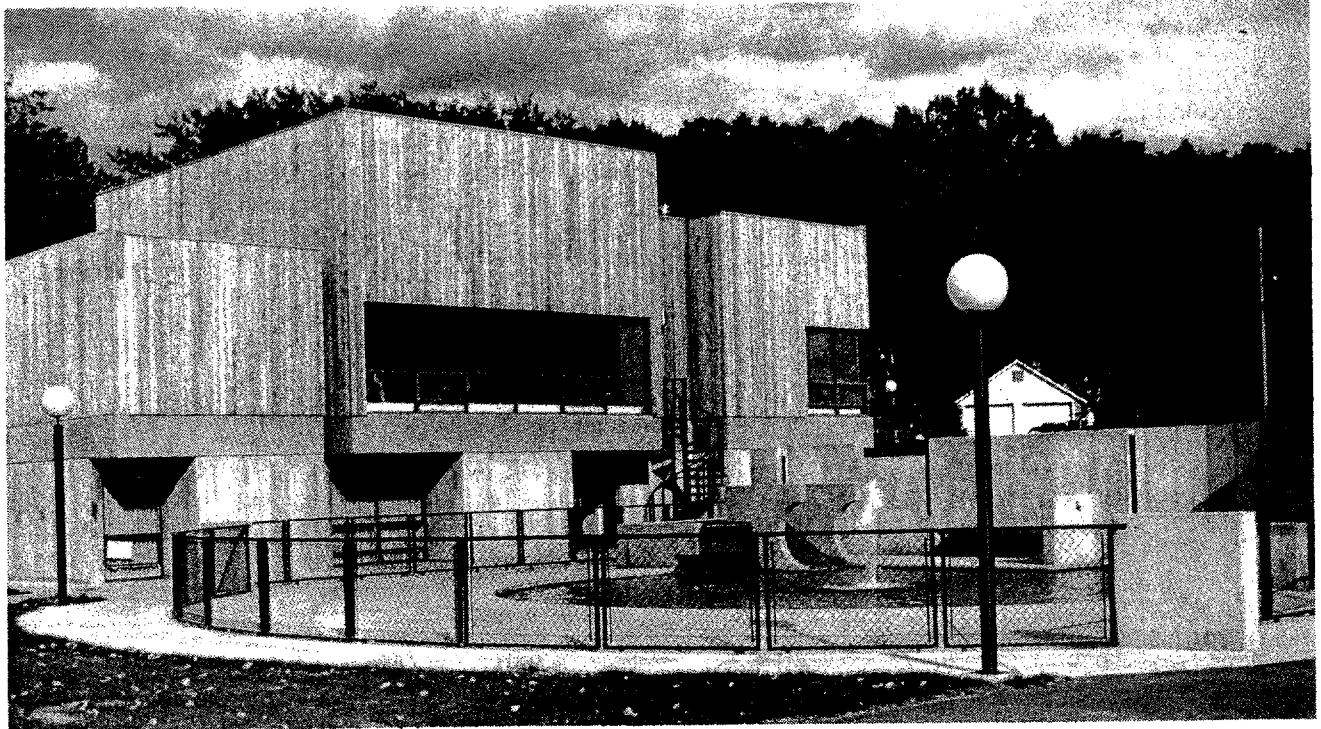


Photo by Ken Meter.

Luxton Park: Residents and City Working Hand in Hand



The new Luxton Park house.

