

first reading

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Today, our society is the site of the struggle between community and institution for the capacities and loyalties of our people. This struggle is never carried out in the abstract. Instead, it occurs each day in the relations of people, the budget decisions of systems and the public portraits of the media.

- John L. McKnight

In the "struggle," as John McKnight refers to it, between community and institution, this edition of *First Reading* devotes most of its space to an examination of the role(s) which community can and does play in the development and growth of a healthy, free society.

"Community Development" is the term which has been coined to describe the idea or movement of using community-based structures and organizations to deal with both individual and societal problems.

The current systems or institutions which were created to deal with these issues have had limited success; it is argued that they have actually made the problems worse. John McKnight describes some of these failed systems as "crime-making corrections systems, sickness-making health systems and stupid-making schools."

Two of the articles in this edition of *First Reading* comment on the value of community-based programs, as well as on some of the drawbacks which programs with a small base can have. The major article, by Hubert Campfens, provides an analysis of community-based program types. It provides a good introduction to the entire concept, and is of particular value to those who were unable to attend the *Nurturing Community* conference.

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The next edition of *First Reading* will deal with the subject of "homelessness." What has been accomplished in the year that was dedicated to this issue? Also in the next issue, the results of a recent survey conducted of members of the Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Nurturing Community

REGENERATING COMMUNITY

John L. McKnight

Each of us has a map of the social world in our mind, and the way we act, our plans and opinions are the result of that map.

The people who make social policy also have social maps in their minds. They make plans and design programs based upon their map. Indeed, if you carefully examine their programs, you can detect the nature of their mental map. Using this method, we have found that the most common social policy map has two locations: institutions and individual people. By institutions we mean large structures such as corporations, universities and government mental health systems. These structures organize a large group of people so that a few of them will be able to control the rest of them. In this structure, there is ultimately room for one leader. It is a structure initially created to produce goods such as steel and automobiles.

It is obvious, upon the briefest reflection, that the typical social policy map is inaccurate because it excludes a major social domain -- the community. By community, we mean the social place used by family, friends, neighbours, neighbourhood associations, clubs, civic groups, local government and local media. In addition to being called the community, this social environment is also described as the informal sector, the unmanaged environment and the associational sector.

The Struggle Between Community and Institution

These associations of community represent unique social tools that are unlike the social tool represented by a managed institution. For example, the structure of institutions is a design established to create *control* of people. On the other hand, the structure of associations is the result of people acting through *consent*. It is critical that we distinguish between these two motive forces because there are many goals that can only be fulfilled through consent, and these are often goals that will be impossible to achieve through a production system designed to control.

There are many other unique characteristics

of the community of associations.

- The associations in community are interdependent. To weaken one is to weaken all. If the local newspaper closes, the garden club and the township meeting will each diminish as they lose a voice. If the local Legion disbands, several community fundraising events and the maintenance of the ballpark will stop. If the Baptist Church closes, several self-help groups that meet in the basement will be without a home and folks in the seniors' residence will lose their weekly visitors. The interdependence of associations and the dependence of community upon their work is the vital centre of an effective society.

- The community environment is constructed around the recognition of fallibility rather than the ideal. Most institutions, on the other hand, are designed with a vision imagining a structure where things can be done right, a kind of orderly perfection achieved and the ablest dominate.

In contrast, community structures tend to proliferate until they create a place for everyone, no matter how fallible. They provide vehicles that give voice to diversity and assume that consensual contribution is the primary value.

In the proliferation of community associations, there is room for many leaders and the development of leadership capacity among many. This democratic opportunity structure assumes that the best idea is the sum of the knowings of the collected fallible people who are citizens. Indeed, it is the marvel of the democratic ideal that people of every fallibility are citizens. Effective associational life incorporates all of those fallibilities and reveals the unique intelligence of community.

- Associations have the capacity to respond quickly. They do not need to involve all of the institutional interests incorporated in a planning committee, budget office, administrative staff and so forth.

A primary characteristic of people who need help is that their problem is created by the unexpected tragedy, the surprise development, the sudden change. While they will be able to stabilize over the long run, what they often need is

immediate help. The rapid response capacity of associations, and their interconnectedness, allows for the possibility of immediate and comprehensive assistance, without first initiating a person into a system from which they may never leave.

