

*MARKETS AND POLITICS IN URBAN RECYCLING:
A TALE OF TWO CITIES*

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May 2001

Working paper, 01-03 Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, Evanston,
IL USA, 2001.

Abstract

Much contemporary environmental policy-making shifts our political focus away from our ecological goals, stressing instead the need to create "economically efficient" means to accomplish these goals. Social scientists have paid limited attention to the social distributive outcomes of such policy-making. Yet these outcomes of heightening attention to economic efficiencies affects the scale and intensity of political constituencies for environmental protection.

In this *Tale Of Two Cities*, we trace this process of "markets over politics" and its impacts in the U.S., Chicago and its northern suburb of Evanston, Illinois in the 1990s. Both cities constructed and implemented curbside recycling programs during this period. But the rationale, goals, and means of recycling were dramatically different in the two municipalities.

Although both communities recruited unskilled labor for the actual sorting jobs, the Chicago facility initially offered a repressive and regressive mode of labor control, essentially reducing low-income workers to a day-labor contingent worker status. Recyclable diversion rates were extremely low, for the wide diversity of materials collected. In contrast, Evanston offered both life-skills training to its workers, and assistance in getting employment at the end of their recycling jobs. Their recyclable diversion rates were quite high, for the restricted materials they selected. Paradoxically, the political administration of Chicago eventually intervened to improve both work conditions and recyclable diversion rates. But the budgetary politics of Evanston led to an abandonment of the city's unique recycling program, and a contracting out of the work to the private sector.

We also explore the factors that led each community's decision-makers to select and to modify their technologies of curbside recycling: capital-intensive in the case of Chicago, and labor-intensive in the case of Evanston, and their quite different managerial agendas. These differences and dynamics suggest the value of studying how political involvement in the policy-making process in environmental policies can alter the balance between politics and markets in environmental protection.

A. SOCIAL VERSUS. ECONOMIC FRAMINGS OF RECYCLING

**1. MOBILIZING & DEMOBILIZING ECONOMIC & SOCIAL DISCONTENTMENT
IN ENVIRONMENTAL REFORMS**

With rising costs of environmental protection, political agencies are urged to find economically 'efficient' ways of reducing some aspects of ecosystem withdrawals or additions. To some extent, we know that this can limit their benign ecological outcomes. But environmental policies and programs often ignore their social distributive effects. We argue here that environmental protection policies can move in more progressive or more regressive directions. We illustrate these arguments by presenting data on community-based policy making about local solid waste recycling.

Progressive distribution of social rewards can help environmental movements and agencies politicize previously-unmobilized groups. Progressive policies can help socialize citizen-workers by more overtly politicizing the existing maldistribution of both natural amenities and socioeconomic achievements. Such community-based policies can respond to growing complaints about widening social inequalities in access to resources, on the one hand (Schnaiberg & Gould 1994), and in exposure to environmental hazards, i.e., increased environmental injustices, on the other (Bullard 1990, 1993; Bryant & Mohai 1992). Conversely, more regressive environmental policies that stress market factors and economic efficiency can exacerbate social inequalities. They also suppress political reactions in local political agendas by treating social inequity as a non-issue (Bachrach & Baratz 1963).

To illuminate these processes, we focus on a growing mode of environmental control, the recycling of waste materials. By presenting "a tale of two cities" in the U.S., we note how materials recycling emerged in one place in a socially progressive form, and in another locale in a socially regressive form. In the first city, the local policy initially integrated social distributional concerns with market concerns. This confirmed the prospects of environmental policies to achieve social as well as environmental goals within a economically viable framework. But the second city's policies prioritized economic efficiency over environmental protection. This policy worsened social inequalities, and fell short of producing serious ecological protection. Social and political resistance to Chicago's regressive and ecologically inefficient program eventually led to the city's melioration of the program. Conversely, the rise of budgetary concerns and the absence of an activated local political constituency for recycling led to the abandonment of Evanston's **unique program**.

Local social and economic discontentment that may be reduced or exacerbated by local recycling policies include:

- a. middle-class and working class resentment of landfills and incinerators;
- b. environmental justice movement against these locally-unwanted-land-uses

- (LULUs) in minority and/or low-income communities;
- c. strained municipal budgets inadequate to control growing waste streams, leading to rising local property taxes, landfill user fees, and/or lowering waste collection services;
 - d. managerial and investor resistance to tight control over producer waste-generation by direct state regulation;
 - e. downsizing and redirection of investment out of inner cities and poorer communities, creating growing unemployment and wage declines;
 - f. declining potential of many working and middle-class families to engage in flight from blighted communities rather than "fight", because of (e)

Recycling presents an interesting environmental policy case, since much of the structure of the contemporary recycling policy apparatus has been built in the past decade. It is during this decade that social inequalities have been widening in many industrial societies. While the degrees to which such inequalities have been socially and politically mobilized has been quite variable within and across these societies, the potential for articulating and mobilizing this growing inequality is present in many communities. This potential can be tapped by social movements or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on the one hand, and attenuated or aggravated by governmental policies, on the other.

In many ways, the case of post-consumer recycling illustrates, albeit in a different historical and social context, Hugh Stretton's (1976) earlier classification of forms of political mobilization arising from environmental challenges. He outlined sociopolitical scenarios during the era of energy crises that were nondistributive ["business as usual"], regressive ["the rich rob the poor"], and progressive ["troubles" and "second chances"]. His work in the 1970s, stimulated by the energy crises, and our recycling examples in the 1990s, stimulated by the so-called "landfill crisis", both alert us to the variable forms of social distribution and political mobilization that can arise from environmental protection policies in any industrial society and community.

2. THE PITFALLS OF ENVIRONMENTAL REFORMS WITHIN THE TREADMILL OF PRODUCTION

We view the dominant political and economic system of industrial societies as a "treadmill of production" (Schnaiberg 1980b; Schnaiberg & Gould 1994; Gould et al.

1996; Weinberg 1997a, 1997b; Pellow forthcoming). The concept of the treadmill visualizes a political-economy driven by several core factors.

First, there is a social and political assumption of the need to continuously expand industrial production and economic development. Economic expansion is generally viewed as the core of any viable social, economic, or environmental program. Economic expansion is thought to increase the profits that corporate managers and their investors require for capital outlays. Workers benefit from these outlays because they lead to increased production, which creates new local employment opportunities both in direct industrial production and, more indirectly, in the construction and service sectors. The service sector is thought to grow most rapidly due to the economic multiplier of having more workers with higher wages living and spending within a community. Capital outlays also lead to higher levels of productivity--a precondition for rising wages. Finally, local and national governments view economic expansion as increasing the taxation capacity of the government, allowing it to distribute compensatory benefits to displaced workers and dependent citizens. Governments believe that tax revenues rise more rapidly than citizen demands, and thus government officials and agencies increasingly share a stake in the economic expansion of the private sector (Schnaiberg & Gould 1994; Smith & Feagin 1987; Logan & Swanstrom 1990).

Second, the treadmill is structured by the need to ensure that consumption keeps pace with production. If economic growth comes about through increased production of goods, consumers have to have the disposable income to purchase the goods. The state works with private capital to make low interest loans available to consumers for the purchase of homes and other items. In the United States we have seen 20 years of state/private deregulation making credit cards and mortgage loans easier to obtain.

Third, there exists the sociopolitical belief that social and ecological problems are best solved by ratcheting up the treadmill's pace. Social problems are generally thought to be best solved "through the market." Thus, there is a magical sense that any type of economic expansion will reduce social and ecological problems. Poverty will be reduced by a growing economy, because there is an expanded job base and an increase in wages. A growing economy also supports government social expenditures (for education, housing, and other needs of the poor to move up) .

Fourth, economic growth is tied to a commitment to an expansion of corporate-centered development. In this model, nation-states and cities prioritize the needs of private capital over the needs of the state itself and its constituent citizen-workers. Economic expansion can only be fostered through the growth of large firms--what are often referred to as "core firms." Large firms are thought to be the engine of the

economy. Their growth creates the most demand for jobs, and it creates secondary demand for supplies which fuel the growth of smaller entrepreneurial firms. The wages paid to the large labor pools provide consumption needs in the stores that keep local merchants in business (Reich 1992).

Fifth, and finally, all of these elements of sociopolitical belief are reinforced by substantial economic and political socialization efforts on the part of core firms and their dependent institutions (trade associations, advertising, educational efforts in promoting "free trade", etc.) What has resulted until recently in industrial societies is an enduring political alliance of private capital, trade associations, and governments to promote these goals.

Although there exists a substantial literature on the degrees and types of "corporatist" or "non-corporatist" forms of industrial states (Schmitter and Lehbruch 1982), it is our assessment that virtually all industrial states have evolved into a common commitment to the types of growth policies that characterize the treadmill of production. Moreover, with growing transnational investments, there appears to be an intensification of such commitments, as capital and employment flows from more industrial societies of the North into the emergent economies from the South. In general, it appears that the United States is the most extreme advocate for transnational contraction of both economic safety nets (Greider 1997, Harrison 1994, Longworth 1996, 1998), and limits on economic expansion, as in its rejection of the Kyoto agreement on reducing global warming gases (XXX)

Goodman and Redclift (1991:17) remind us of the socially regressive biases of the treadmill of production when they assert that "the share of resources which individuals (and governments) receive is linked to the way that these resources are used." Effective citizenship practices, which are implied by theories of a socially-progressive and ecologically stable future of sustainable development, thus require changes in the basic forces and relations of production (Gould 1993). The progressive potential in environmental reforms such as recycling are, therefore, only attainable and sustainable with an enduring level of political tension and often-overt conflict (Stretton 1976; Redclift, 1984; Schnaiberg 1994; Redclift 1987). Citizen behaviors will, across time and space, reflect their different roles as family members, workers, and variably-politically mobilized players in a sometimes-conflictual discourse about socioeconomic development and environmental protection. In this paper, we suggest ways in which local state actions can enhance or retard this discourse, and the subsequent social outcomes of community policies.

3.WHY RECYCLING "WON SUPPORT" WITHIN THE TREADMILL OF PRODUCTION

1. Waste Production & Waste Disposal: From Solution to Problem.

Recycling policies emerged in an historical context in which the treadmill of production has increased its dependency upon discarding most producer and post-consumer wastes. Such actions stimulate demand for new disposable products and also reduce some labor costs of production and distribution by using machine packaging and disposability. Incineration, landfilling, and other modes necessary to deal with growing waste volumes have produced growing ecological additions of water and air pollution, and taken productive land out of alternative uses.

In turn, these outcomes have diminished the use values of local ecosystem resources for local community groups, some of whom have become mobilized in opposition to this process. In the conservative administrations of the 1980s, dominant capital interests in the U.S. were able to place market or exchange value considerations uppermost on the political agenda (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962, 1963, 1973; Grieder, 1992; Philips, 1989). U.S. producers operated in a world system that stressed growing competitiveness, which required shifting capital and natural resource inflows into production (Lipietz, 1987; O'Connor, 1988). Both the Reagan and Bush administrations in the U.S. helped producers compete by allowing them to externalize costs, thereby deflecting the focus of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976. RCRA initially stressed source reduction and recycling within the production process, which Congressional Republicans and many industry sectors viewed as too costly. Instead, political and economic elites substituted policies for improved disposal of industrial wastes, through landfills and incinerators, which they saw as less costly.