Photos courtesy of Hodne-Stageberg Partners, Inc.

by Anne Barnum

Luxton Park (formerly known as Prospect Field) is located in a neighborhood in Southeast Minneapolis known as Prospect Park, which includes within its boundaries the Glendale Homes, a Federal housing project where about 285 families live. Prospect Park lies within a clearly defined geographic area bounded by the University Of Minnesota campus, the Mississippi River and the St. Paul City limits. The population numbers about 9,200 and represents a cross section of people. Income levels include some very high and very low ones; professional and University related personnel and students live in the area; and it is also a racially mixed community. Residents of Prospect Park have always been noted for being activists and involved in everything from local to national affairs. On-going and well-organized community groups have gained credibility for the neighborhood in its relationships with institutions and other organizations and public agencies. Local groups most involved with community improvement are the Prospect Park and East River Road

Improvement Association (organized in 1906 and affiliated with the umbrella group of Sempacc, the S.E. Minneapolis Planning and Coordinating Committee), the Glendale Improvement Association, and the Prospectors (a recreation council associated with recreation programs in the community including those at Luxton Park). Prospect Park is also a participant in the South East Alternatives School Program, a Federally funded program developing alternative educational programs.

The site of Luxton Park was a cow pasture in 1912 when the community, under the leadership of the late George Luxton, persuaded the city to acquire the property. George Luxton lived across the street from the pasture and was garden editor for the Minneapolis Star. The park was named after him in 1963. By 1950, there was still only minimum play equipment (swings and teeter totters), one ball diamond (the skating rink in winter) and a shelter building consisting of one room which could be used for a variety of purposes in the warm months but was exclusively a warming house in the winter.

**"In 1951, 285 families were suddenly added to the population . . .
Space for gatherings was already too limited to adequately serve the
existing community."**

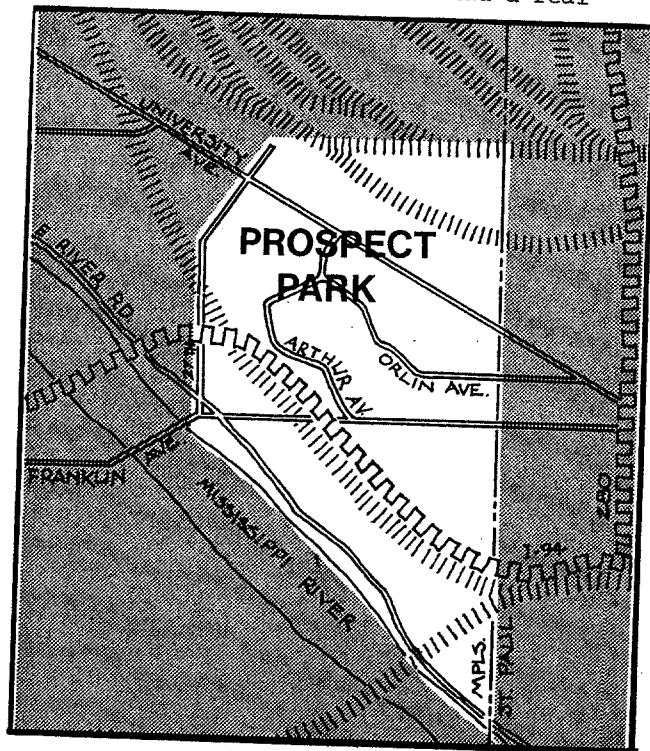
In 1951, with the building of Glendale Homes--located directly adjacent to the park--285 families including over 600 children under 18 years of age were suddenly added to the population of the community. No recreation or even meeting space was included in the Glendale development. The idea was that neighborhood integration would be encouraged if the new residents used space already existing in the neighborhood. But nobody thought to check out the practicality of this idea or they would have discovered that space for gatherings for various purposes was already too limited to adequately serve the existing community.

✓ However, it wasn't until 1957 that a committee was appointed by the PERRIA to begin exploring the possibility of improving the park facilities. At that time the I-94 freeway was scheduled to take a large portion of the park. The first accomplishment of the committee was to successfully negotiate an agreement with the highway department whereby they would take only 1/4 of an acre of park land by putting a wall and not a slope along the freeway strip adjacent to the park.