•The proliferation and development of community associations allows for the flowering of creative solutions. Institutions tend to require that creative ideas follow channels. However, the non-hierarchical nature of the field of associations allows us to see all of the budding ideas and greatly increases our opportunities for social innovation.

"...community structures tend to proliferate until they create a place for everyone, no matter how fallible."

•Because community associations are small, face-to-face groups, the relationship among members is very individualized. They also have the tradition of dealing with non-members as individuals. Institutions, on the other hand, have great difficulty developing programs or activities that recognize the unique characteristics of each individual. Therefore, associations represent unusual tools for creating "hand-tailored" responses to those who may be in special need or have unique fallibilities.

•Our institutions are constantly reforming and reorganizing themselves in an effort to create or allow relationships that can be characterized as "care." Nonetheless, their ministrations consistently commodify themselves and become a service. For many people with uncommon fallibilities the need is for care rather than service. While a managed system organized as a structure of control can deliver a service, it cannot deliver care. Care is a special relationship characterized by consent rather than control. Therefore, its auspices are individual and associational. For those who need care, we must recognize the community as the appropriate social tool.

•Finally, associations and the community they create are the forum within which citizenship can be expressed. Institutions, by their managed structure, are definitionally unable to act as forums for citizenship. Therefore, the vital centre of democracy is the community of associations. Any person without access to that forum is effectively denied citizenship. For those people with unique fallibilities who have been institutionalized, it isn't enough that they be deinstitutionalized. In order to be a citizen they

must also have the opportunity for recomunalization.

In summary, the community of associations provides a social tool where consent is the primary motivation, interdependence creates holistic environments, people of all capacities and fallibilities are incorporated, quick responses are possible, creativity is multiplied rather than channeled, individualized responses are characteristic, care is able to replace service, and citizenship is possible. When all of these unique capacities of community are recognized, it is obvious why the social policy map that excludes community life has resulted in increasing failures.

Why is it, then, that social policy maps so often ignore community? One reason is that there are many institutional leaders who simply do not believe in the capacities of communities. They often see communities as collections of parochial, inexpert, uninformed and biased people. Indeed, there are many leaders of service systems who believe that they are in direct competition with communities for the power to correctly define problems and provide scientific solutions and professional services.

In this competitive understanding, the institutional leaders are correct. Whenever hierarchical systems become more powerful than the community we see the flow of authority, resources, skills, dollars, legitimacy and capacities away from communities and into service systems. In fact, institutionalized systems grow at the expense of communities. As institutions gain power, communities lose their potency and the consent of community is replaced by the control of systems; the care of community is replaced by the service of systems; the citizens of community are replaced by the clients and consumers of institutional products.

There is a mistaken notion that our society has a problem in terms of effective human services. Our essential problem is weak communities. While we have reached the limits of institutional problem solving, we are only at the beginning of exploring the possibility of a new vision for community. It is a vision of reassociating the exiled. It is a vision of freeing ourselves from service and advocacy. It is a vision of centring our lives in community.

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NURTURING COMMUNITY

Hubert Campfens

The "glass of milk" program introduced in 1984 by the Metropolitan Government of Lima, Peru is one of those rare cases that serves as an example of what good community development is all about. It was a well-conceived plan that took into account the particular conditions that women and children in the teeming shanty-towns of Lima found themselves in, linking government planning with the community and responding to a locally perceived priority need. The struggle for survival had assumed such proportions that municipal politicians and planners decided on combating the wide-spread malnutrition among Lima's children as their top priority.

The program was a resounding success, meeting all the policy objectives the planners had set out, with little bureaucratic involvement and relying largely on community controlled local committees of women. These committees of women, on a voluntary and daily basis, prepare the milk mixed with other nutrients, work out a fair distribution system and, with support from external technicians, develop their own accounting and management procedures.

From a community organizational and participation perspective, the program astounded everyone for the degree of social mobilization achieved among women who were, until then, largely non-participants in community affairs. By March 1985, no less than 100 000 women were participating, actively assuming full responsibility for the program, organized into 7500 local "glass of milk" committees, involving 1300 male-dominated neighbourhood organizations from 33 out of 41 municipal districts making up the capital region of 6 000 000 inhabitants. The program attended to the milk consumption needs of 1 000 000 children, up to the age of 13.

