

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Education in a variety of social movements has enabled participants to gain skills and competence in such areas as organizing, public speaking, and writing. Since the 1960's the environmental movement is one social movement which has made a significant impact on persons and public policy in the United States. One offshoot from the broader environmental legacy was the toxics movement. Housewife Lois Gibbs, who lived in Love Canal, New York, was a catalyst for the movement in 1978 as she helped found the Love Canal Homeowner's Association (LCHA). Subsequently, in 1981, the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW) was formed. This organization has grown to include a network of some seven thousand community groups across the country. Participants have been able to stop incinerators from being built, and have played a role in getting many toxic wastes sites cleaned up. Communities have addressed issues of race and economic situations as companies sought to build incinerators and dumps in their backyards. The purpose of CCHW revolves around social justice and educating people in order that they might become empowered to change their circumstances. This study will explore the educative dimensions of the CCHW focusing on the critical events and educational processes which have evolved throughout the organization's fourteen year history.

### BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

#### **Roots of Environmentalism**

The term environmentalism came into popular use in the 1960's. The references for this term have expanded since then to include environmental philosophy, environmental ethics, environmental law, environmental science, environmental policy, and the environmental movement. Darnovsky (1992) states that the term environmentalism itself is a deceptively unitary one that fails to register the array of differences between people and groups who consider themselves part of the movement. Even in the 1990's a multitude of positions continue to emerge, and include a variety of political and ideological positions, nature philosophies, organizational structures, approaches and issues, activist styles and spiritual beliefs (Aitchey, 1992; Grove, 1992; Nash, 1990; Petulla, 1977,1980,1988; Porritt, 1985; Rees, 1990; Rifkin, 1989,1991; Spoehr, 1955; Terrie, 1989; White, 1967; and Wild, 1986).

Sale (1993) states that though the movement is but thirty years old, in just one generation, environmentalism has become ingrained in American culture through laws, textbooks, schools, work, practice, and consciousness. More than 12,000 grassroots groups and 150 major national organizations are devoted to environmental issues today (Sale, 1993). One criticism is that many groups do not understand the big picture since they focus on specific problems. This isolationist approach ignores the issue of environmental problems being a function of an economic system based on growth and exploitation of resources. Consequently, Sale (1993) suggests that there have been no attempts at structural reforms. An example is the greater emphasis on recycling centers rather than reduction in packaging. There has been little alteration of the core values of the society; people focus on the immediate problem and perhaps fail to realize the importance of adopting a system of behaviors which is inherently more friendly toward the environment.

People in many areas of interest who do not identify themselves as environmentalists are finding linkages between personal and environmental concerns. Berger (1993) recognizes the challenges for social work in the environmental crisis, and provides guidelines which can serve as a personal code of practice while incorporating environmentally friendly values. She also notes

that religious leaders are speaking of the need to respect the earth as a religious obligation. *The Washington Post* (Paquette, April 16, 1994; Niebuhr, June 30, 1994) featured articles showing that the ecology movement was beginning to take root among the religious, albeit in a low-key manner, and mostly in local churches.

## **Education and Social Movements**

The importance of educational processes in social movements has been documented by several adult education theorists and others (Finger, 1989; Welton, 1991; Holford, 1995; Evans and Boyte, 1986; Dykstra and Law, 1994; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991); however, little research exists which documents how these processes in the environmental movement, particularly within grassroots environmental organizations, have evolved and influenced participants and society. Darnovsky (1992) contends that the written histories of the environmental movement have unfolded into more or less a standard history which investigated certain people, events, and issues (White, 1967; Petulla, 1977; Wild, 1986; Terrie, 1989; Nash, 1990; and Grove, 1992). These histories tend to omit several transitory organizations and efforts which are politically radical such as the peace movement, the antinuclear movement, and the toxics movement. Specifically, most studies treat various personalities or events which were instrumental in gaining support for nature, such as Aldo Leopold, a prominent preservationist, and through whose efforts large areas of land have been conserved or preserved for posterity. Most mainstream groups have chosen not to identify or be associated with the poor and disenfranchised of society. Darnovsky calls for a history which includes grassroots efforts, and unsung activists who organized to help make societal change.

## **The Role of Women as Activists in Social Movements**

Women have played an important role in social movements throughout the history of the United States (Evans and Boyte 1986). They cite a Revolutionary War era woman, Sarah Jay, who became active in her interest in politics of the day. Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John that men should pay attention to ladies or the women would begin a rebellion. In the nineteenth century, upper class white women formed societies and reform associations which tackled issues surrounding industrialization. These groups helped women feel their collective power. They gained skills in organizing and public speaking. Evans and Boyte (1986) state that women during this period did not interpret their roles as a challenge to mainstream politics. Their identities were “embedded in class relations which inhibited their further politicization” (p. 80).

In 1848, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott determined that they would hold a conference on women’s rights in Seneca Falls, New York. More than 200 women came to this radical event. These women and many others organized around a central focus over the next few decades: the issue of citizenship (Evans and Boyte, 1986). There were problems in gaining a broad base since the middle class had as yet to emerge as a hegemonic force in US life. Groups such as the YWCA and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union made an appeal to a wider segment of American women. Leadership was still primarily educated, white, upper class, and Protestant in nature.

In 1889 Jane Adams and Ellen Starr founded Hull House and so began the settlement house movement. Middle class women moved into the squalor of urban slums. Evans and Boyte (1986) claim that these houses became public spaces where women could challenge their values against problems of urbanization brought about through industrialization. Public and political roles were created by women. The agenda which resulted was Progressivist in nature. During these

years, women were able to form a political culture which took responsibility for the poor and homeless. However, as experts became valued in society, volunteer work such as this became the work of government. Still, working and middle class women did not have a voice and there was little cross over between classes.