At this time park improvements in Minneapolis were done under the Elwell law under which a park project was partially financed (about 50%) by city-wide general obligation bond funds and partially by special assessments against property owners in the area around the park. In order to guarantee contact with residents concerning the proposed project and assure themselves of neighborhood support for a park, Park Board policy required that petitions favoring the project be signed by 51% of the owners of property that would be assessed. Luxton was the last park to be improved under this policy, whose value lay in forcing proponents of park improvements to contact residents of the community but which worked to the disadvantage of those neighborhoods that lacked interest, lacked leadership, had many transient residents or many low income families for whom the assessment was a hardship. Both the Brightbill Study of parks conducted in 1965 and Mr. Ruhe, who became park superintendent in 1966, recommended discontinuance of the Elwell Law and it was voted out by the Park Board

in 1969. Now parks are improved by city-wide bond funds and/or special funds. (Another party interested in park improvement was added in about 1956 when East Side Services opened an office and began a program of Social Services in Glendale.)

Then began the thorough but necessarily tedious process of planning for the rehabilitation of Luxton Park. Plans had to be developed so they could be submitted to residents as part of the petition drive. Then volunteers had to call on approximately 1600 dwelling units to come up with the necessary 801 signatures on the petitions. Because this is a University community, there is an unusual amount of rental property and absentee landlords that had to be contacted. Literally dozens of meetings were held with residents, park planning staff, architects, Housing Authority officials and East Side Services representatives during this time. An attempt was made to involve every interested person and give everyone a chance to express their desires for the park. Then working within the confines of the budget, an attempt was made to establish priorities and satisfy as many needs as possible. Since the residents of Glendale and HRA had a real



“This has been an excellent example of citizen participation, of the viable relationship between residents and public and private agencies . . .”

interest in seeing the park improved and since Glendale could not be taxed, the HRA agreed to pay 20% of the cost of park improvement and the remaining 80% was financed 40% by city-wide bonds and 40% by neighborhood taxation.

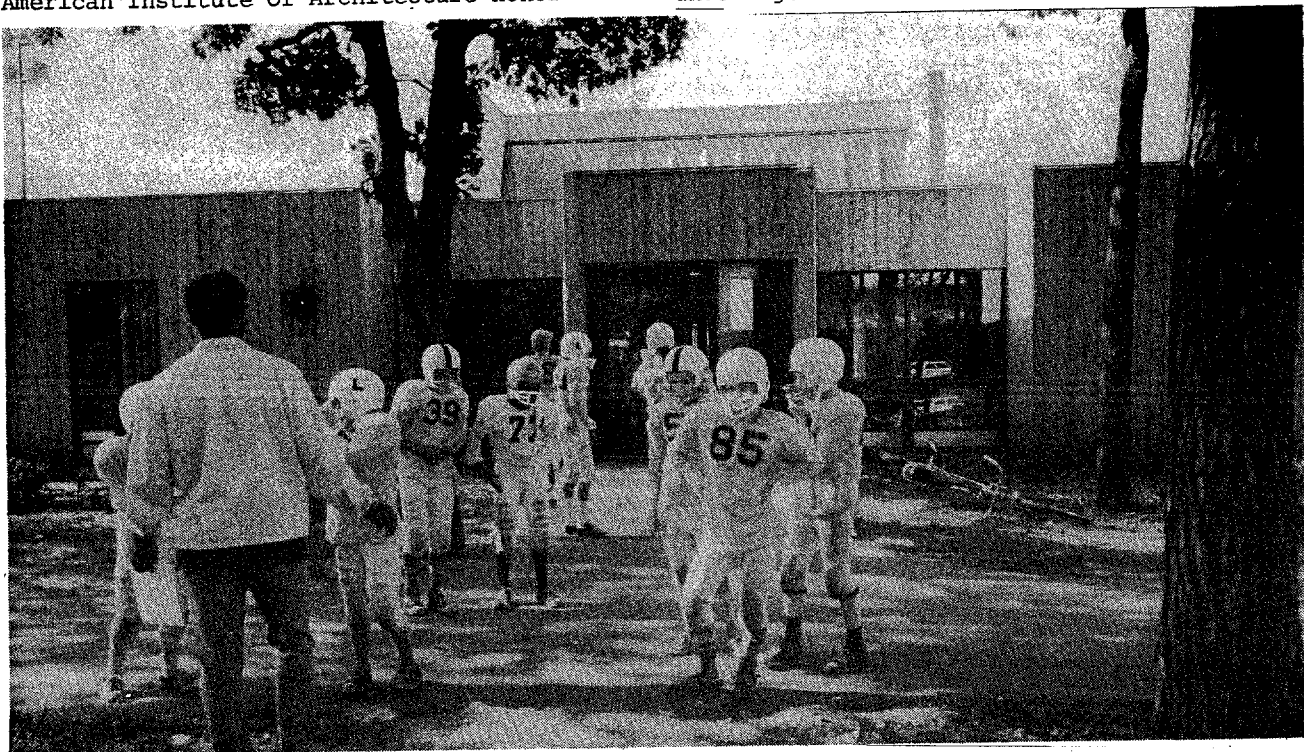
So many homes in Southeast Minneapolis had already been taken by the Freeway and University expansion, it was decided it was not feasible to expand the park acreage even though additional space would have been highly desirable. The result was a rearrangement of existing space to include a wading pool with fountain, creative play equipment for small children, ball field (also for skating rink), picnic area and relocated and expanded structure. At present the Park Board owns the building. They share maintenance with the HRA. Park staff and East Side Services staff together with residents plan the leisure time and social service programs housed in the building.