The call from the administration and core producers for more landfills and incinerators was met with hostility from local communities. To some extent, communities' fear stemmed from the coalescence of local pollution from existing landfills, and the subsequent heightening of social consciousness about toxic waste pollution. National publicity about toxic hazards at Love Canal and other sites increased such local concerns (Szasz, 1994; Brown and Mikkelsen, 1990; Schnaiberg, 1992a). From this rising concern with toxic industrial wastes, local communities formed citizen-worker opposition groups that joined forces with environmental organizations to oppose virtually all landfills and incinerators. This gave rise to the LULU (locally-

unwanted land uses) movement, and was one of the most visible components of the Environmental Justice and the Anti-Toxics movements.

As the LULU movement spread, a "landfill crisis" emerged. Existing landfills were "filling up" (e.g., Papajohn, 1987; Tackett, 1987; Bukro, 1989). And local neighborhood organizations had been able to stop the construction of new landfills and the expansion of existing ones. Likewise, they were able to channel local protests and fears toward local governments, which controlled some portion of the land used for landfills, incinerators, and other alternatives to recycling (Schnaiberg, 1992a). Consequently, local governments became focal points and mediators of these conflicts. Their response to these pressures varied widely. Local governments were split between supporting citizen constituencies, and dominant economic interests that support the state and its transfer payments to constituents (Schnaiberg 1994).

Despite the ambivalence to act, municipalities had to do something. First, they feared that local citizen-worker constituents would withdraw political support for those administrations that failed to adopt some type of palatable policy. Second, the Reagan-Bush administrations practiced subsidiarity, shifting responsibility to the regional, state, and local arenas, though often without concomitant resources to carry out these missions. Third, industrial producers were placing pressure on local and other governments (Lowi, 1979) to maintain "cost-effective" waste disposal, in order to contain corporate costs in a time of increased world-systemic competitive pressures (Szasz, 1994; Blumberg, 1980).

Even so, local governments were confused as to how to proceed. Almost any local "solution" would likely increase costs for the economic actors involved with generating consumer goods. These solutions were politically unfeasible as they would alienate powerful allies (such as business investors who might seek profits elsewhere), shrink the tax base (as profits decreased), and lead to a loss of jobs (again, as profits decreased). Likewise, landfills, (like littering of bottles, cans, and paper), had high social visibility (Schnaiberg, 1993). Local governments knew that anything with high visibility was likely to produce local resistance. Local government and industrial leaders managed these tensions by borrowing an old concept from a long-standing and successful campaign of the trade associations of disposable container manufacturers. They formed a not-for-profit organization in the 1950s--Keep America Beautiful, Incorporated--that remains active today in supporting recycling. It recruited support from other "public interest" groups, by using the corporate social strategy of keeping disposed containers 'out of sight, out of mind' (Szasz, 1994). Initially the focus was on anti-litter campaigns. In recent years, the anti-litter message has been supplemented with new support for

recycling. Garbage, landfills, and "resource conservation" issues all merged in the new local program of "curbside recycling."

2. Materially "Closing the Loop" by 'Squaring the Economic Circle"

Recycling became social constructed as the "magic bullet" that would solve the "landfill crisis" (Gutin, 1992). Recycling was touted as reducing local waste disposal costs, allowing communities to recapture some exchange value of this waste as these materials were sold to private sector organizations that would remanufacture new goods from these wastes. Recycling would be the first stage in recovering wastes for a more market-driven strategy than was the case for landfills or incinerators. In the latter, municipalities paid contractors to somehow move wastes "out of sight."

The rhetoric of recycling, dominated by the economic ideologies of Reaganism, was that recycling would be "cost-effective" or "profitable" for everyone, a utopian solution to the waste problem. Local governments would sell their curbside-collected wastes to recyclers, thereby making money instead of spending money on waste disposal. Not only would local citizens have fewer pollution problems as landfills somehow became less prevalent in the local ecosystem, but they would also be rewarded by lower tax bills for waste disposal. All of this would stimulate the treadmill while pleasing environmentalists, for wastes would be recycled instead of dumped into local land and water ecosystems.

3. The Role of Local Environmentalists

Another important chapter of this history is the connection between the environmental movement's opposition to landfills and incinerators and these groups' support for recycling as an alternative. Paraphrasing the popular slogan of the anti-drug campaign during the 1980's and 1990s, environmentalists urged citizens to "just say no" to landfills and incinerators and "say yes" to recycling. A popular t-shirt many activists wore during this time read, "God Recycles, the Devil Burns." In fact, the decision to initiate the City of Chicago's Blue Bag program was largely attributable to the local environmental movement's successful campaign to shut down the city's Northwest Incinerator and adopt more aggressive recycling policies.

4. The Non-Zero Sum Appeal of Postconsumer Recycling

What made this "new" form of waste handling socially and politically feasible was that, on the surface, postconsumer recycling represented a non-zero sum game. Indeed, according to some early proponents (and contemporary advocates), postconsumer recycling was a form of social alchemy. Since most communities wanted to "get rid of" wastes, these wastes had no apparent social value. They were devalued non-commodities (a synonym of "waste"). These non-commodities could now be socially and materially transformed into new commodities -- those with potential use-value in economic markets. Moreover, by doing so, communities would lower the cost of landfills, incinerators, and other waste disposal facilities that required large public sector outlays. Finally, since these new recycled-based commodities could be marketed, the remanufacturing agents could not afford to pay communities something for the previously-valueless waste products.

An alternative but related path prevailed in lower income communities in the U.S., European and Third World societies. In the United States, the range of reuse activities includes what we might call social reuse: activities that are more oriented toward consumer use values. Included are garage sales (run by individuals), rummage sales (run by churches and other nonprofit organizations), and thrift stores (run for profit or by nonprofit service organizations). A recent innovation has been the recycling of prepared food from restaurants and caterers, which often does allow the poor to "eat cake", using voluntary donations to facilitate the transport of prepared food to needy consumers. For most of these activities, prices are set by the consumers' capacity to pay, and the use value of the goods to consumers. Even here, though, while the commodification process is attenuated, the fact remains that "discarded" goods are transformed into "useful" goods. As with recycling, a negative waste stream is converted into a positive use-value reproduction scheme.

A third mode of market reuse of consumer and producer cast-off goods that involved price setting based on more exchange value considerations of the sellers. Included are traditional antique dealers and newer antique malls, conducted house sales, and some used appliance, furniture and automobile agencies (including sales of previously rented goods). More recent examples are new forms of construction waste recycling, in which timber, concrete, and other materials, which had previously been dumped into landfills or incinerated, is now sold for new forms of construction and landscaping. Many of these materials are being reused by more complex organizations that are being designed to apply the principles of sustainable development to poor neighborhoods in urban areas.

4. DISTRIBUTIVE CONFLICTS REDISCOVERED: NEW ZERO-SUM DIMENSIONS

Within a very short time, the political and social model above was challenged. What appeared to be non-zero sum aspects of post-consumer waste recycling were somewhat illusory. We can enumerate these into four categories:

- (a) diminished returns for waste disposal organizations;
- (b) new outlays for recycling;
- (c) diminished markets for "virgin" materials; and
- (d) growing disillusionment about recycling.

a. Diminished returns for waste disposal organizations

Because recycling is designed to divert the flow of waste streams, those whose business involved waste handling and disposal were initially affected. Everything from underutilized vehicles previously used for transporting garbage to commercial (and public) landfills and incinerators were challenged by the potential and actual rise of recycling. One response of these organizations (public and private) was to become partly transformed into recycling agencies. New trucks that would be designed for garbage were redesigned to collect recyclable materials -- or in Chicago, new containers for recyclables ("blue bags") were simply added to the regular pick-ups of city sanitation crews/trucks. Landfill tipping costs were often also raised (along with incineration costs), ostensibly to reduce the incentive to landfill or incinerate rather than recycling. But a cynical observer might also note that such increased user fees would also compensate for revenue decreased by diversion of waste materials.

b. New outlays for recycling

Post-consumer waste required collection of discarded consumer wastes. It soon became apparent that many for-profit waste-handling firms (and some public sanitation agencies) were required to expend much more on labor and vehicles to collect diffused postconsumer wastes. Most postconsumer-waste collecting groups intended to sell the collected wastes to market-based firms for remanufacturing. The latter decided early on in the process that in order to make profits, they could only accept "clean" batches of recyclable materials -- i.e., wastes sorted into forms that would readily be accommodated

into manufacturing processes, with minimum new capital outlays. Ideally, these remanufacturers wanted materials to be similar to post-producer wastes, which were already being recycled in their origin plants. For example: there are hundreds of grades of paper. Depending on the end markets, the paper needs to be sorted into several different batches of similar grade material. So, in effect, "recyclables" had to become transformed into something approximating "industrial scrap".

Private-sector remanufacturers ensure profits from efficiencies in manufacturing, and usually keep their raw materials costs to a minimum. They merely applied these criteria to new "remanufacturable" raw materials, known as "recyclables". In order to meet these standards, new facilities were needed in communities -- to collect, store, and sort the potentially-remanufacturable waste goods they collected. Private waste handling organizations, and some community-based ones, quickly discovered that there were high costs and low returns for these new activities, often focused around Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs). They thus retreated from this part of the activity, leaving communities to build or contract for new MRFs, thereby allowing private waste-haulers to profit by collecting recyclables, and private remanufacturers to profit by incorporating pre-sorted ready-to-remanufacture recyclable materials. The middle part of the process -- intensive, dirty, and expensive labor -- was left for the public sector to support.

c. Diminished markets for virgin materials

A newer form of challenge to the non-zero sum game of recycling is slowly emerging only after substantial recycling-remanufacturing has been rising. Remanufactured materials using recyclable inputs would lower the need for virgin materials, thereby altering both the profits and employment possibilities of the latter industries. Thus primary product producers would find their markets attenuated. Not surprisingly, then, there has been considerable resistance by primary producers to recycling.

d. Rising disillusionment with recycling

Discontent with state costs for recycling is rising. This has been particularly acerbic in an era of recession and state indebtedness. Critics (Schneider, 1991, Swanson, 1991a) have noted that municipal costs of recycling exceed revenues from remanufacturers. One logical approach would call for higher fees from remanufacturers (an exchange value orientation). Another approach would reason that the negative

environmental externalities justify these net costs (a use-value orientation: e.g., van Vliet, 1990, pp. 32-33). But the most frequent argument is that this "unprofitability" of waste collection calls into question the social value of waste collection programs. These critics suggest scaling down the scope and intensity of collections. A New York Times (1991) editorial put this argument most directly near the start of this "recycling decade":

"Recycling is obviously a laudable goal. It conserves materials at little cost to the environment. But until recycling generates its own revenues, the increased expenses of collection, like rising landfill costs, will have to be paid by cutting other city programs. [The Sanitation Commissioner] is right to go slowly."

Recently, a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article echoes these sentiments:

"To help get local recycling programs off the ground, the state began giving municipalities and counties recycling grants funded with a surcharge on businesses that was supposed to have been temporary. Eventually, enough strong markets would be developed for recycled materials that recycling would pay for itself - or even become a moneymaker for municipalities...That never happened". (Rinard & Sandin 2001)

This response suggests that recycling has been significantly transformed from its ideological origins in the environmental movement. Essentially, the media comments above reflect the dominance of exchange values, and the concomitant decline of earlier use value arguments such as those of environmental movements. Once again, market criteria dominate political decisions about waste processes (Lindblom, 1977; Young, 1991; Swanson, 1991b). From this position, only those elements of solid waste that generate profits should be recycled. The rest should be disposed of in other "more economic" ways. If landfills are too politically risky, then perhaps incineration or shipment abroad should be tried. Environmental and local citizen-worker groups who promote recycling are thus at risk of supporting an ecologically flawed policy, and one that will achieve few progressive social ends, as we note below.