After women won the vote, much of the reform mentality became depoliticized. Groups such as the League of Women Voters, YWCA, and the Girl Scouts were active yet subordinated themselves from a political role. Personal identities and roles were not seen in a broad context yet (Goldberg, 1991). By 1960, there was a revival of feminism which rose up as a result of changing social roles. As consciousness was raised in the 1960's, women began to tie their personal lives to the political, and this in turn helped build networks and brought forth a collective response (Goldberg, 1991). Evans and Boyte (1986) discuss the feminist revolt in terms of two environments. One was a network of professional women whose interests were predominantly women's rights. The second were the social movements of the era-civil rights, student, and antiwar. In most of these movements women were key in organization, political analysis, and as role models. However, their contributions were generally overlooked in public where men were acknowledged as the leaders and spokesmen for groups such as SDS (Students for a Democratic Society). Out of these experiences however, women began to find their identity as leaders and spokespersons for movements. President John F. Kennedy established a President's Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. This report showed that women's attitudes were changing. They espoused traditional values of home and family, but also desired a greater portion in public and government life. They demanded that government promote women's rights.

By the 1970's, environmental issues were a dominating force as an American social movement. Much of the work was done by national organizations whose operations tended to be organized around a central professional core who did the work, relying on individual memberships for funding. Most members were educated, white, and middle class. In reality, there was little recognition of the work that was being done at the grassroots level in hundreds of communities across the country. Most of these efforts were described as single issue and of little importance to the broader community.

In the mid 1980's, the term "environmental justice" began to appear in the United States. According to Di Chiro (1994), environmental justice merges social justice and environmental issues. This US movement "challenges dominant discourses of environmentalism and produces new constructs of environmental theory and action" (Di Chiro, 1994, p. 93). It is about people and their integral relationship to the environment. Environmental justice links together the air, water, schools, and businesses that are essential in communities everywhere, but its focus on people reflects the primary difference between environmental justice and mainstream environmentalism. What is unique about this movement is that a great majority of activists are women--mostly low-income and of various ethnic origins (Di Chiro, 1994; Zeff et al, 1989; Krause, 1991, 1994; Garland, 1988). According to CCHW, approximately 70-80 percent of grassroots movement activists are women. Garland (1988) chronicles the stories of fourteen women activists who have made differences in their communities through sometimes life long struggle and commitment. Krause (1991) discusses the changes which blue collar women undergo as they become activists. This process involves a major shift from believing in the system as their understanding of political life broadens. Krause (1991) contends that these women must find ways to expose how the system fails on their behalf and must take action to make the system more democratic.

These women are ordinary: by their own accounts, they never envisioned themselves as leaders. Their reasons for getting involved were anger, fear, and despair (Garland, 1988). Their

perspectives were framed around how the world treated them as people and as citizens. These women raised their consciousness and in so doing, examined their personal values, beliefs, and behavior. Out of examination and self education emerged women who had a different outlook on life and the political system in which they lived. This outlook allowed them to transcend the system and see what was possible (Goldberg, 1991).

Because of the recognition that women are highly represented as activists in the environmental justice movement, there have been some study and attempts at theorizing about the underlying reasons (Di Chiro, 1994; Krause, 1991; Stern, 1993; Kay, 1991; and Garland, 1988). Much of the discussion is around two issues: are women more environmentally conscious because of biological or social predispositions? Stern (1993) studied the arguments from two perspectives. The first is that women have stronger altruistic value than men; the second is that women are more aware of consequences of events for others (p. 329-330). Stern's findings, based on a random sample of undergraduates in New York state, suggest that when women are more active in environmental issues, it is because they see a connection between environmental conditions and their values. He found no difference in value structure between women and men.

Krause (1991) looked at feminism and a new social historiography to explain the reasons. She states that both bodies of literature "locate power in ordinary people by positing a theory of politics and political change that begin with the "particular," the everyday world of experience and the centrality of consciousness as an agency of change" (p.108). Critical reflection on experiences is essential to develop critical consciousness for many feminists. This reflection becomes important in social change. Critical consciousness allows women to make links between complex private problems and public power. This is an educative process. As women become more aware, they may take political action. In terms of grassroots protests, women need to make a connection between their health problems and the world of public policies and power.

A second perspective upon which Krause (1991; 1994) frames her work is a new social historiography. Rooted in works by E.P. Thompson, George Rude', and Sheila Rowbotham, Krause attempts to illustrate a dimension of working class women's struggles in the toxics movement. She takes the assumption by Rude' that ordinary people "appropriate and reshape popular cultural meanings, such as traditional beliefs about family and community" (p.110.) Krause contends that this analysis is essential to understanding the struggles of blue collar women. Sometimes the contributions these women made are undervalued because they are voluntary. Their struggle around toxic waste issues was embedded in motherhood, family, and community activities. Krause admonishes theorists and feminists not to consider these daily concerns about family and community as barriers to progress, but as the catalysts that determine political protests of working class people who are fighting to retain and protect traditions and values.

Kay (1991) writes in the *Race, Poverty & the Environment* newsletter that perhaps women aren't easily intimidated by authority. Women may be courageous because they find the health and well being of their families endangered. Finally, Garland (1988) writes a series of case histories about fourteen women whom she chose based on their choice to become activists for "personal, practical reasons" (p.xi). Women in her book speculated on reasons why women participated more in grassroots activism. Some felt it was because women are most involved in "nurturing in the community as well as in the family" (p. xxi). Most women tell of defining moments of empowerment when their sense of themselves as people and as women changed. These women were able to make the connections between their local lives and the world outside. All fourteen of these women believe that "everything is connected" from toxic waste to education, car safety or quality of community life.

This connection is the foundation of ecofeminism, a growing theoretical and political movement, which holds that everything is connected, and that women have traditionally been constructive through nurturing while men have had more conquest oriented, dominating roles. Ecofeminism would suggest nothing less than those feminists, both women and men, need to commit themselves to nurturance through direct action on life-threatening issues as well as taking a reconstructive function in society. (Garland, 1988, p. xxiii). In this context, Lahar (1991) includes whom makes up the ecofeminist movement as “homemakers organizing to eliminate toxic chemicals from their homes and neighborhoods whether or not they identify themselves as such” (p. 28-29).