The building is a most attractive one designed by Hodne-Stageberg Partners and has won several national awards. (HUD--1972 Honor Award and Minnesota Society of the American Institute of Architecture Honor

Award--1971.) Emphasis was put on space for group meetings and creative activity such as art and ceramics (there is a kiln, etc.). In retrospect, it now seems apparent that a higher priority should have been given to space large enough and durable enough for informal active play since so many children live in very small homes, comparable in size to an apartment.

Several shared facilities have been developed in Minneapolis during the last ten years with various combinations of participating agencies. This was the first to include parks, HRA and a social service agency so new ground was being broken in terms of contractual, administrative, staff, service and program and other relationships. Through lots of communication, trial and error and a real commitment on the part of the participating agencies and residents as they occur. This has been an excellent example of citizen participation, of the development of a viable relationship between residents and public and private agencies.

Anne Barnum has been a resident of Prospect Park since 1940. She was a member of the Prospect Park Improvement Association during the time the planning for Luxton Park was underway.



COMMUNITY BUILDING



Full Cycle — A Women's Restaurant

Urban residents seeking to end their isolation from one another often look for a place—a store, a park, even a street corner—somewhere in their neighborhood where they can meet, exchange ideas, and organize. In such places a sense of community is born.

Women, too, are seeking a sense of community, and a small group of Twin Cities women hopes to provide the birthplace.

That birthplace will be Full Cycle, a proposed non-profit women's restaurant. Since last summer, a group of eight women has been meeting regularly to discuss the philosophy, planning, and funding of the venture. In a statement prepared last fall, they outlined the ideas underlying Full Cycle.

"To grow, to change, (women) must know one another. We must create the opportunity to share with one another. That is our strength. We must take control of our future. Full Cycle is the form of these possibilities."

As the women envision Full Cycle (they prefer to speak as a collective rather than as individuals), the restaurant would serve four basic purposes:

*It would provide a place for women to meet and share ideas, and would be a showcase for women artists, poets, and musicians.

*It would provide employment for women.

*Women would learn business skills through management and operation of the restaurant.

*And the restaurant would serve good, nutritious food.