B. A SOCIAL HISTORY OF RECYCLING IN THE CHICAGO REGION

5. CASE #1: THE TREADMILL OF PRODUCTION AND THE BLUE BAGS OF CHICAGO

Imagine the following: (reconstructed from an interview):

It is 7 a.m. in the morning. You are a black women, standing in a huge facility (400 yards long) It's freezing cold because there is no heating system. You have just walked 1.5 miles because the facility is not accessible by public transportation and you are too poor to own a car. You are going to spend the next 10-12 hours (often you do not know how long) standing on an assembly line sorting through raw garbage straight from garbage cans. You may or may not have protective gloves, so you will have to be careful. Coming down the line could be: hypodermic needles, dead animals, live rats, broken glass, and on the odd day a baby or other human body parts. You have seen co-workers splattered with battery acid and picking up leaking bags marked: "biohazard." To quote one of your co-workers: "I can't remember the first guy who got stuck by a needle... The guy got stuck by a bloody needle. You don't know whose needle that was. Hopefully, he didn't get inflected with HIV, or Hepatitis A or B..." This worker goes on to tell us that this man was lucky because one of his co-workers picked up a bag of asbestos that came down the line. For this you will be paid \$6 an hour, and guaranteed employment for 89 days, at which time you will be fired one day before the 90 days needed for unionization and other benefits to start.

---- WELCOME TO CHICAGO'S BLUE BAG PROGRAM

1. Why the City of Chicago Developed A Municipal-Based Recycling Program

In the late 1980s, the City of Chicago embarked upon a large scale municipal recycling program that made it virtually impossible for the city's non-profit Centers to stay open. The City developed a recycling program for the usual reasons. A 1984 moratorium on the expansion and siting of new landfills precipitated a crisis that forced the administration to think about future waste disposal plans. Siting an incinerator in the City was therefore no longer possible. Siting a new landfill appeared to be equally impossible. Much of the city's large white, liberal elite supported environmental protection issues. Recycling seemed to be one of those rare win-win policies for the City. It would solve the landfill problem, please the environmental community, and perhaps provide jobs in some of the City's depressed areas.

In 1990, the City of Chicago announced a Request For Proposals (RFP) for developing a comprehensive, city-wide, residential recycling program. The City closed

the door on bids for separate neighborhoods of Chicago, thereby shutting out existing community development organizations. The executive director of the Chicago Recycling Coalition called the RFP process an example of "bald-faced power playing by a corporation with a monopoly," suggesting that the RFP was written with the locally-headquartered multinational Waste Management Corporation in mind. Her charge stems from her observations that: (1) Waste Management is headquartered in the Chicago metropolitan area and plays an influential role in local politics; (2) the brother of Chicago's mayor is on the Board of Directors of a Waste Management subsidiary, Wheelabrator Technologies and, (3) Wheelabrator's Northwest Incinerator in Chicago was shut down in April of 1996, necessitating a compensatory waste management system. This tailor-made request for Waste Management continued despite the fact that the corporation has had many lawsuits charging bribery, death threats to politicians, illegal dumping and environmental racism (Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly, July 24, 1997).

The Chicago plan was to adopt what became known as the 'Blue Bag' approach to recycling. While many curbside recycling programs are characterized by source-separated recyclables put into bins for pick up by recycling (not municipal waste) trucks, this program was different. Through the Blue Bag program, residents place their recyclables in blue plastic bags, which are then collected along with garbage in regular garbage trucks. The trucks dump their loads at what the City is calling Material Recycling and Recovery Facilities (MRRFs), where the bags are pulled out of the garbage and their contents separated. Recyclable materials not in bags will also be pulled out of the garbage for processing.

To the City, the Blue Bag program seemed like a great opportunity. The Mayor's office had originally been responding to a number of legal and political economic realities, including: a case being considered by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in which it was later ruled that Chicago's incinerator ash constituted hazardous waste. This meant that the tons of waste produced every day at Chicago's Northwest Incinerator (the city's principal waste management system since 1971) were now subject to regulation under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), and hence expensive to dispose of. The City was therefore in violation of this law because by burying the ash in landfills it was not properly disposing of these materials. In addition, Illinois law requires that Chicago have a recycling plan that would achieve a 15 percent recycling rate by 1994 and 25 percent by 1996. Chicago's recycling ordinance (pushed by the Chicago Recycling Coalition and Citizens for a Better Environment) required that

by 1993 all low density dwellings have "regular recycling service," defined as the collection of at least four types of materials.

The City was also eager to explore the prospect of new recycling centers in a city facing a continuous exodus of jobs for its working-class residents. Since the 1970s factories, neighborhoods and entire cities have experienced large scale "deindustrialization" (Bluestone and Harrison 1982) and white flight, leaving the urban core "hollowed out." In the fifteen year period from 1947 to 1963, Chicago's jobs declined by 18% (122,000 jobs). There was a small gain between 1963 and 1967, but in the next fifteen-year period, from 1967 to 1982, decline accelerated and amounted to 46%, which translates into roughly 250,000 jobs. William Wilson (1996:29-30) noted an accelerating decline: by 1987, Chicago lost 326,000 or 60 percent of its manufacturing jobs over this twenty year period.

The four new MRRFs were slated to create anywhere from 50-100 jobs each, with a total of 200-400. This seemed especially advantageous given that a post-consumer solid waste management infrastructure was already in place, with Waste Management already providing waste pickup service using a fleet of trucks and several transfer stations and landfills. The Blue Bag program would fit right into this structure with no major changes. Finally, after conducting a cost-benefit analysis, the City concluded that a privately run program was most cost effective. Total annual costs for the public-private joint program were projected to be \$31 million for a privately run curbside collection program versus the \$41 million a publicly-financed curbside program would cost (not including the 210 new trucks that would be needed). Thus, casting aside both ecological and social criteria, "the primary reason given for adopting the commingled bag/MRRF recycling program is its affordability" (Solid Waste Management Newsletter 1990). To quote a Waste Management manager:

"In 1991 the City went out to look and see how should we recycle and one of the things that they saw is that a lot of places have curbside programs and they looked at the cost of that. The cost -- because you end up sending two trucks down an alley...was.. prohibitive. So they looked at the blue bag program."

2. How the Blue Bag Program Was Destructive for the City of Chicago

All of the above reasons would seem to support the City's position that Blue Bag recycling in Chicago would be a perfectly rational and efficient solution to a variety of economic, ecological and political problems. Since the first week the Blue Bag went on-

line, it became increasingly apparent that the City miscalculated the effects of the program.

Miscalculation #1: The Start-Up Costs

The first miscalculation was that the cost of building and operating the MRFs has turned out to be much more expensive than originally calculated. While Waste Management designed, constructed, equipped and operated the facilities, the City of Chicago compensated the company for its costs and services. Originally, these costs were anticipated to be a capital burden payment of between \$5 and \$8 million for building each of the facilities (Solid Waste Management Newsletter 1990). The actual costs turned out to be closer to \$15 million each. Thus, the City underestimated this figure by as much as \$40 million dollars. Also, the city agreed to compensate the contractor for hauling and/or disposing of nonrecycled refuse to either sanitary landfills or to the city-operated Northwest Incinerator. This has turned out to be expensive because recovery rates have been low, thus requiring larger loads of materials to be sent to landfills. Waste Management, however, retained all revenues derived from the sale of recycled materials. Here too the costs were seriously underestimated.

Waste Management and the City of Chicago had no shortage of critics. One Chicago Recycling Coalition (CRC) social movement leader noted:

"there was a deal made behind closed doors--that this would be the new program. It's easy to see how this happened, in a sense. They also have a close relationship with the Daley family. Mayor Daley's brother sits on the board of Wheelabrator Technologies, which is a subsidiary of Waste Management. He receives a fairly hefty \$40,000 a year stipend for doing basically nothing. And you know, Waste Management has been sponsoring a lot of city-greening activities and things of that nature. I think the most telling thing about the relationship between the city and Waste Management was that... the city chose this program, decided it was going to go ahead with this lengthy process of writing an RFP and during that process there was open discussion about what this program was going to consist of, but the city was a little cagey as to what it was precisely going to ask for in the RFP. But what it was very up-front about was they were arguing that the contractor would be asked to provide the capital in order to construct the facilities. And that aced out a lot of smaller waste haulers in the area who might have been very interested in doing it. ..."

Further alienating taxpayers, environmentalists, and other firms, the CRC director noted that the City made still another unorthodox decision:

"That was the idea, that the contractor would build the facilities and the city would pay the contractor on an annual, or a regular basis for the processing and the materials and the disposal of the materials. And so the contract negotiations began and basically there were only two companies accepted into those contract negotiations--Waste Management and Ogden Projects (part of Ogden Martin corporation, a multinational firm). And mid-stream, halfway through the negotiations on the contract, the city announced that they felt they would save money in the long run if they paid for the capital construction of the facilities instead of asking the contractors to bear the costs...it's like \$54 million the city is going to pay in capital costs and then additionally Waste Management is going to make a lot of money on annual fees and depending on how well the program works, in terms of the city's own costs, if the program does poorly they'll pay more. So basically they're [the City] going to pay for half the facilities. Even though it's a Waste Management-owned facility."

To add insult to injury in this regressive social redistribution of municipal revenues, the Blue Bag program failed to deliver on its main ecological promise: to recycle the city's waste.

Miscalculation #2: Low Recovery Rates

The Blue Bag program was premised on two assumptions about keeping recovery rates high and costs low:

(1) Blue bags would allow for one truck and single work crew to pick up recyclables and non-recyclables. This would lead to a higher percentage of recyclables being recovered from the waste stream as the non-recycling bags could be sorted for recyclables. It would save money by avoiding the purchase of a separate fleet of trucks and the hiring of drivers. As CRC's Ann Irving explained, "it just was appealing to streets and sanitation because there was no need to change the way they collect materials. It's just garbage collection basically."

(2) A high-tech facility would allow for the hiring of cheap, part-time labor without impacting recovery rates.

Both these assumptions turned out to be false. Furthermore, the miscalculations have led to very low recovery rates. While the City did not have to purchase two sets of trucks, it did have to purchase a more expensive truck. Furthermore, the sorting of regular trash required expensive technological additions for the processing, which dwarfed the costs of a second set of trucks and drivers. The Chicago Recycling Coalition stated:

"The city claims that the blue bag program is cheaper because it avoids a separate pick up of recyclables. But the program will use expensive garbage packer trucks to pick up recyclables, where cheaper trucks and smaller crews could be used. Also, any savings on the collection costs will be lost because the blue bag program will have higher processing costs. This is because the labor and machinery involved in separating and processing the blue bags is more expensive than the processing of recyclables collected separately" (internal memo, CRC).