Apart from meeting consumption needs, special educational and skills training was provided. This brought about a growing awareness among mothers of the importance of proper nutritional habits, a capacity to manage their own local committees and an ability to divide their labour in preparing and distributing one of life's most vital

food products.

Unfortunately, the mayor of the newly elected (November 1986) Metropolitan Government wanted to dismantle the autonomous local "glass of milk" committee structure and have the committees replaced by the "mothers' clubs" controlled by the new governing party. The mothers and their children, en masse and angry, marched to the municipal government offices on 12 February 1987 demanding the continuation of the program in its present format, with the mothers maintaining control over the operation instead of the governing party. They were dispersed by heavily armed police forces who used tear gas and water hoses and shot into crowds, wounding hundreds, including children, and detaining scores of mothers. Later that afternoon the new mayor, pressed by the country's President, guaranteed the continuation of the current structure of the program with respect to the autonomous character of the local committees.

The program, now controlled largely by women from the most local level to the top municipal administrator, has had its share of difficulties and criticisms. In spite of these, it has resulted in many benefits. Its significance has been in restoring the rights of children, in promoting the participation of women in organized community activity where men have traditionally tended to be the dominant force, and for achieving a measure of much need self-worth, respect and liberation that is likely to have long range repercussions in the movement toward fundamental human and social transformation. The growing participation of these women in Lima and their degree of solidarity has reached a level that would be difficult to erase. They may be beaten down, silenced and temporarily ignored in government plans, but the combination of their basic needs and a renewed will to act collectively has become a new and potent force that is perceived by objective Latin and international researchers as leading to new creative outlets, thwarting those official and male attempts at keeping women in "their place."

In summary, what we see here is how one

can link an official policy initiative with an attempt at mobilizing a particular segment of the local population. It not only responds concretely to an immediate need of the poor for survival, but also strengthens bonds of solidarity from which people can achieve a measure of liberty. This principle applies as much to Third World conditions as to the oppressed and marginal groups in First World countries such as Canada.

Current Trends

The current trend at the community level, in response to the failures of government and institutionally administered programs and services, consists of an uncertain surge for more autonomous community types, microdevelopment models and participatory structures. These are found in the rise of self-help and mutual aid groups as part of the mental health movement, natural helping networks, producer and consumer co-ops, community economic development and community development corporations, and many others.

In a world of multinationals, high-tech, big government, specialized expertise in problem solving and individualism, it would appear irrational, utopian and taking a step backward in history for people to turn to these often amateur operations of local community groups. Yet their attraction and success is that for the average citizen they are easy to relate to, identify with, participate in, contribute to and feel secure in. They also allow one to take an interest in others and care for others in a personal way. In addition, these groups provide a base for reflecting on life's conditions, for experiential learning and for acquiring new skills that may have marketable value. In this, professional expertise and institutional support can play a role, as long as the community group maintains control over its own decision-making process. In short, these community groups allow for their participants to meet many of the day-to-day needs not met for growing numbers of Canadians in an alienating, unresponsive, bureaucratic and competitive world.

Central Dilemmas and Confusions of our Times Relevant to Community Development Practice

Community development is not to be understood as a pursuit of some utopia, as one finds in some writings, but as an effort that strikes at some central dilemmas and confusions of our times.

1. The dilemma of tradition and modernity

A romantic return to a past found in totally

self-sufficient rural villages with a complete reliance on localism and local initiative in meeting needs and solving problems, as promoted by the neo-conservatives among us, is not the kind of traditionalism strived for in community development. Instead, community development tries to recover certain essential traditional values of the human community as expressed through solidarity, mutual aid and self-help, local initiative, and self determination, without which communities of people and humanity at large would destroy themselves. In this sense, the process of community development is selective. It calls on external efforts of government, voluntary agencies and professionals to work as partners in a relationship of equality with local communities and groups. It aims at increasing the competence of communities and groups in managing their own affairs and thereby counter undue dependency on professional, technocratic or institutional assistance.