Already, Full Cycle is more than just a glimmer in the women's collective eyes. There are several hundred dollars in the group's treasury, the result of a fund-raising dinner in December and a pancake breakfast in February. The women estimate they will need \$5,000 to open the restaurant, however, and they plan to solicit money from women already established in businesses and to organize a speakers' bureau which would provide speakers for community groups for a moderate fee.

They admit they have a long way to go in raising money, but they have already accumulated a sizable store of equipment, including a stove, refrigerator, and steam table. Now they are looking for a location, most likely in south Minneapolis. And they have been studying a formidable-looking book containing the city regulations for restaurant owners.

Just as important as the logistics of the project is the women's belief that Full Cycle should be run collectively, by and for women. "We operate, and will continue to operate when we open, by cultivating trust in community women and in each other," they said.

"We are taking risks and will need each other for support and encouragement. We will have to struggle with individual doubts and problems inherent in any group endeavor. But we are confident that what we are doing is needed in our community, that it is right for us and for other women, and that we have the skills, energy, and desire to make it work."

The women are seeking support—"Spiritual as well as financial," they emphasize. Their mailing address in 723 7th St. S.E., Apt. G, Minneapolis 55414. Phone: 378-0163 (Robin) or 729-1723 (Kit).

--by Carol Matlack

REVIEWS REVIEWS

north country



chautauqua

The Chautauqua Circuit is operating again. William Jennings Bryan is dead, snake oil is in disrepute, and vaudeville is long gone. But America stretches out as long as it did when the 19th Century American entertainment/cultural/religious/political tent show traveled the country. And now the question is, what can Chautauqua offer us in the 20th Century?

The idea is old, but it will take new form. Even the newness has a tradition: "Chautauqua" means "a creature able to survive changing waters." Marv Davidov, one of the principal organizers (along with Karl Vohs and Brian Coyle) and the master of ceremonies for the evening, and David Dellinger, the 59 year-old survivor of struggles for peace and justice, announced the principal purposes of North Country Chautauqua: to bring people together, to celebrate the victories of the people and to urge them on to new struggles, and to do all these things by singing, by dancing, by reciting poetry.

It is both the oldness and newness of this enterprise that excited most of us that night. The women's movement, the abolition movement, the labor movement, as well as the Civil Rights movement and Anti-War movement had their songs, poetry and dance. But the people have had taken from them their cultural heritage, or at least the corporate media have tried to make culture as throw-away as any other consumable good. This throw-away mentality which makes a song un-sung a few weeks after it is played incessantly

on every radio station is the same mentality which stops most of us from knowing about our hidden power, one which is always there beneath the surface of corporate culture. It is this history which lead David Dellinger to proclaim that the Movement is not dead but growing.

As comrades in this movement and as people particularly interested in linking the arts and political struggle, we must both support what some have already started and encourage them to enter an on-going process of criticism, both by the participants themselves and by those of us who attend and support the events, so that we can work together to make this project more effective. The traditional form of the review is not adequate here, because there is implicit in the traditional form the idea of audience as separate from the performers, as consumers of entertainment. What is needed is a form which humanizes criticism because criticism is necessary for growth. Therefore the following thoughts reflect our ideas after conversations with others who came to the event and with Marv Davidov, who had criticisms of his own. Were there time, performers should also participate in the making of their review.

There was a good mixture of media. After an initial diversion by a juggler while the audience waited, many chatting with old friends, Marv Davidov started the show, giving us some of the history of Chautauqua and why he and others were reviving it. Then there was dance, a series of modern dance exercises, followed by a half hour or so of Tom McGrath reading some poems, followed by a somewhat longer set of songs by John Koerner and ending with David Dellinger talking about the need for people to understand the victories we have already won.

The dance, performed by a very lively company from Nancy Hauser's Apprentice Workshop, portrayed fragments of experiences of alienation which, although ending with a triumphant segment, did not leave us with a clear vision of a positive future. But the dancers are talented and their movements, which are experiments with extensions of ordinary body movements, have an accessibility to others than the mere connoisseurs of dance.