The initial recovery problem concerns both the blue bags and the trucks collecting them. In order to make pick-up inexpensive, the City purchased trucks that compressed the bags. When the bags are compressed, however, they break. By the time the garbage arrives at the MRRFs, you have a mess. Workers are confronted with a truck load of garbage mixed together with the recyclables in the blue bags. Most workers accordingly feel that their job has little to do with recycling and more to do with picking through garbage. The advantage of being able to sort through the raw garbage is far exceeded by the disadvantage of having lost a lot of the clean, separated recyclables. The Chicago Recycling Coalition noted:

"The system mixes all recyclable materials together in one bag. Recycling industry representatives say that much of the material will be poor quality and difficult to recycle. FSC Paper, the area's main newsprint buyer, has said that newspaper contaminated with glass shards will damage its machinery. If the city is unable to sell the materials, they will have to be landfilled or incinerated, which defeats the whole purpose of the program. The city and Waste Management will not be able to sell these low grade materials for top dollar, so the overall cost to taxpayers is likely to be higher." (internal memo).

To overcome this problem, the recyclables had to be sorted by hand. The MRRF was designed as a high-volume process. Because the actual operations leave a high percentage of the waste stream unsorted, due to the breakage of blue bags, substantial

amounts of raw garbage proceed down a line at a fast speed. Recovery was then dependent upon workers doing a careful job of sorting. So highly-productive workers are needed. The system, however, was built on keeping labor costs low. This was done in a number of different ways, mostly through a temporary job service, Remedial Environmental Management (REM).

In recent years a powerful lobbying force in Washington, D.C. for temporary employer firms has emerged and fundamentally changed labor legislation. Technically workers at the Waste Management MRFs were not employees of Waste Management or REM. Rather, due to recent changes in labor laws they are 'consumers' of REM's services (Gonos 1997). Thus, they had no legal rights as workers and no legal relationship to Waste Management. This allowed REM to pay the workers very little, without concern for minimum wage laws. Waste Management was also free to mistreat the workers without fear of major law suits. REM 'employees' were routinely overworked and underpaid.

Additionally there were no benefits, no upward mobility, no pay raises, nor union representation. To keep costs low (having overspent on technology) there was no heat or air conditioning. Anyone familiar with Chicago weather knows that this means the facility was almost always unbearably cold or hot. Since it contains raw garbage, the odors often make employees nauseous. So the workers, not surprisingly, were not highly productive, nor were they loyal to a firm that offered them no security. In the end, recovery rates were low, indicated by the City's reluctance to release the recycling figures. Several deadlines passed before the Department of Environment made the numbers public, at which time they were presented in a format that was confusing and full of errors. One ex-manager of a Waste Management MRF informed us that he had witnessed managers deliberately inflating recycling numbers in several of the MRFs:

"They started off from day one padding and changing the numbers that were being reported to the City. I would question anything they submit. I really would."

Miscalculation #3: Occupational Safety Issues

Aside from the question of costs and recycling quality, the biggest problem with the Blue Bag was one that Waste Management never anticipated or seriously considered - - labor safety. The City and Waste Management grossly miscalculated the environmental and safety issues, which is ironic given that recycling was touted as a socially responsible initiative. There were substantial problems with occupational safety and the hazardous

working conditions laborers face in the MRFs. The Chicago blue bags are processed in a 'dirty MRF', where the bulk of the materials sorted is municipal solid waste, a material that presents a serious health hazard when sorted by hand.

We had interviewed more than two dozen workers and managers who were employed by Waste Management in the Blue Bag system. The stories we uncovered resemble those told by laborers in the sweat shops, steel mills, coal mines, textile mills, and meat factories of the nineteenth century industrial cities and those in the contemporary Third World. Workers regularly handle toxic substances on this job. This is because household hazardous waste is unregulated and is often contained in recyclable plastic and metal containers that recycling centers collect. As one worker explained, he comes into close contact with "anything and everything that people just normally throw out in their garbage." This includes bleach, battery acid, paint and paint thinner, inks, dyes as well as razor blades, and homemade explosives.

Despite legislation governing the U.S. recycling industry, in 1994 it was documented that such waste industry employers failed to: keep a log of injuries and illness; provide proper protective gear and equipment to workers; post signs and notices detailing safety procedures and workers' rights; and communicate all possible work-related hazards to each employee (see Pellow, 1998). Like REM/Waste Management, most other MRFs are also non-union shops.

Recycling MRFs are also not designed for medical waste processing, but MRF workers routinely handle these materials. Workers getting stuck with syringes and hypodermic needles is one of most common and harrowing accidents in materials recovery facilities (Powell 1992), particularly given widespread fear of contracting HIV. An ex-Waste Management manager-turned-whistleblower stressed the following point in an interview:

"Let's take for example, the medical waste issue alone. When you say, when you talk in terms of the whole medical field, it now has changed. Fewer and fewer people are allowed to stay in hospitals, most--practically every--procedure that they can think of that they could put into an outpatient basis, they're doing it. Which means that people are taking all kinds of hypodermic needles, colostomy bags, and all this stuff home and disposing of it in the garbage. Just say for example, all the people who are diabetics--all of the people who are forced out of the hospital because their insurance will not allow them to stay any longer, they feel like they can be better taken care of at home. Now they're sending in nurses, there's a whole network that they send out to people's houses. The reason I know this is because my dad just had serious surgery not too long ago. And he was

taking all different kinds of injectables and he had a colostomy bag for a while. He's fine now, he still has a nurse visiting but he's not injecting anything anymore. But, my point is just think of all the people who have a legitimate use for hypodermic needles, have a legitimate, a hospital prescribed use for all of these items that are normally disposed of in a hospital setting."

Later discussions with a practicing health professional confirmed that these practices were indeed widespread among hospitals. These environmental hazards added a new and disturbing dimension to the limited discourse around 'the health care crisis' in this nation. Workers experienced shock and stress on a routine basis. For example, Edward, a former employee, told of a grisly incident that occurred during an evening shift:

"I worked in the primary department. That's where the trucks dump raw garbage right there. One time a dead lady was dumped on the floor in front of me....One woman [employee] fainted and everybody else was screaming. A couple of guys were just wandering around on the catwalk [a 40 foot structure] looking like they was dazed."

Later at the same MRF, two deceased human infants were discovered on the recycling line on different days. Psychological and physical hazards intermingle as people desperate for gainful employment and job security are pressured to continue working in the face of gross health and safety violations. In a city where the African American unemployment rate is greater than 50% in some neighborhoods (Wilson 1996), it was not difficult to understand why. One worker explained, "You never turn down work when you're looking for it." However, he also reasoned that "you also have to think of your safety because that job might be there next year, but if you contracted some disease, you might not be there next year."

Thus, the City grossly miscalculated the types of jobs that would be created. At the very least, the Blue Bag program created 400 hundred jobs in the City. This was not an insignificant number of jobs. But the jobs offered little progressive redistribution. First, they paid below a living wage. The crucial issues of job quality and remuneration are often missed by poverty policy experts (see Wilson 1996). For example, as recent research underscores, there is a sharp increase in the number of Americans who are working poor (Schwarz and Volgy 1992). Thus, while a major problem in urban areas is under and unemployment, these discussions often never raise the question of the deplorable working conditions and low quality of living those who have jobs experience.

Second, they were short-term jobs. The REM process seems to ensure that most of the workers will only be at the facility for a short period of time. Even if the pay were good, the worker is not employed long enough to get their family on its feet.

Third, they were deskilled jobs. Even though the facility has high-technology capital equipment, workers are not acquiring skills through the employment. Even if the jobs did not pay well and were short-term, they could still be good jobs if workers acquired skills, and were hence more marketable. These jobs fail to do this. Together, the jobs neither support the community (through wages for families) or the future prospects of workers (by increasing human capital).

Fourth, the jobs created ill-will in the community. The MRFs have continually used strong-arm coercive management styles. For example, after several workers spoke to journalists about the deplorable health and safety conditions in the plants REM issued a memo to its employees, "strictly prohibiting" any communication with the media. Workers were warned that "violation of this work rule may result in disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination of employment."

Unfortunately, this was only the beginning. Workers regularly complained of being harassed by foremen and managers who rarely let them leave the sorting lines to use the bathrooms, and arbitrarily instituted mandatory overtime. As one whistle blowing ex-manager put it,

"[The managers']... philosophy was to keep your foot in their ass. That was their verbal philosophy as communicated to us. That is bound to fail. Nothing new about that....Yeah, you know that anybody working in those places needs a tetanus shot. You know with all of the dust and bacteria floating around in the air. If you bump your leg on a piece of metal and prick yourself...anything can happen....[they weren't given the shots]...Well it's because of the costs. The thing is that an enormous amount of money changed hands but all of the workers were circumvented from all that. They were the last thought of part of the puzzle. They had all of these specifications as to how the plant should be built, but they had nothing in regards to workers' safety, training, employee retention, none of that....Carl Dennis was the site supervisor for REM and when things took a turn for the worse when everybody started to riot at the Medill plant and all the [pay] checks were coming in bad [underpaid, miscalculated] , we had armed guards. I don't know if they were policemen or not, but they looked like street thugs. They were sitting around the dining room making sure that workers weren't going to bust any windows out or anything."

In summary, Chicago's program neither provided progressive social redistribution through its MRFs, nor did it implement effective materials recycling. Proponents of recycling were sharply critical: "Attempts to implement similar programs in other cities have run into problems. Houston decided to dump the blue bag after a 10-month pilot test. In Omaha, Nebraska, the contractor separating the blue bags went bankrupt a few weeks after the program was implemented. Waste Management, Inc. now sorts the blue bags in Omaha but at a much higher cost than Chicago [officials] estimated its blue bag program would cost. In Brown County, Wisconsin, the Solid Waste Department conducted a test mixing plastic bags of recyclables in with garbage and deemed it a failure." (Chicago Recycling Coalition, memo)

"...the Blue Bag program is a farce. It hasn't worked anywhere else. We expect it to fail in two years at the most. They're not committed to recycling at all. In fact, an assistant to the Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Environment says that if the program does fail, at least the MRFs will make good waste transfer stations!" [Manager of a corporate MRF in Chicago]

Chicago's program represented the low-road to economic development (Harrison 1994). It has been a program where profitability was gained by squeezing low wage labor and producing questionable environmental impacts (Gordon 1996). This did not constitute development; it was nothing less than underdevelopment. It constituted poor use of human, natural, and economic resources to the extent that the City, workers and the ecosystem are all taxed more than is necessary.

By 1997, even Chicago officials were beginning to realize the extent of MRRF problems. Critiques by the Chicago Recycling Commission were disseminated through local media, focusing especially on the low recovery rates -- 5% rather than the goal of 25%. On the basis that these recovery/diversion rates were far below the contractual goals, the City refused payment to Waste Management. By that time, managers at the MRRFs had been replaced several times, as Waste Management sought to recover profits from a what had been a losing proposition. When prices for recyclables decreased, in fact, Waste Management had essentially passed through the MRRFs most of the waste stream, and collected their waste-hauling fees, rather than seeking recyclable sales.

Chicago escalated its control over WMI managers, through retaining an independent consulting firm to advise on improvements in the sorting centers. In its efforts to tame and redirect this organization, it initiated a variety of changes in the MRRFs. These were aimed both at improving recovery rates, and at improving working conditions. Generally, these tended to raise the operating costs at the MRRFs, and so Waste Management officials reacted quite negatively to these proposals. According to a

former senior Chicago official, Waste Management initially attempted to use its political connections to offset the new controls. This official indicated that Waste Management "never expected to have its contract actually enforced by Chicago". But Chicago's political leaders firmly indicated that they expected such compliance, and the city staff pushed forward their proposals.