In the same vein, "modernity" or indiscriminate "development," as promoted by some of our liberal enterprisers, will not satisfy either, because not everything modern or that grows and is touted as progress is good. Cancer, which is a growth of bodily cells, can hardly be considered a desirable growth. There are many forms of cancer in our societies that are equally destructive. One such example is the unchecked growth of cities experienced during the '50s and '60s, and the urban renewal programs that destroyed socially healthy communities, uprooted millions of inner-city poor across North America and alienated people from their neighbours and their environment. This went on until communities began to organize and put a stop to this senseless form of growth.

"Those who are concerned about development and problem-solving turn to community development as a 'means' or 'social technology' for mobilizing people to improve their socio-economic conditions."

2. Modern science, technology and mutual aid

A second dilemma and confusion of our times relates to the primacy we have placed on modern science and technology and the extent to which we have come to rely on the rationality and expertise of the trained professional and techno-

crat in addressing human need and solving problems, to the near exclusion of the potential that lies within mutual aid and social mobilization.

While it is true that science and technology have brought us untold benefits, we also observe how the values of secularism, materialism and individualism embodied in them have turned out to be a mixed blessing at best for our general well-being as a human community. We may joke about the symbiotic relationships observed between people and their newly acquired computers, but many of us who are not able to operate a computer are made to feel left out and "under-developed." What is clear is that our technologically advanced societies have placed an almost blind faith in what is euphemistically called "the law of the instrument" -- namely the belief that the only route to problem solving lies in ever-larger outlays of capital in technology and in an endless upgrading of technical, professional and managerial skills.

Let me share with you an Amazon legend which probably best states the confusion we find ourselves in. The legend tells us the following:

A priest was speaking with God about Heaven and Hell. "I will show you Hell," said God. They went into a room which had delicious beef stew on a table around which sat people who looked desperately famished. They held spoons with long handles which reached into the pot, but were too long to put the stew back into their mouths. Their suffering was terrible.

"Now I will show you heaven," said God, and they went into an identical room with the savoury stew on a table around which sat people with identical spoons and handles, but they were well nourished and joyous. The priest was baffled, until God said, "Quite simply, you see, these people learned to feed each other."

In terms of this legend we have become overly zealous in perfecting the spoon, to the near exclusion of considering how we can mobilize the mutual aid and self-help potential among people at the interpersonal and informal levels in the context of the human group and community.

Let me give you a concrete illustration of how mutual aid and self-help, as two principal elements of community development, can be built into the construction of affordable housing and make proper use of available technology and ex-

pertise. Mutual aid, in an operational sense, consists of gaining the co-operation of all participating families in teamwork to construct project infrastructures and the basic parts of a house. Self-help aims at using the labour, organizational talents and managerial skills of participating families in the construction and improvement of their homes. Generally, these two principles constitute a methodology for improving not only the economic but also the social conditions of low income people, instead of merely producing a certain number of housing units. It involves qualitative as well as quantitative changes. The assumption based on this approach is that there is a surplus of labour among lower income sectors of the population - because of high rates of unemployment or underemployment - for whom conventionally constructed housing is inaccessible and unaffordable.

The conventional approach relies on a contractor, an architect who designs the house, carpenters, masons, plumbers and electricians who construct the house, and a professional site manager who manages the overall project. It also places the product outside the purchasing power of hundreds of thousands of Canadians, denies them involvement in the process of shaping the house according to their interests and desires, negates any opportunity to learn new skills and, finally, it creates a community of individuals who are thrown together, residing in their own shell and frequently not knowing how to reach out to one another.

The mutual aid and self-help approach may not produce as aesthetically pleasing structures as professionals can turn out, but it certainly creates a vibrant and active community spirit with a greater sense of well-being and pride in having built something oneself in union with others.

The same principles can be applied to introducing community health facilities and services and daycare services to local communities, as promoted by the World Health Organization in Third World countries. It can also be applied to working with ethnic minorities, natives, senior citizens, the handicapped, farmers and other community groups. Too often, planning and services delivered by our institutions and professionals treat people as if they are targets and objects, instead of treating them as subjects being placed in charge of their own immediate environment and providing them with the essential technological know-how.