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Photo by Ken Sower

Tom McGrath was next, a fairly late replacement for Robert Bly, who is probably better known to most Minnesotans. Bly, who turned in the late sixties from his earlier imagist past to become leader of a group of anti-war poets, dramatizes himself, while McGrath seems on stage a much more self-effacing, certainly less pretentious person. He began the evening with "Driving Toward Boston I Run Across One of Robert Bly's Old Poems," a lively, even uproarious parody of one of Bly's best known imagist poems. Generally McGrath's poems seemed more public, less the private celebrations of inner, personal moments while there is parody here, as in the last poem he read, there is also praise and a generous loving of things. McGrath fit in well with this revival, more public than precious, reading a poetry surely meant to be heard aloud. We hope he stays in the North Country Chautauqua.

John Koerner sang a series of songs about miners, gamblers, people in America's past. These are among the songs we must re-discover and learn. John Koerner expressed his distress at being along on a silent stage, away from the chatter and clinking of glass. That silence was partly due to the setting and partly because we were being entertained. We needed to move, to stretch our legs, to sing. Certainly, Chautauqua will be more effective if the people attending can also often be active participants.

Dave Dellinger should not have been last on the program. We should have left Chautauqua singing, dancing or reciting poetry. Even Dellinger, like us, a citizen of a corporately fragmented society, could not quite link the arts with politics. But he could move us and in his own way he too sang praises, as did McGrath before him. The movement towards peace and justice, in spite of Time's attempts at self-fulfilling prophecy, is not dead, but growing. This is not the self-centered generation as Time insists, but rather the "centering generation," working in neighborhoods and communities "to create new centers of power." This is the generation that has revived a "reprieve on society's inhibition on love and trust" and none of us in the movement, having experienced this reprieve, will ever be the same again. Presidential administrations already know they can't count on the people to fight their imperialistic and materialistic wars. We have, as the title to Dellinger's new book (which he read from) says, "More Power Than We Know." Finally, Dellinger urged us to remember that we are all of us fragments of the movement, but fragments that are reaching out to each other, Marxists and feminists and so on, and to remember that we need the sensitivity to understand where each is, the solidarity to work together, and the songs, dances and poems to reach that solidarity.

We shouldn't be surprised if things didn't completely mix together. First there were the technical difficulties of a first run; not enough time for the performers to get together ahead of time, the program not arranged in the best order, the difficulties of pace. But second and more important, are the difficulties we in the movement are having which have given rise to this project and others like it - that people in art and people in politics have not been recently working together. We are going to have to get over our idea that group sings are merely "camp." It is only when we share the same songs, the same dances, the same poems that we will have the solidarity we need to struggle.

Call or write for further information:

North Country Chautauqua
P.O. Box 14073
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55414
Phone: 612-335-0339

--by Sandy and George Bowen
Members - People's Literature and Art Project

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"Mechanical Ballet" Photo: Mary Kay Johnson

Lady in the Corner — Poliatrics and New Criticism

Circle of the Witch Theatre is Minneapolis' own feminist theatre. Like its colleague, Alive & Trucking Theatre Company, its purpose is to create a new kind of theatre: "poliatrics." How is poliatrics different from Establishment theatre? And what do these differences imply for how one "reviews" a Circle of the Witch play?

Political theatre is special in several ways. First of all, its purpose is not merely to entertain or to divert, but also to educate, to raise consciousness, to mobilize. Thus, members of both theatres do day-to-day political work (Circle of the Witch is affiliated with the Twin Cities Women's Union). Second, just as the purpose of the play is different, so the process of creating the play is also different. This process is collective not only within the theatre troupe itself, but also because the theatre considers itself responsible for the feedback given by its audience. Depending on what the community says it likes or dislikes, the theatre continues to create and transform its original script.