The debate continues as theories are tested and formulated about why women are prominent in grassroots activism. No one set of constructs seems to apply universally. It is evident that these women went through educative processes which allowed them to identify problems and make connections to a broader world. They learned organizing and public speaking skills, and practiced recruitment and grant writing. They learned to be painstakingly persistent and to recognize that the process of change can be excruciatingly slow (Garland, 1988). What women in all these studies seem to know is that all it takes for change to happen is for one person to bring others together and then work to make things happen themselves, rather than relying on governments and authorities to do the job for them.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Several adult education scholars have recently attended to the study of popular social movements and their educative dimensions. Dykstra and Law (1994) discuss several studies concerning the educational dimensions of popular social movements in recent years (Finger, 1989; Welton, 1993; Holford, 1995). While the educative dimensions of popular social movements are now being discussed, historical research focusing on the educational processes, leadership, and organization of grassroots organizations which often are born and then die fairly quickly is lacking. One organization which has not been studied in terms of its place in the history of the environmental movement, nor has its role as an agent of adult education helping to create social change is the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes. Such a study would demonstrate how an action organization is able to provide leadership through its educational dimensions. No study investigates how this organization has assisted communities in their struggle for environmental justice relative to their educational strategies, programs, processes, and leadership which have helped to empower people to make changes in their communities. How this work helped shape people who participated and influenced them to take action in their communities is vital to an understanding of the role of adult education in this movement.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Beginning with events at Love Canal and progressing to the CCHW, this study will identify and describe the educational dimensions, processes, and critical events which the organization has undergone from its inception in 1981 to the present. The changing focus from toxics to environmental justice will be traced and analyzed in terms of philosophy, educational processes, and leadership. The educational interventions made, what organization leaders included in terms of educational opportunities and reasons for their success and /or failure over the course of CCHW's history would provide important insights into how this group defines itself both to its constituents and to a broader society. Understanding the approach to environmental justice at the grassroots level by this organization is valuable to gain insight into how well the organization has been able to adapt and assist communities in their struggles. The work and theory of CCHW and how it is related to current work in adult education focusing on social movements as educative

forces will be examined. The study will identify the historical context, formation, philosophy, educational programs and activities, leadership, and the contributions CCHW has made to their stated goal of achieving environmental justice for communities in America.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

To guide the collection of data, the following research questions are posed:

1. What role did Lois Gibbs have in defining the toxics movement?
2. What were the circumstances leading to the formation of the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW)?
3. What was the evolution of CCHW from the time of the first national conference and strategic planning meetings in 1986?
4. What are the basic educational processes intrinsic in this movement?
5. How did the CCHW expand its program of work in communities?
6. What roles have women played in the organization and the toxic waste movement?

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study provided knowledge about the adult educative dimensions of the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes. The educational dimensions and processes used by a national organization to promote change at the community level was a primary focus of the study. The knowledge created about toxic wastes, and how the group organized and used communities as sites of learning to disseminate knowledge in order for citizens to gain power is essential as it begins to link adult education practice to adult education theory. It is important to understand the educational processes which CCHW utilized to define itself both internally and externally in order to interpret the various dimensions of the movement within an educational context. The field of adult education will benefit as expanded knowledge of the context in which learning occurs will be discovered.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The study of a particular social movement offers a place where the creation of knowledge, the programs and the processes which occur during the life of a movement can be investigated. In this investigation, social movements are defined as follows: a movement rises from pressure between traditional values and political and/or economic cultures. The pressure generates a protest with goals of bringing about an identity transformation, and altering the political situation in society. Politics and education are intertwined. The processes which emerge are immersed in education, both formal and informal. Education, in a basic sense, means learning and understanding the politics which affect societal views, as in this study, where communities learn how to protest the location of toxic waste dumps, first by gaining an understanding of government. Learning is defined in this investigation in the liberal tradition; primarily that which occurs in the course of everyday living. Recognition is given that much education occurs in nonformal arenas, such as those provided in organized educational activities which are inherent in a social movement. Education is also about processes by which people are brought together in a community for the purpose of enlightenment which leads to empowerment.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the contributions which CCHW has made to the body of knowledge in adult education, there must be insight into the work which has been previously accomplished in the field. A conceptual framework to the study, built on theory about social movements and the relation between adult education and social movements was explored.

### Theoretical Background

A conceptual framework derived from theory and positions of adult educators, other disciplines, and from analyses of instances in which learning occurred in other social movements is important as the foundation of this study. Adult education scholars such as Dykstra and Law (1992), Holford (1995), Finger (1989), and Welton (1993) has brought a revival of interest to the study of social movements as important sites of learning. Historians and social theorists such as Evans and Boyte (1986), Eyerman and Jamison (1991), and Goldberg (1991) have made contributions recounting the importance of community and positive social change. Studies of past movements such as the Southern Farmers' Alliance have shed light on specific groups of people and how they gained knowledge and used it to empower themselves to make their lives and communities better. These contributions provide the framework from which the present study derives its orientations.

To understand the theory and background of social movements and their educative dimensions, six authors and their work will be examined. The literature of adult education is replete with examples of educational activities which have attempted to assist adults with obtaining the civic knowledge and skills they need to develop into productive citizens in a democracy. Boggs (1991) suggests that "no other issue has produced as many intellectual contortions as the questions of the appropriate relationship between adult education and social change" (p. 36). The debate centers around how adult education is conceptualized. Dykstra and Law (1994) assert that many adult educators tend to restrict education into a form recognized as "educational in intent" (p. 21). The sometimes subtle implication is that adult education lies more in the vein of formal schooling. A second predominant thread of thinking lies in the radical democratic tradition of scholars such as Lindeman and Friere, in which the concept of education is framed as events which occur daily: ordinary occurrences can be powerful educational tools. People live and work in a world where basically any activity can be seen as educative in nature. All of these formative influences serve as the process through which a culture transmits itself. This conceptualization of education also recognizes that there are individuals and groups within societies who attempt to influence people's views and interpretations of the world in which they live and work. These groups may also facilitate development of skills which assist people in coping with or forging change within the society (Dykstra and Law, 1994). By becoming active participants in their communities, citizens are able to make changes in their lives and the lives of others.

One of adult education's earliest theorists, Eduard Lindeman (1926), wrote in the early decades of the twentieth century of the importance of social movements in maintaining democracy. He contended that adult education is a reliable vehicle for persons taking social action since participants in a movement must be educated. Lindeman believed that adult education and democracy were intertwined. He felt education was a process which was lived out every day in daily activities of citizens (Brookfield, 1987). Lindeman's ideas were not accepted in the mainstream of adult education in the 1920's and 1930's. People were more interested in 'experts' managing governmental affairs at the time. Ideas such as Lindeman's languished and were seen as

radical. Recently, adult education scholars have renewed interest in the relation of adult education to social movements.