Those who are concerned about development and problem-solving turn to community development as a "means" or "social technology" for mobilizing people to improve their socio-eco-

conomic conditions. Others perceive community development as a "goal" or an "end" in itself, with emphasis being placed on the inherent value of the human community and group interdependence in addressing social-psychological needs and problems.

In combination, the "means-end" and "community-individual" focus provide us with at least four basic conceptions or models of com-

munity development as found in its current practice. These are not to be viewed as exhaustive of all actual or potential models of practice, nor are they to be regarded as mutually exclusive, since reality is too complex to view them as separate forms of practice. Each model may incorporate elements of any one of the others. The purpose here is to present them for their current significance and analytical contrast.

Typology of Community Development Models

C.D. POLICY and PRACTICE	SOCIAL ORGANIZATION	
	INDIVIDUAL	COMMUNITY
MEANS	¹ Instrumental/Individualistic Economic + Security Needs	² Instrumental/Communal Socio-Economic Development
ENDS	³ Communal/Therapeutic-Emancipatory Psycho-Social Needs	⁴ Community Control Socio-Political Development

1. *The instrumental individualist conception* is reflected in that type of practice which involves people in community group activity aimed at increasing job opportunities, developing new community services, obtaining a street-light at a dangerous street crossing, or action aimed at the removal of an irresponsible official. It is assumed that certain needs of the individual can only be met through group action. In this sense such practice helps its beneficiaries to manage and cope with their day to day needs as individuals in a "free enterprise" society in which each and everyone is expected to be responsible for their own welfare. Within a welfare state such as Canada, community development would be considered as merely incidental to meeting the multifaceted needs of the individual not met by welfare state programs. It excludes from its practice those concerns that relate to meeting the individual's psycho-social or socio-political needs addressed in the other forms of community development.

2. *The instrumental-communal conception* mobilizes groups and communities, as part of government or institutional policy, in dealing with

social problems or development issues. It acknowledges man's social and communal nature and the economic value in mobilizing people as a "human resource." This orientation was advanced by the United Nations during the '50s and '60s in an effort to bring about socio-economic development in Third World countries, and by governments of Western nations in their "War on Poverty" programs. By relying on such social techniques as adult education, group work and community organizing, government planners aimed to mobilize the local population for involvement and participation in programs that would achieve social progress, national development and improvements in the general condition of living. Similar to the instrumental/individualist model, this form of community development excludes from its practice those objectives that address the psycho-social and socio-political needs of its participants. It is essentially an apolitical form of practice.

3. *The community-therapeutic/emancipatory conception* helps individuals to connect with groups. Apart from meeting concrete tasks set by the group, it aims also at satisfying the psy-

cho-social needs of its participants for belonging and social support, and in becoming emancipated in the process of an autonomous form of group problem-solving. It gives credence to the therapeutic value of those community groups oriented towards self-help and mutual aid, and to the liberating value of engaging in a critical reflection on one's life situation and group action taken. This approach forms part of a new North American movement in the mental health field that brings people experiencing similar problems together as equal partners in a process of mutual sharing, solidarity and problem-solving. In a slightly different form its practice is reflected in the Latin American movement of popular education, in which a dialogical practice among group participants links the arrival of critical consciousness with the social and political practice of organizing.

The concern is very much with the participants' psycho-social condition expressed in a sense of oppression, powerlessness, alienation, aloneness or feeling victimized and discriminated against, as well as the participants' socio-political needs.

In short, this model not only responds to the immediate concrete needs for survival, but also strengthens bonds of solidarity via which people can achieve a measure of liberty.

"...certain needs of the individual can only be met through group action."

4. *Community development as an objective or goal*, involves a policy where the community would be the centre of both government and citizen action, aiming at helping communities to become satisfying social groups. The concern would be with the quality of life in the fullest sense of the word, giving due attention to the interrelationship between the community as a physical, economic and political entity, and to the optimum involvement and participation of residents in community affairs. This concern was the principal preoccupation of the organizers of the 1976 U.N. sponsored Habitat Conference in Vancouver. The objective would be to counter the negative social consequences of rapid unplanned urbanization, of unbalanced economic development resulting in gross inequities and disparities in standards of living, and of the general deterioration in environmental and ecological conditions. The communal view implicit in this policy has been of central concern throughout the history of community development. It has found

its expression in Alinsky's social action movement, in advocacy planning, the citizen participation movement, the neighbourhood government and community control movement, community development corporations, and community economic development. The underlying assumption is that liberty lies in self rule.