After much foot-dragging, Waste Management brought in a new manager for the MRRFs, someone with a history of turning around failing operations. This seemed to augur a new era for Chicago, as there was for the first time an actual partnership between the city and its contractor. Our interviews with the manager indicated that he saw improvement of working conditions as a key component of raising productivity levels in diverting materials at the sorting centers. Under his leadership, a variety of work changes were initiated. Improvements included: new heating and cooling of the MRRFs, to enhance worker comfort; establishment of union status for the sorting workers, through REM, and sustained attention to reducing turnover rates (which approached 30% per month in the early years).

According to this official, for the first time, sorting workers, city staff, and managers began to work collaboratively. The sorting line was slowed down, and the height of materials on the line reduced, so that workers had more access to recyclable materials. City staff and managers engaged in line sorting, to understand some of the sorting problems. Managers sought insights from workers about how to improve the sorting productivity. As these suggestions were followed and productivity raised, a new bonus scheme was introduced. Workers' pay bonuses ranged as high as \$1.60 to \$2.13 an hour, in addition to their base rates of \$6.50 to \$8.00 per hour. These bonuses were paid to an entire shift of workers, based on the volumes of materials that they successfully extracted from the sorting line. Perhaps as a result of this, within two years, recovery rates appeared to meet or exceed the 25% goals.

6. CASE #2: SOCIAL PLANNING FOR MARKET ACTIVITY: RECYCLING IN EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

"When society and the system has beaten you down so much and you've basically given up and you've been through a lot of programs before where they promised something to you and didn't deliver and now there's something that works, people are willing to try. Once they get in here and they see that it works or if a close friend had been in here and knows that it works, they want to try. I've got young

people coming in here who are in gangs who really don't want to be there. It is because they have no where else to turn. If they have something that can keep them off the streets, and keep them out of the gangs, then they won't be there. I've had young guys come in here before and tell me 'I don't have any work experience; I've never worked before but I don't want to be on the streets. I'm tired of being in gangs. I want something to do with my life, in my spare time.' And here's a program that gives them that opportunity, and that's what attracts them to it."

This was the perspective of the Program Coordinator of Futures Through Recycling, the Private Industry Council of Northern Cook County's (PIC) venture with the Evanston Recycling Center. Evanston is a suburb of Chicago, immediately to the north of that great industrial city. Founded in the 1850s, a city marked by great contrasts, and in this sense it mimics its southern neighbor, Chicago, with a growing divide between those segments who benefit from the increasing level of development and those who are left out. Evanston's African American community is highly segregated, located within a narrow space along the city's western border. As is the case nation-wide, poverty is on the rise in this African American community.

Despite these divisions and extant inequalities, Evanston has long enjoyed a reputation for moral reform.

"In the twentieth century, Evanston has led in the resolution of urban controversies, including initiation of zoning to protect the residential character of its neighborhoods in the 1920s, an innovative integration plan for its schools in the 1960s, plans to preserve its architectural heritage and the same time provide affordable housing for its low income residents in the 1970s, providing shelters and support for the homeless and plans to revitalize the downtown business district in the 1980s" (Lindstrom, Traore, and Untermeyer 1995).

Continuing this progressive tradition, in the 1990s Evanston's leaders conceived of a recycling program to save both teenagers and natural resources. The Evanston recycling program was remarkably similar to the Chicago Blue Bag program. Both programs operated on a fairly conservative and mainstream recycling production network. Recyclables were placed on the curb by residential and commercial units. The recyclables were picked up and taken to a MRF, where they were sorted and bailed for resale. The materials were then sold on the open market to an array of brokers and firms.

Upon closer inspection, however, the original programs could not be further apart in process and outcome. Evanston made two shifts in developing their program. First, the program was based on the quality of the recyclables, not quantity. Recyclables did not arrive at the Center after having been emptied from trash cans. They were placed in specially marked plastic bins and picked up by recycling trucks operated by the City of Evanston and Browning-Ferris, Inc. (BFI). There was no effort to recover recyclables from municipal solid waste. This means that the work was not as hazardous as working in a dirty MRF. Additionally, nearly 100% of the volume received at the Evanston MRF went to market. This is in contrast to a dirty MRF, where the great majority of the volume is trash and is destined for landfills or incinerators. For Evanston's program, at every step of the process, the emphasis was doing things right, as opposed to doing as much as possible.

Secondly, Evanston approved a recycling program in return for the project contributing to some other local program. Traditionally, such linkage programs entail public-private bargains, to spread the benefits of private development. Developers gentrifying a depressed area, for example, might be required to pay for low income housing in a different area. The Evanston program extended the concept of linkage. It entailed a true public-private partnership that ties together job retraining needs for low income residents, with the ecological and fiscal goals more typically associated with recycling programs.

Pick-up of recyclables was shared between the City, for residential units, and private contractors covering multi-unit and commercial buildings. The recyclables were taken to a city-owned MRF. The MRF was run as a job retraining program. The retraining component of the MRF was run by the Private Industry Council of Northern Cook County (PIC), funded through the federal Job Training Partnership Act of 1982. PIC operates with donations from the private sector and some federal money.

There were two key persons who directed the Evanston/PIC center. One was the Recycling Coordinator, a woman whose job included locating brokers and purchasers for recyclable materials, weighing in trucks, and even bandaging up worker's cut fingers. One could only marvel at her business acumen, her ability to 'multi-task,' and her skills as a mentor. She brought to the program a philosophy similar to that which drives many socially-responsible businesses. Her thinking was embedded in the realities of the marketplace, but her goals are social and ecological.

The other key person was the PIC's Program Coordinator and worker-trainee supervisor, with experience in worker training, retraining, and counseling. He had worked with youth and adult men and women who had bouts with homelessness, drug addiction,

time in prison, and corporate downsizing. He boasted about the PIC's successes, but was also a realist. This African American male provided a valuable cultural link to the mostly African American crew of trainees at the MRF. He never shied away from discussions with PIC trainees about racial discrimination in the workplace and in society in general. In fact, he integrated Black History into the curriculum at the MRF. He was also about the business of producing a quality product and preparing workers for the competitive job market.

Together these two administrators run the facility, making the City and PIC's public-private partnership work. The City was charged with bringing in recyclables and selling the baled materials. PIC was charged with the sorting and bailing. PIC hired at-risk teenagers and unemployed adults as trainees into an eight-month retraining program. Once accepted into a the retraining program, the trainees worked at the MRF four days a week. On the fifth day they attended a job training seminar held in a classroom built into the MRF. Trainees had to be residents of the City of Evanston and to be receiving some form of welfare, in order to be eligible for the program. The idea, as one manager put it, was "we're putting the money back into the community."

Most of the trainees were African-American males who came from families living in poverty. The trainees were often former gang members who had trouble with the law. Ages range between 15-35, although most were between 18-25. Trainees were originally hired on a 60 day probationary period. They were screened for drugs and put through a rigorous training period, where they were closely watched by supervisors. The idea was to use the early days to teach them good work habits and good work skills, which would be needed to gain and retain employment. A supervisor stated:

"you're going to get a lot of people with some rough edges that don't know how to be at work on time... A lot of these guys I end up doing parenting skills... Helping them know them to know what a budget is like and know the importance of having a savings account."

Evanston's recycling coordinator stated, "There are a lot of benefits to the program. Some of these kids don't know how to make phone calls or to make an appointment to see somebody." These basic skills--often called "life skills" (Auletta 1982)--are an integral part of many welfare-to-work training programs. Many of the program participants came from communities where a significant number of adults did not hold regular jobs, and this lack of work severely impacted the life chances of young adults (Wilson 1996).

The trainees worked from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on a conveyor belt sorting recyclables. There were two work lines in the MRF. One conveyor belt is for paper products, including newspapers, cardboard boxes, and magazines. The other conveyor belt was for wet products, including glass, plastic bottles, aluminum and steel cans. Trainees were rotated so that, to quote a supervisor, "so that positions don't get so boring." Trainees sat on the lines removing anything that was not recyclable. There was emphasis on making sure that poor quality products (too dirty or contaminated) were pulled. Quality superseded quantity. The managerial philosophy was that they would rather ensure a good price for the product, while teaching good work habits, than get a low price and teach sloppy work habits. Discipline, patience, quality control and team work were the habits trainees acquired there, which helped them secure and retain future employment.

The work at the MRF was also specifically designed to give trainees the esteem, skills, and networks needed to gain long term, living wage employment. This was done in a number of ways. Within the first few weeks every trainee was put through a two hour motivation and self-esteem class. The Friday seminar was also seen as pivotal to the success of the MRF and the training program. Classes vary, although each was designed to provide a range of professional and personal skills. The idea was give people the opportunity to turn themselves around. The PIC supervisor stated:

"we get people in here who have hit rock bottom, whose self-esteem is very low. And we all know that as human beings once your esteem goes then you basically have no purpose for living. So this program really gives a lot of people a second chance... That's what makes the program so fascinating, to see people turn themselves around like that. "

Classes rotated. Some classes were more skills oriented, where a professor from a local community college helped worker-trainees upgrade math, reading, and writing skills. Other classes were more practical or life oriented, with experts from the community lecturing about personal finances, health issues, and community concerns. Unlike most job retraining programs that screen in only those applicants who are mostly likely to succeed, the Evanston program purposely tried to attract the 'hard core.' They wanted to find those kids who were capable, but not likely to find a way through other pre-established channels. It was the Friday classes that turned many of them around.

One Friday, the instructor led the trainees through a series of exercises. They started by talking about different people's strengths and weaknesses. The PIC supervisor said, "I would like somebody to give me their definition of a weakness and your definition of a strength." His goal was to empower trainees, to feel their strengths and to work on their weaknesses. Their discussion was quickly geared toward job interviews,

whereupon he told them, "now when you identify your weakness in an interview, identify it in a positive sense, which means that you know you have this weakness, but you're doing something about it." The discussion was both practical and personal.

If the trainees made it through the program for eight months, PIC would help them locate employment. The PIC representative worked closely with area companies spread throughout the nearby suburban areas. Mostly, he spent time building relationships and convincing personnel managers that PIC would send them good employees. The PIC had such a good reputation for producing reliable employees that employers were often unconcerned about a trainee's poor work history. Personnel managers then agreed to interview trainees for available jobs. The jobs were posted on a bulletin board at the MRF. PIC screened the trainees to make sure that they would represent the program well. PIC also set up the interviews. Trainees were paid for the time and travel expenses required for the interview. Most trainees got jobs on the first or second interview. While the jobs were mostly in manufacturing, transportation and the City government, the pay was good. Most trainees earned within the \$18-25US per hour range.

PIC also funded educational opportunities. For those trainees who wanted to aim for higher paying jobs, or jobs with long term career ladders, PIC would pay the cost for them to earn their high school and/or junior college degree. PIC paid for the books, fees, and tuition, helped trainees locate appropriate schooling programs, filled out applications, and get accepted. The relationship between PIC and area colleges seemed to open avenues that would otherwise not have existed, given trainees' work histories.

Relationships were the way things worked at the Evanston MRF. Two of the most important functions of the PIC were made possible through relationships. These functions were recruiting good workers and finding good market prices for materials. Most trainees heard about the program through word-of-mouth from friends and relatives. Every trainee we interviewed found out about the job through some such network (Granovetter 197). Typically, such types of networks rarely exist between low-wage trainees and higher paying jobs (Wilson 1987).