A contemporary scholar, Mathias Finger (1989), attempted to show how adult education was linked to what he termed a 'crisis in modernity' (p.15). Arguing that the field of adult education must respond to a cultural transformation which places emphasis on how people define themselves in relationship to society, he urges scholars to respond to this transformation so that adult education can take a larger role in education. He distinguished between old and new social movements. Old social movements, according to Finger, had the goal of defining the individual in relation to societal development. Problems of society were due to the inequality of power among people.

In new movements, he argues that a person "defines his or her relationship to modern society" (p.15). New movements have emerged which have attempted to transform our scientific, highly industrialized society. Finger contends that new movements question modernity, "both as reality and as an ideal" (p.16). New movements include the green, peace movement, religious, and spiritual movements. In these movements, education is a key to their success; however, the approach and conception are unique to each movement.

In old movements, such as the worker's education and farmer's movements, education was generally structured and programmed, and the individual was a vehicle for transmission of ideas into the broader society. Finger asserts that new movements place a more profound meaning on adult education. Adult education is defined in terms of personal transformation. Individuals who have gone through this process will ultimately impact on "social, political and cultural life" (p.18). Transformation occurs primarily out of a concern and commitment to seeking changes in local culture. The individual is the "only unit of social and cultural transformation" (p.18).

A second theorist, Welton (1993), grants credit to Finger for situating new social movements within the context of a "crisis of modernity" (p.152). He identifies peace, feminist, ecological, and local and personal autonomy movements as exemplars of new social movement's vision or practice. Welton states that there is a general consensus among new social movement theorists that actors desire an autonomous civil society. Economic restructuring will follow. But Welton contends that Finger polarizes new and old movements too drastically in terms of their political outcomes. According to Welton (1993), new social movement actors choose and radicalize rather than reject all modern values. Actors criticize the political system in part, based on their interests, rather than condemning the entire institution. He argues that new social movement actors want personal autonomy, but believe that it can be achieved through collective action so that public life is truly democratic. The political and educational dimensions of the movements cannot be separated in Welton's view.

As example, Welton cites the ecological movement as one in which actors mark the capitalist system or industrial system as the antagonist. Actors are attempting to unlearn anthropocentric values about nature and move toward a more ecocentric value system with beliefs such as those espoused by Bookchin (1990) and Fox (1989). Activists, locally and nationally, are attempting to educate and empower citizens to take action to improve environmental conditions such as toxic waste landfills and chemically polluted groundwater such as those reported on by Browermaster (1993) and Carson (1962). People who live in areas which have been subjected to these kinds of pollution are being encouraged to stand up and take action to improve their lives and communities. Educational activities take the form of songs, speeches, art, and other forms of defiance. Welton (1993) calls this "weaving together of diverse learning movements toward the creation of a new sensibility" (p.159).

Through these actions, people protest their exclusion from making decisions which affect their lives, culture and community. Welton believes that new social movement practice proposes social justice in terms of a particular set of circumstances which effect the disenfranchised in society. These grassroots citizens' movements are able to frame the debate and establish goals. The link is then made to the legislative level. In North America, citizens' groups have not traditionally been strong, so the challenges are fierce and, according to Welton (1993), will require the "greatest mobilization of imagination and learning potential yet known in human history" (p. 163).

A third viewpoint, provided by Holford (1995), acknowledges that a "modest debate" concerning social movements and adult education's role has emerged with Finger (1989) and Welton (1993); however, he notes that social movements have a secondary role in adult education literature. Holford argues for a higher plane of thinking about social movements. He agrees that social movements are important sites for learning as Welton argues. He moves beyond that, however, in framing the dialogue in terms of the "sociology of knowledge" (p.95) which he contends will provide the "basis for a radically new understanding of the relationship between adult education and the generation of knowledge" (p.95).

Holford's premise is that study of social movements in North America has been constructed within a narrow paradigm which focuses primarily on resource mobilization theory. This theory suggests that there is inherent conflict between social groups who have varied interests in a modern society. Adult education processes within the movement-organization were largely ignored with some exceptions about program development and the impact of various approaches in most of these studies. Drawing from the work of Melucci (1985) which suggests that an "actors in conflicts" (p.110) approach is inherent within a resource mobilization context, Holford contends that one cannot assume the "actors in conflicts" idea as they are supposed under the resource mobilization theory. Holford argues that reasons why an organization forms and operates as well as the language the movement uses to identify and explain itself cannot be assumed at all.

Adult education scholars' Dykstra and Law (1994) suggest that by participating in a movement, people gain an increased understanding of its primary concerns. They acquire skills such as organizing, public speaking and writing. Adult education is an inherent part of these movements. Education occurs within the context of the political struggle to achieve democracy. This is popular education according to Hamilton and Cunningham (1989). Aligned with the word populist-for and by the people, the goal of popular education is to create a more democratic state by transforming social reality. This is achieved through the generation and analysis of various knowledges which confront the dominant institutions in a culture. Education is with the people, and through its processes helps build power.

Social theorists Eyerman and Jamison (1991) contend that social movements are not merely challengers to established power, but also an important source of learning and knowledge. When movements are formed, the processes are cognitive. It is through new knowledge production that social movements define themselves, through processes Eyerman and Jamison (1991) call "cognitive praxis." Holford suggests this construct holds possibility for adult education in terms that social movements are "central to the production of human knowledge itself" (p.101). By conceptualizing social movements in this manner, the processes by which knowledge is generated can be analyzed. Holford suggests that a cognitive praxis approach can assist adult education in several ways. The first is recognition of social movements as sources of knowledge and as learning sites. Secondly, how an organization communicates can provide valuable information in learning about the educational processes of a movement.

Eyerman and Jamison (1991) state that all social movements have a specific organization which means that within a particular context, knowledge is produced and disseminated. A movement identity is formed, both within the organization and to a broader outside world. The organization provides the structure of the movement. There are also knowledge interests, or dimensions of a movement. There are three such dimensions. They are the cosmological, the technological and the organizational (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). The cosmology of a social movement is its world view and is articulated through its programs and documents. The technological dimension concerns the kinds of technology which the movement promotes as well as the criticisms against established technological development. The third dimension, the organizational, is process oriented, meaning how the organization forms and how a cognitive praxis unfolds.