So it's clear from the purpose and the process of poliatrics that to be a "critic" of Lady in the Corner cannot be to confront a reified object--the play--from the outside. Rather, it seems that a review must itself participate in the community process of creating the play. The tasks of political theatre are extraordinarily difficult, and therefore whatever problems emerge must always be seen in the context of wholehearted support for the entire project of political theatre.

The central difficulties of poliatrics seem to emerge from the conflict between its potential as an art form and the urgency of its political vision. Because theatre can, as an art form, intimately reflect our lived experience, it has the potential of portraying the process of our always political lives in ways that leaflets never can. On the other hand, because of the urgency of its political vision, political theatre tends to be didactic. That is, in its impatience, it omits the steps in personal and political transformation and gives only the final result of that transformation. Yet, even didacticism can be welcomed if it's of a consciousness-raising variety. That is, if the audience is already sympathetic to the struggle and eager to see a more militant version of it. Didacticism is counterproductive and becomes rhetorical when people generally feel hostile to the cause. Here didacticism can make folks feel lectured to and they often retain their original hostility.

Lady in the Corner tells us the story of two sisters, Jennifer and Stephanie. Jennifer, after a beautiful doubting scene, marries an accountant and moves to Seattle. Her younger and more militant sister Stephanie visits her there, and while arousing Jennifer to defend her bored way of life, no doubt plants some seeds of rebellion in her. Next we see an independent Jen at work in a factory, thinking about organizing a strike. Finally, back in Minneapolis for a visit, she plays the burnt-out organizer intent on getting her own life together contrasted with Stephanie, who's just as intent on her marxist study group, blithely ignoring her own personal life.

For me there were really two perfect scenes in the play. The first was that of

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the "marriage dress" where a young Jennifer and her mother go shopping for the dress, only to begin privately musing and doubting aloud about marriage. The dress, of course, serves as a symbol of the institution. Leave it in the store? Or buy it? The scene is a beautifully accurate portrayal of what I've often experienced as a mother's reliving of her own pain in marriage and the resulting projection of it in revenge onto her daughter by assuaging the daughter's fear of marriage. If I suffered, then so she must.



Photo by Mary Kay Johnson

Karl Marx has written that under capitalism human beings are reified into things, into machines. The second powerful scene was the "mechanical ballet" done by Jennifer and workers on their way to the factory. Donning white masks, the entire group turns into factory equipment. How much more convincing this concept is when, on stage, real bodies become those machines!

The main problem with the play, and one that is by no means unique to this particular

example of political theatre, is that the portrayal of personal transformation is virtually omitted. The omission of this transformation process is more serious with the socialism than with the feminism of the play. However, the women's movement is strong enough now for many women to intuitively respond to the feminism of the play. Even without the process of the sisters' feminist radicalization being clearly spelled out, we fill in from our own experience and get courage from seeing women resist on stage.

Not so with the socialist scenes. We don't quite know why Jennifer has become a factory organizer. When and how she came to see the personal as more important than the political is also unclear.

On opening night the play was packed with movement folks. When the polarized sisters have their encounter in the closing scene, many identified with the burnt-out Jen, and perhaps even more strongly with the abstract marxist Stephanie. Not because the play really moved us to do so, but because the sisters gave us cues that touched off parts of our own often agonized experiences of the polarization in the movement. A week later, though, there was a big difference. The audience reaction indicated that people found Stephanie strange and Jen sympathetic. Feminism was convincing. But the anti-capitalism appeared rhetorical.

My hunch is that it is the strength of a given movement within the society which determines whether or not people find particular parts of a political play rhetorical or not. Socialism still has such fearful and even negative connotations for most Americans. It would seem, thus, that portraying the process of socialist radicalization of women could do more to move people than simply presenting already-formed socialists like Stephanie and Jen. This kind of portrayal of process would, no doubt, require painful introspection from any theatre group. And learning to portray the process of socialist and feminist radicalization is an arduous task that is not unique to Circle of the Witch. It's easier said than done.