Finding good prices for recyclables could be frustrating and hard work in this volatile market. Evanston's recycling coordinator sought to build relationships with buyers and brokers whom she could trust. She told us: "I don't always sell to the same people, but I do try to establish relationships with people that I feel are honest and treating me properly." This social element of business is often lost on neoclassical assumptions of marketplace behavior (Williamson, 1985; for a critique see Granovetter, 1985). The success of the program appeared extraordinary. First, the program allowed the

City to run a successful recycling program, even through the market slump of the early 1990s. Labor costs were kept low without devaluing the workers. Rather than pay the normal \$7-10 hour, trainees were paid \$5 an hour. The city saved money on the program and workers understood that it was a step up to higher wages. Second, the City produced one of the highest quality recyclables in the area. Even during market slumps they were able to get top dollar for their product. The quality can be attributed to accepting only source-separated recyclables (i.e. no garbage), a managerial emphasis on quality control, and training workers to be very productive. The worker productivity is directly related to the satisfaction of the trainees. The PIC supervisor informed us that,

"For example, with newspaper the City of Evanston gets \$100 a bale (a great price at the time other places were getting \$80-90). And it's not because it's the City of Evanston, it's because we have good trainees that are doing an outstanding job. Because if they didn't clean the stuff out like it's supposed to be they wouldn't get that type of money for the product."

Ecologically, the program produced a clean product, while diverting more than one million pounds of recyclables from the waste stream each month. Because of the program's successful efforts they were awarded with a \$60,000 grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs for capital upgrades. If the recycling part of the Evanston PIC program was going well, the employment component is just as successful. The center was proud of its high job placement rate, with nearly 90% of the trainees acquiring gainful employment in nearby businesses.

Yet within several months of this positive assessment, the rug was pulled from out of this program, under municipal budgetary pressures. Evanston's Director of Management and Budget described the recycling program the following way, to the City Manager:

"The Recycling Center opened in March of 1992. At the time, municipalities across Illinois were responding to the State of Illinois mandate that required the reduction of materials in the waste stream. Recycling was new and the future of the market was unclear. The Recycling Center was built with the vision that the City could save money in three ways: by diverting material from the waste stream; by not having to transport large amounts of material to a site outside of the City thus reducing transportation and labor costs; and by the sale of processed materials. The sale of material and the recycling surcharge of \$1.00 per month per household was expected to make the recycling program a self-supporting enterprise. Unfortunately, the recycling market has changed

dramatically and the City can no longer compete in the market place".(Casey and Steen 1998:1)

That a management and budget officer should stress the economic factors in recycling is perhaps not surprising. What is more surprising was how much this framing was widely echoed among political representatives and officials in the City. Even the director of the Recycling Center herself noted economic problems, in part because a new waste hauler was now diverting valuable, high-quality office paper from Northwestern away from the Evanston MRF. In effect, we had witnessed a process in which an operating program, with elements of sustainable community development, had been attained in Evanston. But it was no longer capable of being sustained politically. With regard to the PIC program, only one comment was offered:

"[Superintendent of Streets and Sanitation] brought up the retraining component of the Recycling Center, noting that the program *has value to the community: it has made a number of residents working and taxpaying citizens*. This component would need to be explored. To Alderman Rainey's question, [the Superintendent] said the budget to pay PIC for employees and two supervisors is \$195,000. The pay range is minimum wage, he believed, and they work five days a week, including four hours of training on Friday." (Nilges 1998: 3; italics ours)

While briefly acknowledging the value of this connection, one alderman simply stated:

"...we have to fulfill our responsibility to programs like this one, though he said no one would maintain that this program *has to remain in business*. He felt it would be appropriate to examine programs like that for other activities, *but to keep doing what we're doing just for that program would be self-destructive, and said we could still pursue our obligation to support training programs*. (Nilges 1998: 3; italics ours)

Yet, within a short period after an initial committee meeting in 1998, the City Council abandoned the recycling program and its PIC component, contracting further recycling to a private contractor, Groot (which, ironically, would ship Evanston's recyclables to a dirty MRF outside the community). In a painful inversion of the social linkage of PIC, one alderman noted that

"... it was *the responsibility of Workforce Development Council {PIC} to place their participants.....* She noted that we should *let it be known that we have recycling trainees who could be hired by recycling companies .*
(Nilges 1998: 4-5, italics ours)

To lower the current modest costs of recycling in the community (about \$1-\$2 more per month per household than other suburban communities contracting out these services), the political economic winds in Evanston battered and dismantled an unusually socially- and ecologically-productive program.

7. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

The concept of the treadmill of production captures the complexity of choices that can and must be made in a dynamic political economy. There are many different ways to build the vibrant economy needed to sustain communities. With each of these approaches comes with a series of choices. Chicago and Evanston illustrate patterns of political choices within the treadmill, which reflect the dialectical relations between corporate exchange-values, and social/ecological use-values (Schnaiberg 1994). Dialectically, conservatives argue that it is difficult to reduce poverty without attaining economic growth. Distribution requires having something to distribute (Schnaiberg 1980: ch. 10). While we can redistribute the material benefits from earlier growth periods, this is a more painful and politically problematic strategy. Yet it is equally true, as structuralists argue, that growth does not necessarily lead to poverty reduction (Harrison 1994, Gordon 1996). In fact, the treadmill model emphasizes that many forms of modern growth are achieved precisely at the expense of social needs and ecological protection (Schnaiberg 1980, Schnaiberg & Gould 1994).

Within any dynamic political economy, even within the treadmill of production, political choices can still modify economic means to meet some social and ecological goals:

"...the inquiry into the functioning of the market continues to be made in a manner which largely ignored the social nature of the problem ...New institutional economics looks at not only market coordination but also non-market coordination within and between enterprises, and also at the determinants of the scope of individual enterprises...Our theory of state intervention also suggests that there are many possible types of state intervention ...neither the market, nor the state, nor any other economic institution is perfect as a coordination

mechanism...[T]his means that each country has to decide on the exact mix between the market, the state and other institutions...through a process of institutional learning and innovation." [Chang 1994: 131-136; emphasis ours]

The tales of Chicago and Evanston illustrate the dynamics of the dialectical system within the treadmill of production. To some extent, the Chicago case tilted almost fully towards economic interests early in its history. With growing public pressures from local interest groups, and a failure to meet the state's recovery goals, the City created a new synthesis, in which political factors became more pervasive. While the revised MRRF structure still is predominantly oriented to exchange-values, officials exerted more political control over this market, to improve working conditions, wages, and thereby to increase recovery rates.

Evanston, in contrast, started with strong political control over market transactions, designed to achieve both ecological and social goals. This potentially sustainable structure functioned only for a short period, though. When tax pressures grew within Evanston, the executive and political arms of the city rescinded their support. One way in which this process was facilitated was that neither the the PIC trainees nor any of their representatives, were powerful in local politics. Hence the social costs of abandoning the Evanston MRF were minimized in the local definition of the situation, and the economic benefits were highlighted instead.

Communities need to make political choices between the levels of economic growth, social programs, and ecological protection. Our thinking is similar to the observations made by economists Louis Ferleger and Jay Mandle (cf. Lindblom 1977; Williamson 1985):

"Precisely because planning and markets both have advantages and disadvantages, a combination of the two is inevitable. Depending on the mix, for example, a society will tend either in the direction of equality or in the direction of growth. Extensive use of markets may result in the latter, while containing them may produce the former. The point to be made in this regard, however, is that there are no a priori technical criteria to appeal to in deciding on the combination of growth and equality to be sought. What is essential, then, from our point of view, is that this decision be made by the people of the society through a democratic political process. Market hegemony should not be unchangeable; it should not be beyond political discourse. The extent of the use of the market should be politically determined. The same is true for issues such as the extent of private versus public ownership and the degree to which profitability

alone, as contrasted with other social or ecological considerations, should determine what is produced. The combination of market and planning to be used should be subject to constant evaluation and adjustment as circumstances and attitudes change" (Ferleger and Mandle 1994:123).

The strongest dynamic that arises from the present political-economy of the treadmill is a commitment to capital-centered development. This commitment diverges into a belief that the only way to reduce groups' social risks of being deprived of the benefits of the treadmill appears to be to speed the treadmill up through large scale capital enterprises. Politically, this leads to an ideology that the state has no right to interfere with the "business of business." It also leads to a widespread social belief that we are locked into "this way of doing things." Too often, this form of development leads to a 'low road' strategy of achieving economic growth, whereby the growth is achieved through the exploitation of people and natural resources (Harrison 1994; Reich 1992). The globalizing economy has a tendency to accentuate these shifts (Gould, Schnaiberg, and Weinberg 1996).

Yet even within this macrostructure, there are some modest revisions in public agendas that can be achieved, where there is sufficient local mobilization of some socially progressive groups. Getting beyond capital-centered development requires a deeper understanding of the political choices within the treadmill, rather than its economic imperatives. At the level of community development, one popular and academic alternative to capital-centered development is some vague notion of localism. This nostalgia for localized economies ignores the fact that most of these economies were neither egalitarian nor sustainable.

Historically sociology is ripe with examples of oppressive communities from by-gone eras that should remind that localized economies were rarely great places to live. It is no better in contemporary times. Localized recycling usually takes the form of community drop-off centers, where the society's most marginalized can drop-off cans and bottles that they locate by scavenging through trash. When these centers work, as they do in some sections of Chicago (such as in public housing), they do not pull people out of poverty. They only permit those in desperate poverty to continue to subsist on a meager diet and inadequate housing.

The diffused influence of the treadmill has led us to seek examples of social spaces where we can find examples of alternatives to the fantasy of laissez-faire capital-centered development, and the nostalgia for localism. The Evanston program was one such exemplar embodying what we are coming to call a pragmatic state, following John

Dewey's model of pragmatism (Pellow et al. 1995). Evanston's political leaders asked specific political and social questions about types of growth, and decided to generate a type of public-private investment that would lead to future growth. It developed its human resources (attracting higher wages), while it used its natural resources somewhat more wisely (staving off future problems). To do this, Evanston creatively mixed market mechanisms with social and ecological planning. Yet with a slight alteration of the local economy and tax base, the mix was dramatically changed in 1998, and the achievements of the PIC-MRF program were largely ignored.

To do this, Evanston followed a more proactive state model, while Chicago's model was a fairly typical reactive role. Evanston chose what we call a "community-centered" approach to development, while Chicago chose a "corporate centered" approach. The community-centered approach begins by asking what the local community's needs are and then selects from a broad array of institutions and organizations to help meet these needs. The corporate-centered approach usually begins with the assumption that only a narrow field of organizations and institutions can meet a community's needs--generally large corporations. Under this model, planners then ask how the local community can meet the needs of the corporation, rather than the other way around. The community-centered approach tends to build long-term relationships among workers, the state and corporations, while the corporate-centered model tends toward 'quick and dirty' transactions that are unstable in nature. Yet even in the corporate-centered approach, mobilization of local political opposition is possible, using both publicity and the enforcement of state laws to leverage new social and ecological arrangements.