Another important concept, which Eyerman and Jamison (1991) model on Gramsci's organic intellectual, is that of the movement intellectual. Movement intellectuals are people who define the movement, who give it identity and determine what the interests of the movement are. These persons are not intellectuals in the traditional sense, although they can be. They are people who can mobilize, access communication avenues, and help define what the movement is about. The movement intellectual also identifies and defines the antagonist against which the movement organization struggles. More research is needed on movement intellectuals and their roles. By studying movement intellectuals the focus can be upon the role of adult education as an agent of change.

Finally, Evans and Boyte (1986) did some of the earliest work on the development of the idea of gender and race as they relate to social movements. They investigated associations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Southern Farmers' Alliance, civil rights, feminist, and worker's movements, all of which mobilized resources, gained an awareness of their status in society, secured a vision and took action to make their lives and communities a source of democracy. They called this 'movement education', and noted that there were educational and political sides to the movement. Evans and Boyte (1986) argue that there are special kinds of public places in communities which they call "free spaces" whereby people have the ability to learn "self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills, and values of cooperation and civic virtue" (p. 17). Free spaces are characterized as "roots within a community, the dense, rich networks of daily life, by their autonomy; and by their public or quasi public character as participatory environments" (p. 20). These are usually voluntary associations through which people develop a sense of community, and through which the values learned in life come alive and have a deeper, more meaningful substance.

Even though there is wide variation, free spaces tend to have commonalities which Evans and Boyte report are observable in social movements with a wide array of differences in "time, aims, composition and social environment" (p.20). Democracy is contingent upon these free spaces as they are venues through which people gain valuable civic education during their struggles for change.

## **Summary**

Only recently have adult education scholars looked to the educative dimensions of popular social movements, and to social movements as sites of learning and knowledge production. Much debate is centered on how adult education is conceptualized. To some scholars, education is traditional and formal in nature; to others, education is based on every day, ordinary activities and

events. Regardless, educational processes are inherent in any social movement, as participants gain new, and refine old skills to further their positions.

Social movements have been categorized as old and new. Old movements relied on more formal educational strategies whereby people would transmit the message to a broader society. New movements, such as the peace, feminist, and environmental movements connect the political and educational dimensions of the movement. Education occurs through participating in the movement and through garnering an understanding of the political context from which the movement emerged.

Movement identities are formed as a result of the organization of the movement. Knowledge is produced and disseminated to society based on the internal belief system of the participants. This occurs through various educational processes and through those individuals, referred to by Eyerman and Jamison (1991) as movement intellectuals, who define and give identity to the movement. Movement intellectuals serve as leaders, interpreters of information, and articulators of the group's identity to both movement participants and the larger outside world. These processes go on in communities, in places called free space (Evans and Boyte, 1986). Free space is often the only space where disenfranchised citizens are able to develop their ideas and act upon them. Free spaces are usually voluntary associations such as churches, where people can participate while they develop a deeper sense of community life.

## **Historical Background**

If one studies the written histories of adult education, it is discovered that until the 1980's and 1990's adult education scholars have not studied social movements in terms of their educative dimensions. Knowles (1977) primarily writes of the institutions, individuals and associations which deal with the education of adults, rather than with the struggles of various groups within the context of a broader social movement. Recent historians of adult education have investigated the context of adult education as it relates to social, economic, and political movements in the United States. Stubblefield (1988) and Stubblefield and Keane (1994) write of the push for economic justice in the 1950's and 1960's by women, Native Americans, blacks and Mexican Americans. They state that their movements contained essential educational components by which participants became aware of their situation and seized upon their sense of power to alter their status. Although their activities may be considered civic education, Stubblefield claims that activities in these groups did not fit the established pattern of civic education whereby challenges were made to the system rather than being accepted.

Over past decades, scholars and historians have conducted several studies which substantiate the link between social movements and education (Goodwyn, 1978; Mitchell, 1987; Evans and Boyte, 1986; Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). These movements are born in answer to changes which occur and which threaten to erode or destroy a particular way of life. Evans and Boyte (1986) relate the courage and spirit which ordinary men and women have found to seek and pursue radical change. They cite as evidence the Southern Farmers' Alliance, women suffragettes, civil rights activists, and the neighborhood and citizen movements of the 1970's and 1980's.

Highlander Folk School has been the focus of much historical research. There is a substantial amount of literature dedicated to detailing the educational outreach of the center, based in Tennessee, which provided a broad range of assistance to communities which sought solutions. Educators were peers with community leaders. The "answers came from the people" as Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Folk School, said (M. Horton, 1990, p.23). Educators were

resources. The philosophy of Highlander was that education for change must have a clear vision--one with an acute political understanding of that vision (A. Horton, 1989). Heaney (1992) suggests that the lesson best learned from Highlander was that adult education is critical to a movement's success, but it works in conjunction with a "dynamic political apparatus" (p.57) consisting of people who share a common vision of what possibilities exist. Education was with people, not for them. The Highlander Folk School was successful in assisting the poor and disenfranchised, primarily in the South, in achieving a better understanding of their circumstances. With this deepened understanding came the ability for people to take action and make an impact on their communities and lives.

Studies of the populist movement have shown how education constitutes one stage of democratic social movements. Based on his study of the populist movement, Goodwyn (1978) developed a theory of democratic movement building which has four stages. The first is movement forming where an independent organization is developed where new interpretations are formed counter to those which prevail in the society. Second is movement recruiting whereby members are encouraged to participate. Movement educating is the third stage which relies on a new form of social analysis which has been unsanctioned. Finally, movement politicized occurs when the ideas of the group can be institutionalized and expressed in an "autonomous political way" (Goodwyn, 1978, p.xviii). Goodwyn surmises, then, that the assumption that democracy moves forward readily is problematic since democratic views are often thought of as insurgent views by the elite, and therefore become insurgent ideas. Secondly, Goodwyn disputes the idea that protests burgeon when times are lean. Industrialized societies are centralized and the established rules are "intimidating to their populations as a whole" (p. xii). Protests are condoned in a 'narrow' culture occasionally because it shows the society to be democratic.