While the community control movement or some variation on the same theme, may be appealing, its scope to be creative is limited in a highly technological, urbanizing and interdependent society. American as well as Canadian experiences indicate that community governments and councils usually have their resources tightly controlled by higher order governments and their departments, and that their energies are absorbed in administration and internal quarrels. Clearly, decentralization of government cannot be confused with decentralization of power. Organizing around social issues like women's liberation, Native caucus and environmental impact assessment, would appear to have greater potential for bringing about more fundamental changes.

Conclusion

It is the mobilization of people who have similar needs and problems that can help them to rise above their individual perceptions and see the limitations placed upon them from without. In other words, by linking themselves to one another, individuals can move from a naive state of consciousness to reflecting critically on their collective condition, sharing their individual insights and experiences, and thereby check the correctness of their perceptions. Secondly, they can gain support from one another in mutual aid and self-help efforts and become mobilized to experience a sense of personal control. Eventually they may take group action toward achieving social change in a societal context.

It is in the strengthening of the bonds of solidarity, the nurturing of the co-operative community in the emergence of a new group and the taking of group action that emancipation and liberty are achieved. This applies as much to the oppressed masses in the Third World as it does to members of minority groups in our so-called developed societies.

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CAN SMALL BE UGLY

Patricia Marchak

"When technologies are imported, they carry with them certain social structures which have to be built in order to facilitate the working of these technologies...Technology is like genetic material which carries the code of the society in which it was conceived. When you transfer technology, it tries to replicate the society which conceived it."

-Professor Amulya Reddy
Institute of Technology
Bangalore, India

In a world of enormous buildings, densely packed urban centres, complex technologies and vast transnational corporations, there is great appeal in the idea of creating small, self-sufficient communities using what are called "appropriate technologies" for relatively small-scale production.

The appeal increases as we suffer through periods of inflation, depression, dislocation, shut-downs and other economic consequences of a dependence on the export of staples (such as oil, minerals, timber) and an international economy controlled by large pools of capital without local roots.

There is, I believe, a good, solid argument in favour of smaller scale technologies and more self-sufficient communities. These are both possible and attractive for some regions with certain kinds of resource endowments and fairly stable populations. There is good reason to examine the potentiality of alternative energy sources, for example, and to abandon the practice of damming great rivers, flooding fertile valleys and building nuclear plants to feed mass production industries centrally located in ever larger urban areas.

But I worry about some of the romantic versions of this argument, and the tendency to cast small as the ultimate solution to all the world's ills.

There are serious arguments against "small" that need to be grappled with by those of us who recognize the very real problems of "big."

One is the problem of equity. While some regions have resources, others do not; some could survive very well on their own, but some could not. To overcome unequal endowments, there has to be a combination of small and large political units to distribute the benefits. This is

related to a global, and not just a provincial or national reality; there are nations with too many people, and nations with very few.

To cope with the global situation we need to devise rather large political organizations to redistribute wealth. This brings us to the paramount fact of modern existence -- the global marketplace. We may condemn it, and its contemporary custodians - the transnational corporations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and even the United Nations organizations - but there it is, something that will not go away and which, whether we will it or not, deeply affects our lives. If we want to work toward transformation of our social world, I think we have to deal with a world economy -- we certainly cannot wish it away.

The Argument for Small

The basic argument in favour of small really is that people should have more control over their own destinies. The belief is that communities would create more equitable, more humane and more human-sized outcomes for themselves if they determined, collectively, what they were going to produce, how they were going to produce it and what they were going to do with both their produce and any surplus they could create.

This argument is counterpoised to the more common situation today of large externally-owned companies extracting local resources, employing workers on a wage and with no say in company policies, and moving out when the resource is depleted, technologies are changed, or market demand declines. Indeed, a problem for many communities in North America today is that companies have left, taking with them the profits made in the communities through the communities' resources and the labour of its

members, in search of cheaper labour or new resources elsewhere in the world.