Evanston political officials initially saw their role as finding ways to harness the market in order to service the community. This was very different from Chicago's accommodating the community to the market, assuming that it would "all work out in the end." In Evanston, the local state tried to shape the local market to fit the needs of the community. Both communities were willing to mix and match elements of public and market goods, but Chicago initially deferred to market organizations, while Evanston initially ought to bargain and negotiate. Evanston initially adopted a high road to growth, whereby profits were achieved through the enhancement of labor and natural resources. In this case, workers were given training and offered good job opportunities. Natural resources were carefully selected and time was taken to ensure the integrity of the resource. Evanston was able to produce a clean product efficiently. Firms were included in the process where they could enhance the enhancement of the labor and/or were interested in purchasing a quality material. Firms were excluded when they were

interested in exploiting labor or natural resource conditions. Yet even with this powerful achievement, this program was quickly scuttled when it did not sufficiently "pay its own way" (Rinard and Sandin)

Ultimately, this required new frameworks for problem solving. In Chicago, urban problems were initially dealt with analytically. They were broken up into their smallest components, and these components were channeled to the appropriate agency, where practical rules could be applied to solve the problem. By contrast, in Evanston, the state initially took an integrative approach to problem solving. Rather than break things into facts, tasks, and units, city managers integrated these into patterns, relationships and partnerships. This was true for the whole recycling program, and especially for the MRF operation. Yet at the present time, both programs have altered their mix of analysis and pragmatism -- Evanston has become more economically analytic, and Chicago has become more integrative in the face of public pressures.

Thus, we note that the initially differences between these two municipal programs were considerable. In Chicago, we saw a policy approach that started with three simple assumptions:

- (1) the urban enclave was dependent upon attracting global capital;
- (2) a program had to be efficient, defined as producing high quantities at low costs;
- (3) the state had to be reactive, accommodating the community to the market.

Inherent in these principles were the following corollaries:

- (4) environmental protection could be achieved merely by allowing market forces to harness economies of scale in urban areas;
- (5) labor, whether coordinated through unions or community development organizations, had no role in this decision-making -- and thus was not permitted to search for policies allowing for upward mobility or even merely for job security and safety.

In Evanston, we initially had a policy approach that started from a different place. Initially, Evanston viewed recycling as entailing a series of political and social choices. Market mechanisms were accepted as important ways to gauge only certain aspects of the project and to achieve much-needed revenues that would politically justify the program.

Evanston had three different, yet equally simple, starting assumptions for their recycling program:

- (1) they were clear about the type of growth they wanted;
- (2) they were clear about the linkages between growth and community;
- (3) and they were proactive about making it happen.

Within Evanston's program, the following corollaries of these principles have also been noted:

- (4) environmental protection was only going to occur when there is good planning, continuous evaluation, and hard work devoted to reorganization.
- (5) even the poorest citizen-workers could achieve upward mobility, when they are incorporated as active agents in the planning and implementation processes.

This type of state decision-making cannot guarantee achievement of the current panacea of "sustainable development" (Schnaiberg 1997). Ultimately, the Evanston program regressed to "business as usual", leading to outsourcing to the lowest-bid company and the abandonment of the social program. Yet the initial commitment to a process of continually reflecting and refining practices based upon what worked was operating for some period. The end goal was to locate the "right" choices between the market for economic vitality, and political planning for social and ecological needs. Evanston's program may represent a case of how this can work successfully, but with the risk of dramatic shifts from social-ecological goals to economic ones. In contrast, Chicago's program represented everything that was wrong with not trying to break the dominant ideology and practice of corporate-centered development within the treadmill of production.

"The concept of sustainability can be interpreted in either a limited or a broad sense. From a narrow economic perspective, it is synonymous with wealth creation or economic growth... However, in a more holistic sense, sustainability is essentially linked to broader societal goals:..the requirements of sustainability and justice tend to coincide. This is related to the necessity of building durable social and economic structures, and of eliminating various forms of inequality." [David (1988:153)]

Under local political pressures, some pragmatic shifts in Chicago appeared, although the structure of even the "reformed" MRRFs has never reached as close to sustainable development as the initial Evanston program. The tale of two cities can be told as a positive one, in which quite different political structures incorporated some elements of social and ecological sustainability. Or it can be told as a negative exemplar, of how sustainability promises become compromised and unattainable under economic pressures of the treadmill (Weinberg et al., 2001).

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Humphreys Chapter/CHICAGO

Ironically, despite these rejections of external criticisms of the program, the city itself quietly determined that the initial operations were dismally below-target, and had set out to reform the program. The former Commissioner of the city's Department of the Environment, Henry Henderson, noted that "anyone who expects that a private firm will eagerly undertake public business" is naive, and that the initial failures of Waste Management were not unusual in such "partnerships".

RECLAIMING THE MRRFs: CHICAGO'S ATTEMPT TO REGAIN CONTROL

In our interviews with Chicago officials and Waste Management managers following the completion of our field research, we discovered that City inspectors had also begun to provide feedback to city officials that the program was not adequately functioning. Reflecting on this history, a former senior official of Chicago city government indicated that he was not surprised. In his experience, every public-private partnership only succeeded when the public officials exerted firm sanctions over the private sector. By 1997, Chicago officials were beginning to do that. On the basis that recovery/diversion rates were far below the contractual goals, they refused contract payment to Waste Management. By that time, managers at the MRRFs had been replaced several times, as Waste Management sought to recover profits from a losing proposition. When prices for recyclables decreased, in fact, they had essentially passed through the MRRFs most of the waste stream, and collected their waste-hauling fees.

Chicago escalated its control over WMI managers, through retaining an independent consulting firm to advise on improvements in the sorting centers. In its efforts to tame and redirect this organization, it initiated a variety of changes in the MRRFs. These were aimed both at improving recovery rates, and at improving working conditions. Generally, these tended to raise the operating costs at the MRRFs, and so Waste Management officials reacted quite negatively to these proposals. According to a former senior Chicago official, Waste Management initially attempted to use its political connections to offset the new controls. This official indicated that Waste Management "never expected to have its contract actually enforced by Chicago". But Chicago's political leaders firmly indicated that they expected such compliance, and the city staff pushed forward their proposals.

After much foot-dragging, Waste Management brought in a new manager for the MRRFs, someone with a history of turning around failing operations. This seemed to

augur a new era for Chicago, as there was for the first time an actual partnership between the city and its contractor. Our interviews with the manager indicated that he saw improvement of working conditions as a key component of raising productivity levels in diverting materials at the sorting centers. Under his leadership, a variety of work changes were initiated. Improvements included: new heating and cooling of the MRRFs, to enhance worker comfort; establishment of union status for the sorting workers, through REM, and sustained attention to reducing turnover rates (which approached 30% per month in the early years).

According to this official, for the first time, sorting workers, city staff, and managers began to work collaboratively. The sorting line was slowed down, and the height of materials on the line reduced, so that workers had more access to recyclable materials. City staff and managers engaged in line sorting, to understand some of the sorting problems. Managers sought insights from workers about how to improve the sorting productivity. As these suggestions were followed and productivity raised, a new bonus scheme was introduced. Workers' pay bonuses ranged as high as \$1.60 to \$2.13 an hour, in addition to their base rates of \$6.50 to \$8.00 per hour. These bonuses were paid to an entire shift of workers, based on the volumes of materials that they successfully extracted from the sorting line.

In addition, some new mechanical sorters for metals were added, and new procedures for sorting yard wastes were added to the sorting line. As a result of all these changes, the MRRFs achieved their contractual goals, for the first time in the system's history, in 1998-99. Additionally, the plant experienced reduced turnover rates for sorting workers, which dropped from 25-28% per month in the MRRFs' early years to less than 10% currently (reported by the current manager). In addition, safety meetings were scheduled regularly at all the MRRFs. According to the new manager, recycling has ranked close to mining occupations in its safety record. But he has introduced improvements, both on the line and between line workers and mechanical vehicles in the

plants. Among other techniques, he has instituted a program of reporting and analyzing "near-misses", as well as actual accidents involving worker injuries. In addition, there are more staff positions, with stable incumbents, monitoring work conditions to spot hazardous work situations.

Nonetheless, none of the managers or officials have any delusion about recycling work. The current manager noted that "no one ever wanted to grow up to be a garbage sorter", but nonetheless he has acted to improve financial rewards and safety for sorters on the line. Despite the fact that the MRRFs are still losing money for Waste Management, they are now losing *less* money than in the early years. And the work improvements and other efficiency gains in diverting materials have been paid for by higher productivity in the sorting centers. For example, in its earlier operations, sorters averaged 140 pounds of recyclable materials per hour, but now have achieved rates of 310 pounds per hour (reported by WMI's current manager). The current manager of the sorting centers acknowledges that Chicago's design for recycling is far from ideal, but that he is working with the system as he inherited it. City officials remain optimistic about the overall system, perhaps because they claim it has achieved most of their major economic and waste management goals.

Although criticism of the system continues (e.g., Killian 1999), city staff see recycling as now operating within their broad goals for a solid waste management system. Among the remaining problems of the system is a relatively low residential participation rate. The tensions remain, despite attention to some of the early problems of recycling that we described above, in part because of the "fully-only" differences between critics and defenders of the system. Critics view the performance of the city as "only" partly achieving the ideal goals of the 3 E's, while defenders from the city staff see it as "fully" accomplishing much more than earlier systems in Chicago (Schnaiberg and Gould 1994: 228-231).

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Humphrey's chapter/EVANSTON

**DE-LINKING THE EVANSTON PROGRAM: THE NEW 'BOTTOM LINE'
ORIENTATION TO LOCAL RECYCLING**

When we completed our first draft of this book, we were enthusiastic about the successes of the Evanston program. For a variety of political and social reasons, Evanston had chosen to use recycling as both an environmental program, and one with public linkages. Alas, within a few short months, we were faced with yet another case that had failed to produce sustainable community development around its recycling program. What makes our revised analysis of the Evanston case so painful is the fact that this was not merely a promising *proposed* program such as Maywood's, but an existing and apparently successful program. As with the community-based centers of chapter 4, Evanston's program achieved some of the simultaneous environmental, equity, and economic goals of sustainable community development. Unlike the community-based programs, moreover, Evanston's recycling program represented a clear local government decision to move towards both social and ecological goals, at quite a modest economic cost to the city and its residents.

Yet within several months of our assessment, it is instructive to note how differently the program was being described to the City Manager, by Evanston's Director of Management and Budget:

The Recycling Center opened in March of 1992. At the time, municipalities across Illinois were responding to the State of Illinois mandate that required the reduction of materials in the waste stream. Recycling was new and the future of the market was unclear. The Recycling Center was built with the vision that the City could save money in three ways: by diverting material from the waste stream; by not having to transport large amounts of material to a site outside of the City thus reducing transportation and labor costs; and by the sale of processed materials. The sale of material and the recycling surcharge of \$1.00 per month per household was expected to make the recycling program a self-supporting enterprise. Unfortunately, the recycling market has changed dramatically and the City can no longer compete in the market place (Casey and Steen 1998:1).

That a management and budget officer should stress the economic factors in recycling is perhaps not surprising. What is more surprising was how much this framing was widely echoed among political officials in the City, and even to some extent by the director of the Recycling Center herself. In effect, we were witnessing a process in which an operating program with elements of sustainable community development had been attained in Evanston -- but one which was no longer capable of being sustained politically. In April 1998 (at a local conference for Earth Day), we participated with Nancy Burhop of the Evanston MRF and other community-based recycling leaders. This was the first public occasion at which we were made aware of the economic "fragility" of the Evanston MRF. At that meeting, Burhop reported that, ever since Browning Ferris Industries bought out a regional recycler, Active Service, BFI had chosen to convert its new materials transfer station in Evanston into a long-haul center. This "transfer" operation is one way of segregating recyclables and landfill-destined solid wastes, as in Chicago's MRRFs described in chapter 3. And it substantially lowered the sales revenue of Evanston's publicly-owned recycling center.