Mitchell (1987), an educational historian who followed Cremin's approach to education, which was based on the precept that education was a function of many institutions and not just school, analyzed the work of the Southern Farmers' Alliance from 1887-1900 as an educational process. He looked at the various educational processes and actors which were a part of the movement. Mitchell's research demonstrated the various constructions which education took in helping the Alliance achieve its goal of changing the nature of agriculture as an enterprise. For the Southern Farmers' Alliance, "education meant understanding what had happened in the political economy to change the nature of agriculture as an enterprise" (Mitchell, 1987; p.10). A second meaning of education was participation. Participation would create a culture of cooperation and improvement. Class conflict was at the center of the debate and framed the dialog. The Alliance desired to unite farmers around their commonality. This was achieved by visionary leaders such as Charles McCune. He utilized the newspapers, *The Economist* and *Southern Mercury* to convey messages to various suballiances. Emphasis was placed on political and economic affairs. Mainstream press often carried opposition views, so the Alliance-backed papers were important in sending the messages leaders felt important to maintaining their vision. Rallies were held to forge links between farmers' and their communities. These rallies often took the format of a religious service. Lecturers, or the person in charge of "the educational work" (Mitchell, 1987; p.95), often led discussions. Debate was encouraged to ensure participation and the generation of ideas. Singing and pageants became important avenues of education.

## Summary

The analysis of the theoretical and historical research on social movements and education reveal that education is a vital part of social movements. Social movements are tapestries which are woven together with threads of political and educational action. People come together realizing the possibilities of what can be, and combine their collective energies to make what was imaginable

reality. Through the processes of education, people who are oppressed learn to resist the hegemonic forces within their culture. Social movements are sites of learning which contain psychological processes by which people who are actively involved can be educated and changed. Movements are important sites for knowledge creation and generation. Definition of a movement is often made by a movement intellectual whose role is to educate participants through leadership, interpretation of information and articulation of the group's identity to both movement participants and the larger outside world.

It is essential that adult educators continue to develop constructs and theories which link adult education theory and practice. By studying a movement, its educative dimensions, and the various factors which are critical to an understanding of the interconnected issues which surround it, adult educators can begin to strengthen that link. These linkages can help to show the connection which can bring about change and bind adult education to a broader society. It is the intent of this study to continue this dialogue.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research Design**

This study utilized the historical research method. The method allows one to systemically read the information produced by and about a movement from both a historical and sociological perspective with emphasis on the educational dimensions associated with that movement, therefore providing a means to reconstruct the past systematically and objectively. This method is appropriate since the study will trace the origins and development of a particular movement and the educational processes associated with that movement over time. The CCHW will be studied within the historical context of the broader environmental movement. Critical events in the CCHW's fourteen year history will be documented and analyzed with a focus on the educational processes and leadership of the organization.

### **Sources**

Important primary sources of information for this study are archival materials developed by the Clearinghouse and the Love Canal Homeowner's Association. These included, but were not limited to, written material--newspaper clippings, more than sixty training booklets and pamphlets, videotapes, Gibbs' autobiographical account of Love Canal, *Everyone's Backyard, Action Bulletin*, correspondence between staff and community leaders, and personal interviews with Lois Gibbs and Cora Tucker.

Data collection was accomplished by wide reading and note taking from extensive archival materials found primarily at the headquarters of CCHW. A survey and examination were made of newspapers, journal articles, government documents, and books in order that a balanced representation be obtained. A time line was constructed to help determine chronology and themes which emerged from the literature. Tape recorded and transcribed personal interviews with Lois Gibbs and Cora Tucker were found to be a useful source of data. After reading and taking careful notes from the various sources available, a content analysis of these materials was made during the collection phase of the research. The study followed the history of the CCHW, from the precursors which were the catalysts for its formation in 1981 to 1995.

## **Organization of the Study**

The study combined thematic and chronological approaches in that each chapter covered a discrete time period. The internal organization was thematic. The dissertation was organized into an introductory chapter, a chapter covering the context of the toxics movement, its evolution from the broader environmental movement and the educational dimensions of the direct action grassroots movement at Love Canal as well as the leadership role of Lois Gibbs. Three chapters explored the circumstances which led to the formation and organization of CCHW, factors which affected the group such as mission, philosophy, and early programs, and educational strategies and activities used and developed for community work. These chapters also explored the emergence of CCHW onto the national political scene, the organizational structure, and the roles which women and minorities played in the organization. A final chapter provided a summary and drew conclusions based on the analysis of the data collected.

## **CHAPTER II THE MAKING OF A MOVEMENT**

As the dangers of industrial society began to be apparent following World War II, public knowledge of, and interest about, hazardous wastes began to grow. Many community groups were beginning to protest against industries creating environmental hazards in their neighborhoods. The media rigorously covered one environmental disaster after another and kept issues at the forefront of public consciousness. Alvin B. Toffler's report on water pollution in *Reader's Digest* in March 1960, and Rusty Conan's *Sports Illustrated* article in November 1961 expressed how sportsmen were noticing the decline of various fish species. In 1962, Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*, galvanized thinking about the dangers inherent in the chemical age, and helped create a new consciousness among citizens to the dangers of pesticides. She also placed the emergence of contemporary environmentalism firmly within the sweeping structural changes which occurred after World War II in the United States. In the early seventies, Barry Commoner and Arne Naess, both professional scientists and popular science writers, brought the problems of waste disposal to the public's attention, and helped provide a cognitive identity to environmental activism (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). In 1971, Commoner claimed that "the period of World War II was a great divide between the scientific revolution that preceded it and the technological revolution that followed it" (p. 129). In *Science and Survival* (1970), he recognized that environmental problems were biological, but also placed them within the socioeconomic world. He believed that solutions were created by citizens who politicized issues and forced government to take action.

Beginning in 1978, Love Canal, New York became synonymous with the toxic waste movement. Until this time, there had been little, if any, concern or knowledge on the local, state, or national levels about toxic wastes. All of that changed when Lois Gibbs, a Love Canal housewife and mother of two, began to associate the illness of her son to the wastes which had been dumped in and near the Love Canal. This chapter focuses on the relationship of business, industry, and government to the environmental movement from the post WWII period as well as the Love Canal experience.