But is the solution to this problem the creation of numerous small units, each striving to produce its own subsistence through utilization of relatively simple technologies? How much power would a small community to keep large companies at bay? How well could a small community survive it if attempted to produce goods for sale, competitive with large companies in external markets? How would a small community limit the appetites of its own members, some of whom inevitably would prefer temporary wage labour to subsistence, and many of whom would not anticipate life-long commitments to a single community even if the community had control of its own resources? How well could such small units satisfy the multitudes of diverse interests and talents which human beings have? What if, for example, they were unable to produce sufficient surplus to build universities and cultural institutions?

"Somewhere between the gross materialism of contemporary urban life and the confines of puritanical villages, unnecessarily limiting their skills to simple technologies and bounded social encounters, might be a more appropriate objective than small for its own sake."

Suppose we could create a self-sufficient small economy in a resource-rich region. Suppose this were utopia: the citizens take their citizenship seriously, attend all the public meetings (there would be a great many because there would be many decisions to be made), co-operate with one another in developing small-scale, appropriate-technology production units to process their apples into juice, or raise their pen-reared fish, or manufacture furniture from their trees. Wages are roughly equal for elected managers and workers, and surplus will be invested, through democratic decisions, in diversification of the economic base.

Now suppose that at the other end of the same valley there is a community with no apples, no fish and no trees. Does the first community have an obligation to help the second? And if so, how could this be achieved, except through

establishment of a somewhat larger political unit than the village? Would the population of the second village not migrate to the first, and how would the first cope with this migration if their production units were not geared to a denser population base?

Suppose further that the community with the apples wants to purchase oranges and sell the apple juice? That obviously requires an external market, a network of services, transportation and storage facilities, and an economic framework to keep these in operation. Does the second community, the one without the apples, have an obligation to support that infrastructure? If it does have that obligation, does it not also have the right to share in the decision-making about the sale of apple juice? Where does one community begin and the other end? Unless each community is entirely self-sufficient, or trades only with its nearest neighbours on an ad hoc basis, it is difficult to determine who rightfully makes decisions and who can be excluded.

These, of course, are simple examples to be used as metaphors for a world society. Canada as a whole could probably support itself. Like Albania, we could put up barriers to the world and still survive, if we had such a mind. But we share a world with India, Brazil, China and Poland, and the decisions we make affect others. If we make the decision to keep out immigrants because they lack urban skills and are poor, or because we prefer low-density population, we would no doubt be able to create a country of very small communities making apple juice. Is that adequate? I think not.

This does not mean that the current situation is acceptable or preferable. In the current situation decisions are made entirely by those who have property rights, and property rights have nothing to do with citizenship, participation in community life, residence or investment of work and time. They are rights belonging entirely to those with capital.

A Question of Control

If the real problem is control, then what is needed are safeguards against the rights of property, and contractual rights for the producers, residents and citizens of regions enabling them to establish more self-sufficient communities within larger political and economic contexts.

Norway, when faced with a potential oil boom, insisted that oil companies plough back some of their profits into the fishing communities and imposed considerable safeguards against pollution of fish habitats. Some of the new wealth was invested in fish farms and the dis-

placed fisherfolk became farmers of a product that is now in great demand around the world. This was one way of ensuring that small communities could survive in changing market conditions. Britain and Canada were less concerned with their small fishers and farmers and the result was greater dislocation from the temporary oil boom of the 1970s.

In British Columbia today, the technologies for producing lumber have changed dramatically. It is now entirely feasible to produce small quantities of specialized cuts for diverse world markets. The economies of scale that typified the forest industry before 1980 no longer apply to automated laser mills. This reduces the advantages of large companies at the production level, but they continue to have the advantage of capital for establishing the new mills, buying the new technology and entering world markets. To ensure that the advantages of these technologies are not captured by multinational firms, what is needed are political policies that protect community-owned firms, providing loans for start-up costs and, perhaps, crown marketing agencies for selling products on world markets. Perhaps we could devise contracts between governments and communities which state the rules of accountability and ensure that the communities keep their end of the bargain. This means a combination of small and large. The "appropriate technology" is, in fact, "high technology" in this instance.