Active Service, a local enterprise, had earlier brought many of its recyclables -- especially the highly valued office paper from Northwestern University -- to Evanston's MRF. Active Service achieved savings in transportation costs by not having to haul recyclables to more remote sorting/processing facilities. This local waste stream was one of the components that had permitted Nancy Burhop to achieve high sales revenues for Evanston's MRF. As she noted a month later at a committee hearing into the recycling program:

a reason our income went down was the loss of material from Active Service when they were acquired by BFI, and now that we are not operating at capacity...[W]e could get more materials without our having to pick it up, if rental units, which total over 8,000 more living units, were required to recycle. I felt *most haulers would bring recyclables from those units to Evanston's facility*, which would have given us additional materials without increased cost to the city (Nilges 1998: 1).

The combination of a steady stream of recyclables, and the desirable physical properties of office paper from Northwestern University, made Evanston MRF's paper products highly marketable and profitable. Paradoxically, given the strong market component of Evanston's program, it would appear that the community's profits from paper recycling also then led BFI's managers to seek out higher corporate returns. They

then began to negotiate with other recycling centers and remanufacturers for Northwestern's recyclables and other commercial recycling pickups.

Evanston's *public* loss of revenue was BFI's *private* gain of profits.² But even more to the point of this political drama, the timing of this shift at the Evanston recycling center was crucial. Indeed, this single act alone may have tilted Evanston officials and city council members in a rather different direction than the previous experiences of the recycling center as a "going concern". Ironically, what precipitated the evaluation of the program by municipal authorities was that the volume of local recyclables had risen to the point where four additional recycling trucks were needed, an expenditure estimated at about \$500,000. In the April 1998 meeting, Burhop had been anticipating these critical assessments. Following a local media report about a potential change in the recycling operations, we traced the first official document--a report to the City Manager (Casey and Steen 1998).

The central argument of this report was that Evanston was paying too much for recycling, compared with other north shore suburbs. All of the other suburbs were outsourcing their collection of recyclables, and paying approximately \$3.00 per household for the service, as compared with the current Evanston MRF total cost of about \$5.05. The report also acknowledged that the net cost per household was 'fully' \$2.97 (Casey and Steen 1998: 2), factoring in the sale of recyclables and the monthly user fee of \$1.00 per household. They noted that other north shore suburbs had costs of "pickup and processing" ranging from "2.16 ...to \$3.00" [*ibid.*]

Within two days, the 'political' part of local government met, in the form of the Administration and Public Works Committee, to offer a discussion about the City Manager's report (Nilges 1998). The draft minutes of that meeting on May 6, 1998 represent perhaps the most interesting municipal debate about an ongoing operation that is somewhat congruent with the principles of sustainable community development. (Schnaiberg 1993, 1997). Present at this meeting were five Evanston alderpersons, and a number of municipal staff members, including Nancy Burhop. The meeting opened with a reference to the City Manager's report of two days earlier, noting that "the Recycling Center has been operating at a loss for a number of years." (Nilges 1998:1). One of the staff noted however, that "if one took into account the amount of money made selling the material *and also the amount saved by not hauling it to a landfill or for collection*, the Center did not look too bad." (Nilges 1998: 2). The director of Management and the Budget replied:

Mr. Casey noted that, whether the City or someone else handles Evanston's recycling, we are still diverting the materials from the waste

stream, so 'it's a wash'. He said for us to break even, *we would have to triple the tonnage* [Nilges 1998: 2, italics ours].

Interestingly, none of the alderpersons present challenged this assertion by noting that the same argument could be used to justify continuation of the Recycling Center! Ironically, none of those present even raised the possibility of changing BFI's behaviors, as the dominant commercial recycling collection firm in Evanston, in directions which could restore more revenue to the Recycling Center. Indeed, at this point, the alderpersons presiding over the committee meeting noted: "after reviewing the options, it's a cut and dried decision" (Nilges 1998:2).

Pointedly, the social linkage part of the Recycling Center--which is what we had noted made this operation more of a sustainable community development practice -- was virtually ignored throughout the committee meeting of May 6th, 1998. The only comment we found was the following:

Mr. Edwards [Superintendent of Streets and Sanitation] brought up the retraining component of the Recycling Center, noting that the program *has value to the community: it has made a number of residents working and taxpaying citizens*. This component would need to be explored. To Alderman Rainey's question, Mr. Edwards said the budget to pay PIC for employees and two supervisors is \$195,000. The pay range is minimum wage, he believed, and they work five days a week, including four hours of training on Friday. He noted that this figure has been set for several years, but we've spent more than that with the overtime needed with equipment failures, etc. (Nilges 1998: 3; italics ours).

Note that the rationale for this training component is framed primarily in *economic* terms, rather than as the *social* linkage we outlined in the previous section. In some ways, this spirited defense of the training component via an economic analysis reinforces the market framing of recycling, rather using sustainable community development framing. The following exchanges, in response to the quote above, indicate how this reframing of the trainee program led to its peripheralization in the debate:

Alderman Feldman said we have to fulfill our responsibility to programs like this one, though he said no one would maintain that this program *has to remain in business*. He felt it would be appropriate to examine programs like that for other activities, *but to keep doing what we're doing just for that program would be self-destructive, and said we could still*

pursue our obligation to support training programs. (Nilges 1998: 3; italics ours)

Having started on this line of narrow *economic* reasoning about Evanston's PIC program, this alderperson continued to thrust aside all empirical evidence of *social* gains from PIC and its successor, the Workforce Development Council. The Superintendent of Streets and Sanitation stated to him that there were 13-15 trainees on the line, and that about "200 residents have gone through the program". But this was not sufficient for the alderperson.

(He) wanted information as to where those people are now, not only the number who went through. If people don't move on and get jobs in other places, he said this would be an employment program, not a training program. Mr. Edwards said we have statistics from the Workforce Development Council. (Nilges 1998:3)

The statistics referred to are those we reported in the previous section, and they represent a strong record of placing PIC/WFDC trainees in the private sector. They are a powerful testimonial to what can be accomplished using a creative sustainable community development approach to city services, rather than merely a "bottom line" approach.

Increasingly, the tone of the committee discussion shifted further away from any accurate depiction of the history and goals of the PIC trainee program. Instead of viewing this as a program to rehabilitate young at-risk adults using the Recycling Center as an interim training period, the alderman gradually transformed this discussion into another "bottom line" economic analysis. Consider the following two quotes by Alderperson Rainey:

Alderman Rainey pointed out that it was *the responsibility of Workforce Development Council to place their participants.....* She noted that we should *let it be known that we have recycling trainees who could be hired by recycling companies* . (Nilges 1998: 4-5, italics ours)

When the authors read the City Manager's report and the Committee minutes, it was clear to us that this model for locally-based sustainable community development was in danger of being abandoned. In particular, the tenor of the discussion of trainees indicated that the City was reverting to treating them as peripheral *employees*, not trainees. Furthermore, at best, their futures were to lie in the recycling *industry*, rather

than treating recycling as a short-term training position, a springboard for gaining more human capital and finding better employment elsewhere.

Similarly, the *ecological* component of the Recycling Center program rapidly declined in centrality in the city discussions. We note that, in addition to achieving the laudable social goal of job training and placement, the PIC MRF also recycled thousands of tons of waste each month and produced a high quality product. At the May 6th meeting, Nancy Burhop reported on one of the likely contractors the City would pick-- Groot Recycling:

Groot's facility is what is known as a '*dirty mrf*', dealing mostly with garbage, from which only about 30 percent is recycled, 90 percent of that being curbside paper [Nilges 1998:2].

As with the future of the PIC trainees, no one picked up on this revelation, nor did anyone suggest a systematic evaluation of proposed bidders to ensure that they actually "recycled" the Evanston materials they collected. The description of Groot, a private recycler with a long history in Chicago, suggests an operation somewhat similar to Chicago's blue bag program (chapter 3). In our frustration over both the social and ecological tone of the committee discussion, we decided to send a memo to the City Council, which we distributed on July 15th, 1998. During its May 6th meeting, the Administration and Public Works Committee had authorized the City Manager of Evanston to put out a Request for Proposals for outside private contractors to bid for collecting and "processing" Evanston's recyclable materials.

We submitted our sharp disagreement with the committee well before the full City Council had to review the committee's proposals and the RFPs. Yet we never received any invitation to discuss this matter at any city council or committee meeting, nor did we ever receive any inquiries asking us to clarify points in our memo. It would appear that, whatever took place publicly thereafter, the City was committed to scuttle the Recycling Center and outsource its recycling services. On November 9th, 1998, the City Council essentially voted to "privatize Evanston's recycling services" (Demes 1998a). By then, the city staff had narrowed down responses to "two Chicago-area [sic] recycling companies, BFI Waste Systems and Groot Recycling & Waste Services, Inc."

Local African American politicians and business representatives made a plea for favoring BFI as a company with stronger "local" roots, since it hired more local minority employees at its Evanston waste transfer facility. At its meeting then, the City Council approved a contract with Groot, arguing that its annual fees of \$586,768 (Kline 1998) were \$98,000 lower than BFI's, for curbside and alley pick-up of materials (thus, they

also ignored the African American community's call for contracting with a purportedly more socially responsible firm). The meeting was long and acrimonious (Demes 1998b), and failed to consider any sustainable community development themes. The authors had earlier decided, in the absence of any responses to our memo, that attending the meeting would merely be an exercise in frustration and futility for us. The fate of Evanston's recycling program had been definitively set in the committee meeting of May 6th, and most policy changes from May-November were largely epiphenomenal.

In their final vote, there were no specifications about recycling processes to be used -- only about pick-up schedules and materials to be collected. Collectibles were, admittedly, more extensive than those from the Recycling Center, but in the absence of monitoring by Evanston, they may actually end up in landfills, rather than as remanufactured goods. Moreover, Evanston agreed to retain the city-hired employees of the Center and shift them into the Streets and Sanitation department. But the 15 trainee positions with the state-funded Workforce Development Council/PIC job program would be eliminated (Demes 1998b: 1). The ultimate rationale for the outsourcing decision was, not surprisingly, primarily economic:

The action will result in savings of about 60% in the City's annual recycling budget. Evanston residents will continue to pay the same \$1 per month recycling surcharge and will receive the same alley and curbside pick-up service [*ibid.*].

Interestingly, the economic rationale for taking this course saves the city as much as three million dollars over a five-year period. By contrast, in this era of Evanston's tight city budgets and high local property taxes, the same City Council approved an "economic development plan" that would require about \$20 million of investment by the city to subsidize the private developer of a new shopping mall and movie theater 'multiplex'. Despite sharp divisions within the city's political and business sectors, the decision was made to encourage national and multinational investors to establish commercial outlets there. The interest alone on this new Evanston City bond for this project would have more than covered the "inefficient" operations of the Recycling Center. But in these two actions taken nearly simultaneously, the City of Evanston opted to abandon its only hope for sustainable community development.

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