### **TECHNOLOGY AND POLLUTION-RISE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT**

#### **Defining Toxic and Hazardous**

After World War II the production and development of new technologies and industries expanded greatly. A whole new generation of powerful chemical compounds came into being in the fifty years from the 1940's to the present. Vice President Albert Gore noted in 1993 that according to the "United Nations Environment Programme, more than seven million chemicals have now been discovered or created by humankind, and several thousand new ones are added each year" (Gore, p. 148). The production processes of more than 80,000 chemicals used commonly today produce chemical wastes, much of which is hazardous (Gore, 1993; Steffoff, 1994). The National Academy of Sciences reports that "fewer than ten percent of the agricultural chemicals and five percent of the food additives used in the United States have been fully tested" (Stenstrup, 1991, p.10). Stenstrup (1991) sees this as one of the biggest obstacles to linking human health to exposure to hazardous wastes since there is little scientific data available on many of these compounds.

Exactly what is hazardous and toxic is often in dispute. Toxics can be by-products of industrial processes which are released into the environment, or end products such as pesticides (Castillo, 1993). However, there is no uniform definition of toxic or hazardous (Gore, 1993; Castillo, 1993). Technically, there is a difference between the two terms. Castillo (1993, p.11) says that toxic substances “cause detrimental effects in living organisms and make up one category of hazardous substances” while hazardous substances have at least one of four characteristics: “ignitability, corrosivity, chemical reactivity or toxicity.”

## **Environmentalism in the Sixties**

In the 1950's and 1960's , companies routinely dumped mixtures of various chemicals into fifty-five gallon metal drums, and then placed them into landfills. Sometimes byproducts were burned. Most of the dumping occurred in predominantly rural areas. As people began to move into the areas where dumping had occurred, they began to notice air and water quality problems. As air and water quality became poorer, groups began to speak out against these and other unsafe industry practices. From 1959-1961, conservation groups and the League of Women Voters publicized water and air problems.

One of the leaders speaking out against pollution was Barry Commoner, a microbiologist by training. He believed that citizens had a fundamental right to be informed of the dangers to which they were being exposed as a result of the mass production of chemicals and nuclear armaments. Commoner (1966) tried to expose government and industry for their shortsightedness and emphasis on development for short term gain without consideration for the impact on people and the environment. He held meetings in churches and union halls to alert citizens about the dangers of nuclear fallout. He produced evidence that government was not telling the entire story about the dangers of nuclear fallout and testing. A few activists across the country embraced his ideas and pushed for a public debate which helped lead to the nuclear test-ban treaty of 1963 (Wild, 1986).

During the early 1960's the press became actively involved in keeping the public informed of environmental concerns. Articles were published in such popular magazines as *Reader's Digest*, *US News and World Report*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Redbook*, *Saturday Review*, and *Life Magazine*. The media helped politicize the issues by keeping them in the public consciousness.

Terrie (1989) asserts that during the sixties Americans in large numbers realized that “their culture’s treatment of nature had been irresponsible and perhaps catastrophically threatening to human prospects and even life itself” (p. 43). The term environmentalism came into use in the 1960's according to Darnovsky (1992). The word ecology, which first appeared in English in 1873, became a household word (White, 1967). The science of ecology, which was concerned with the interrelationship between organisms and their environment, began to provide the intellectual basis for this new period of environmental concern. Along with the science of ecology, the Antiestablishment and counterculture of the sixties entered the environmental movement (Darnovsky, 1992). The peace, feminist, antinuclear, and student movements provided opportunities and public space for active protest. The peace movement, for example, campaigned against nuclear testing and its byproduct strontium-90, which appeared in cow’s milk and children’s bones. Activists considered this an “important political struggle” (Darnovsky, 1992, p.32) which sought to put their protest in the realm of public health and as an “environmental issue which affected everyone”(p. 34). Ordinary citizens became involved in protesting in 1969 about the offshore oil leaks in Santa Barbara, California, and in Cleveland, Ohio when the Cuyahoga River spontaneously ignited due to extreme pollution. The press covered these and other environmental issues zealously.

By the late sixties, the media had captured an audience with its continuing coverage of environmental issues. Media served as an important educative mechanism for the general public according to Darnovsky (1992). A second force which came into power were the national environmental associations which had first been established during the New Deal. These groups now had a great deal of political power. In 1968, the Sierra Club, headed by David Brower, led campaigns on wilderness issues and urban development. Brower was a progressive environmentalist who served as executive director of the Sierra Club for seventeen years (Newton, 1990). He believed that political activism was a legitimate function of environmental groups. One of the Sierra Club's greatest victories was achieved when an educational and political campaign was initiated against a government plan which would have flooded the Grand Canyon. Full page ads were taken out in newspapers, tens of thousands of letters were generated, bumper stickers printed, and books published. The bill was defeated even though the chair of the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee supported construction (Newton, 1990; Sale, 1993b).

Perhaps one of the most dramatic events to fuel the environmental era was in 1968 when the first lunar orbiters sent back photographs of planet earth (Nash, 1990). The view from space was a powerful reminder that earth was indeed fragile, finite, and unique. People saw that this tiny orb was mankind's only place of existence and recognized that pollution had to be addressed and controlled.

A new wave of public awareness was evident in the sixties. One Gallup poll showed that Americans believed that environmental issues were the third most important following the Vietnam War and jobs. A second poll reported environmental concerns should weigh heavier than economic issues by a margin of two to one. Nash (1990), an environmental historian, claimed that environmentalism in the 1960's was emerging from a novice understanding of ecology and how the technology driven civilization, which if too careless, could destroy the health of the entire ecosystem. Nash (1990) also suggested that there was a new holistic sense of integrity, which he termed civil religion, with the planet. This was important since 'civil religion' stressed that humans needed to be in touch with the natural rhythm and flow of temporal and spatial worlds. Problems were global and could not be solved only on the local, state, or national level.