During March the group will be touring the five state area with the play. For bookings after that call:

Twin Cities Women's Union
612-729-6200

--by Deborah Hertz

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Scene from Battered Homes and Gardens
Photo by Gayla Wadnizak

Where's Alive and Trucking?

This article is addressed to you folks who have been asking, "Where's Alive and Trucking Theatre keeping themselves?" Since our successful summer run in the parks of Battered Homes and Gardens, mystery musical about community control of urban renewal, we have been involved in street theatre, writing another full length play, and teaching classes. "A spark can light a prairie fire."

For those who haven't met us, Alive and Trucking is a political theatre collective of twelve based in South Minneapolis, alive now for over 3 years. We write, direct, act, dance, juggle, and sing original scripts written by the troupe which are born from working closely with the Twin Cities Women's Union, the Minneapolis Chapter of New American Movement (NAM), and numerous neighborhood organizations.

For the past six months, the theatre has split into two work groups. Four people are writing the tenth outline to our new play on inflation/recession, What's Eating You?, while most of the group is building street theatre formats and presentations. The full length play is addressing such questions as: Why is there inflation/recession? Will there

be another war? What's happening with the economy? Why are people depressed and what can we do to overcome depression? Programs around food stamp cutbacks, unemployment, and the economy are being developed with the Women's Union and NAM through research and talking to people in grocery stores and unemployment lines. The purpose of the play is to give information, ideas on actions we can take to stop "stagflation" and to lift spirits.

The theatre has voted street theatre as a high priority. We are studying the theatres of the '30's and working on a form called "Newsboy" from a worker's theatre of that time. We have performed street theatre for the Cedar Riverside Defense Fund's hearing, the City Council's rent control hearing, the Anti-War celebration following a sit-in at Senator Humphrey's office, and were present at the Capitol with groups protesting food stamp cutbacks (while military spending increases) on Valentine's Day.

We continue to study tap dancing, juggling, directing, and political theory. To support ourselves, we are teaching adult education classes at Lehmann Center and high school theatre at S.E. Free School. A proposal for County Bicentennial funds has been submitted which would allow the theatre to tour the county with a People's History Festival including the People's History Group and Common Ground magazine.

Nationally, Alive and Trucking is working with a network of groups interested in culture and revolution. We are communicating with Teatros working as an arm of the United Farm Workers, as an example of how organizations can reach people through their culture. We have also helped start theater groups in Madison, Wisconsin and Austin, Texas as well as helping people locally write their own plays.

Expect to see us at coming events, rallies, and gatherings in which working folks are refusing to bite any more bullets! Call and visit us at our new office in Stewart Church, 116 East 32nd Street, 823-1022.

--by Lori Hanson and Jan Mandel

This section of the magazine--the Community Building and Reviews section--is a continuing feature of Common Ground. If you want to write about, or review a community project, play, eatingplace, book, etc., write or give us a call.

LOCAL HISTORY: A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

a conference sponsored jointly by the Immigration Studies Research Center, and the Department of History, U of M; and the Minnesota Historical Society

APRIL 11-12, 1975, at the
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National and local investigators in history will give workshops, including: neighborhood history, historic preservation, how to trace family genealogy, ethnic group history, and more.

CONTACT: Judy Martin, Department of History, 614 Social Science, Univ. of Minn, Mpls 55455.

back issues:

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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 #3, "Towards Community Control?" tries to provide background for the current discussion of citizen participation and Community Councils. Arguments for and against Community Councils are developed by five Twin City folks. A history of St. Paul's Swede Hollow, a review of a new community cafe, recommendations for crime control, and a surprising housing cooperative are also featured.

Common Ground #1,#2, and #3 are highly readable, useful resources for anyone interested in neighborhood histories, parks and open space, and community councils.

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Photo courtesy Albert Munson and Minnesota Historical Society

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