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Markets and Politics in Urban Recycling: A Tale of Two Cities

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A. SOCIAL VERSUS. ECONOMIC FRAMINGS OF RECYCLING

1. MOBILIZING and DEMOBILIZING ECONOMIC and SOCIAL DISCONTENTMENT

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

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

1. Waste Production and 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. During the conservative U.S. presidential administrations of the 1980s, dominant capital interests in the United States 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 United States 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' concerns stemmed from the accumulation of 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 fornd yuy onalmictenzllure1trn of mo.his risnd othe RC.ces with environmental organizations to lure1e virtually all landfills and incinerators. These efRC.ts gave rise to the Environmental Justice and the Anti-Toxics movements.

As these movements spread, a "landfill crisis" emerged. Existing landfills were "filling up" (e.g., Papajohn, 1987; Tackett, 1987; Bukro, 1989). And local neighborhood organizations were able to stop the construction of new landfills and the expansion of existing ones. Likewise, they

were able to channel protests and concerns 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 "devolution" or *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 socially 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

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 post-consumer wastes. Most post-consumer waste collecting groups intended to sell the 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 focd fir"

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

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 nonprofit recycling 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, citywide, 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 was headquartered in the Chicago metropolitan area and plays an influential role in local politics; (2) the brother of Chicago's mayor was 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 was a tailor-made request for Waste Management,. This firm has faced 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 pickup by recycling (not municipal waste) trucks, this program was different. Through the Blue Bag program, residents placed their recyclables in blue plastic bags,

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

> 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 efficiently recycle the city's waste.

<u>Miscalculation #2: Low Recovery Rates</u>

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

A. 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 purchadn7kp se(p ra fleelot oe truies and thhidurint odrelivals.she Cit'AneenIrvurinexpl r urcngcle thlfway one eclojehe materialsI it'jushagarbntag eclojeatiob basicalty."

nineteenth century industrial cities and those in the contemporary Third World. Workers regularly handled toxic substances on this job. This is because household hazardous waste is unregulated and was often contained in recyclable plastic and metal containers that the recycling centers collected. As one worker explained, he came into close contact with "anything and everything that people just normally throw out in their garbage." This included 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 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 Blue Bag MRRF workers routinely handled these materials. Workers getting stuck with syringes and hypodermic needles is one of the 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 stufk* -0.0teetalk iuethisxplaned d

> "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 intermingled, as people desperate for gainful employment and job security were 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, as 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."
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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)

Even within the recycling industry, there was considerable skepticism about Chicago's program:

> "...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 positive environmental impacts (Gordon 1996). This did not constitute development: it was nothing less than underdevelopment. It constituted a poor use of human, natural, and economic resources to the extent that the city, workers and the ecosystem were all taxed more than was necessary.

By 1997, even Chicago Department of the Environment officials were beginning to realize the extent of MRRF problems. Critiques by the Chicago Recycling Commission were being 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 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).

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

Secondly, Evanston approved a recycling program in return for the project's 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 tied 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 operated 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 women whose job included locating brokers and purchasers for recyclable materials, weighing in trucks, and even bandaging up workers' 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 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 ran 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 baling. PIC hired at-risk teenagers and unemployed adults as trainees into an eight-month retraining program. Once accepted into 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

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 their 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 most 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-$25 US 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, fill 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 1974). 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 center, 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

job placement rate, where nearly 90% of the trainees acquired gainful employment in nearby businesses.

Yet within several months of this positive assessment, the rug was pulled out from under this program, because of 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

> 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. Ironically, Groot would transport 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 [in jobs]*..... 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 and 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 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 first achieving 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 and 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

> 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 corporate-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" unless its actions involve unconditional support for capital. 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

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. Recycling was initially allocated to the solid-waste disposal agency, and only later administered by the Department of the Environment. 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 problems into patterns, relationships, and partnerships. This was true for the whole recycling program, and especially for the MRF operation. At the present time, though, 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 initial 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 its recycling program:

(1) it was clear about the type of growth it wanted;

(2) it was clear about the linkages between growth, environmental protection, and community;

(3) and it was proactive about making it happen.

Within Evanston's program, the following corollaries of these principles were also 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 into a "business as usual" framework. This led to outsourcing to the lowest-bid company, and to 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 appeared to represent everything that was wrong with not trying to break the dominant ideology and practice of corporate-centered development within the treadmill of production. Yet even in Chicago, the plan was to use the political power of the city to limit its economic vulnerability to market forces. When the program faltered, the city re-entered the process, to induce the contractor to meet the social (worker pay and protection) and ecological (recovery rates) needs.

> "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)

Local political pressures did produce some pragmatic shifts in Chicago. But the structureThis is

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