Why worry about communities keeping their end of the bargain? The reason is simply that not all regions are equally endowed. If governments become real agents of social change, helping smaller communities to gain greater self-sufficiency and control, there have to be reciprocities so that regions without a natural economic base would be able to develop manufacturing or other kinds of industries.

Small Can Be Ugly

Small can be ugly when it constricts human talent and diversity, and there are plenty of historical and contemporary examples of small communities that do that. Life at a subsistence level may be virtuous by the idealist standards of sated urbanites, but subsistence communities are frequently harsh and sparse because they really cannot afford to be otherwise; there is little room in them for the vast range of human characteristics that urban centres can afford to support. Somewhere between the gross materialism of contemporary urban life and the confines of puritanical villages, unnecessarily limiting their skills to simple technologies and bounded social

encounters, might be a more appropriate objective than small for its own sake.

While one might admire the Chinese attempt to build industries under primitive conditions rather than import advanced technologies, one is obliged to note that the attempt has been abandoned. Instead, China is now importing the technology but carefully monitoring its use and the surplus created from it. China is no longer afraid of "high technology" where it is appropriate; the emphasis is on maintaining rural communities and local control of production, rather than on the characteristics of the technology itself. By way of example, in a remote Chinese town where very primitive sawmills were operating, I was surprised to learn that a sophisticated forestry school had been established. The objective was to train the local population to take over the forestry, adopting the most advanced ideas for seeding, nurturing and growing trees, and importing experts from Canada to act as advisers. In Canada, forestry schools (or engineering, or chemical, or geophysical schools) are located only in urban centres, and while this makes them accessible to a wider population it does not help forest-dependent communities to develop local expertise. Thus China has created a way of reducing the out-migration of rural people while creating a means for them to become advanced technicians in a very large industry under their control. Within the next generation the technologies for timber growth and lumber production will be advanced; but the community will not, as happens so often in Canada, lose control of its own destiny.

What I would argue, then, is that the objective of progressive social policy should be to devise strategies that will enable communities to become more self-sustaining. This may involve downscaling technology and choosing smaller forms of production, or it may involve upscaling technology and planning larger production units. Small is neither beautiful nor ugly by itself. What matters is increasing the control people have over the conditions of their lives, by whichever means turns out to be most appropriate for their particular region, and tempering this concern with a wider concern for the welfare of other communities and other nations with whom we share the earth.

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COUNCIL NEWS

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New Publications

**Poverty and Unemployment:
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Brown Bag Forums

Date: Tuesday, October 20
Time: 12:10 to 1:10 p.m.

Topic: Sales Tax Reform and the Poor: Passing the Hat or Passing the Buck?

Speaker: Havi Echenberg
Executive Director,
National Anti-Poverty
Organization (Ottawa)

Date: Wednesday, October 21
Time: 12:10 to 1:10 p.m.

Topic: Improving Day Care: Real Changes or Just Kidding Around?

Speaker: Eva Roche
Instructor, Early
Childhood
Development Program,
Grant MacEwan
Community College

Date: Wed., November 18
Time: 12:10 to 1:10 p.m.

Topic: No Place Like Home:
Homelessness in
Edmonton

Speakers: Leonard Neufeld
Outreach Worker,
Boyle Street Co-op
and
Daryl Kreutzer
Housing Planner,
City of Edmonton
Social Services

Date: Wed., December 9
Time: 12:10 to 1:10 p.m.

Topic: From Welfare to Work: Is it
Really Working?

Speaker: Geoff Anderson
Executive Director,
Employment Services,
Alberta Career
Development and
Employment

All Brown Bag Forums are held at:
4th Floor Boardroom
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Social Services Advisory Committee Representative

The Edmonton Social Planning Council is seeking an individual to sit as its appointee to the City of Edmonton Social Services Advisory Committee. The Committee allocates funds and advises on social policy for the city. Voluntary or professional experience in the social services is preferred. Time requirements are a minimum of five hours per month.

For further information contact Peter Faid at 423-2031 prior to 15 October 1987.