### **Legislation and Associations in the Sixties**

With pressure from various environmental groups and voters, Congress began to consider some form of legislation to protect the environment. Two leaders on the federal level who were big environmental advocates were Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall. Muskie's contribution was mainly in the area of air quality. He held public hearings around the country in 1964 concerning air pollution regulation. As a result of these hearings, Muskie introduced a bill which set federal standards for auto emissions and authorized enforcement of the standards (Petulla, 1988). President Lyndon Johnson wanted voluntary compliance by industry; public outrage was so great that Johnson reversed his decision (Petulla, 1980). Much public debate ensued, but in 1967 the Air Quality Act was passed. Compliance was more difficult. With suspicion high against the auto companies, the Justice Department conducted an investigation in 1969 as to whether auto manufacturers had "conspired to prevent an air pollution control device program from being established" (Petulla, 1980, p. 420). A consent decree suggested that Chrysler, General Motors, and Ford had tried to do so.

Udall was very instrumental in persuading Congress to establish the National and Scenic Rivers System, the National Seashores System, and the National Wilderness Preservation System

(Newton, 1990). Under Udall's tenure, four national parks, two recreation areas, and six national seashores were added to the system (Newton, 1990).

Justice William O. Douglas who sat on the Supreme Court proved to be important to the environmental movement as well. In 1972 he wrote a dissenting opinion in a case between Walt Disney Enterprises and the Sierra Club. Disney wanted to build a ski resort in the Mineral King Valley of Sequoia National Forest. Disney argued that since the Sierra Club owned no land in the area that it had no standing in the case. Douglas essentially argued that "rocks have rights too" and that the Sierra Club was protecting the rights of the land (Newton, 1990, p. 85). This opinion gained acceptance as a principle of environmental law.

The sixties saw an increased awareness by the general public of the potential danger of increasing pollution brought about by rapidly emerging technology and human carelessness. Environmentalism was born. The media brought information to the public, primarily in print. Political activism was a mainstay of the sixties. Environmental groups formed earlier in the century began to wield power as they helped politicize issues, took them to lawmakers and expected results. A looseknit unity appeared to develop among the various actors within the movement. Legislators such as Edmund Muskie and Stewart Udall as well as Justice William O. Douglas fought for and won environmental laws.

## **The Seventies**

The movement of the sixties had enjoyed a certain unity; however, this unity gave way to major conflicts of values and behavior among certain groups during the seventies. Some groups became politicized and many new groups connected ecology with other issues such as antinuclear, peace, and feminism (Merchant, 1987, 1992; Clausen, 1991; Galtung, 1992; Aitchey, 1992). Other groups promoted decreased population, self-reliance, and decentralized communities (Porritt, 1985; Hill, 1989). Others, such as Earth First! used radical techniques they termed 'ecotage' in efforts to preserve nature (Foreman, 1991). Ecotage was Earth Firsters! method of fighting various industries they believed degraded the earth. Members would chain themselves to trees and spike trees so chainsaws would be broken if they tried to saw the wood.

Federal involvement also continued in the 1970's. President Nixon, realizing that environmental concerns were of interest and knowing that Edmund Muskie was to be his presidential opponent, began touting environmental issues. He signed into law the National Environmental Policy Act on January 1, 1970, which formed the Council on Environmental Quality and required "environmental impact statements for federal expenditures" (Nash, 1990, p.189). These impact statements had the short term effect of stymieing timbering, wetlands abuse, and highway construction. The National Environmental Policy Act also formed the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This agency had the task of overseeing federal land and water use, a new business of federal government. A new role was created which held government responsible to future generations for the quality of the environment, assured everyone safe and healthy, productive and aesthetic surroundings. A range of beneficial uses without degradation of health and safety was to be the hallmark of development (Petulla, 1977).

In 1971, Congress "authorized research and development in superconducting transmission, energy storage, solar energy development, geothermal resources, and coal gasification" (Marcus and Rands, 1992a, p. 82). Other legislative actions included amending the Clean Air Act, passing a Water Quality Control Act, regulating toxic waste disposal through the Resource Recovery Act in 1976, and establishing a National Industrial Pollution Control Council (Sale, 1993b).

Government could enact legislation; however, compliance by states and industry was difficult at best. The amended Clean Air Act had a provision that states were supposed to file implementation plans to reduce air pollution by 1975. By mid 1975 not one state had done so. One reason, according to Petulla (1980), was the 1973 oil crisis, which led industry to use more coal which was more polluting. Industry ignored the regulations which had no enforcement. In April 1977, an industry spokesman speaking on "Meet the Press" declared the "air pollution rules to be unrealistic and uneconomic" (Petulla, 1980, p.184).

Another example was the failure of government to force car manufacturers to adopt strict emission controls (Zipko, 1990). Government was unable and unwilling to take the steps necessary to make the existing regulations stick. People would not alter their behaviors in terms of car use, and industry alliances with government helped to gain moratoriums on pollution standards and eventually won delays for auto emission standards (Sale, 1993b, Zipko, 1990). There were reports of gasoline shortages and high prices. Evidence that public support for environmental causes was waning was demonstrated by conflicting public policy goals nationally and locally, no real enforcement ability to new regulations, heavy lobbying from industry which made Congress relax auto emission standards, and many lawsuits on the part of environmentalists, developers, and landowners.

Earth Day, April 22, 1970, was widely recognized as a mega-event which marked the "origin of contemporary environmentalism" (Darnovsky, 1992, p. 36). The day was conceived by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, "who proposed a kind of nationwide "teach-in" on college campuses, following the model of the antiwar teach-ins earlier in the decade" (Sale, 1993b). Nelson received a \$125,000 grant from the federal government, and hired a staff of three Harvard students who planned the first Earth Day celebration. According to organizers, "1,500 colleges and 10,000 schools took part, many campuses had street demonstrations and parades, and large rallies were held in New York, Washington, and San Francisco"(Sale, 1993b). Darnovsky (1992) suggests that 10-20 million people across the United States took part. More importantly, according to Sale (1993b), this was the first time an opportunity had presented itself for people on the grassroots level to send a message to politicians to do something.

Indeed there was an increase of neighborhood groups and national organizations concerned with environmental issues. Sale (1993b) estimated that numbers grew from a few hundred to over three thousand. At no other time in American history had such a diverse and varied group of people joined in such a broad range of interests and causes, according to Sale (1993b). Local groups began to concentrate on local issues, such as waste dumps or establishing community recycling programs.

Partly because of this diversity of interests and focus, national educational campaigns were not very effective. National associations turned to litigation, injunctions, lobbying, and boycotts. Most of the major mainstream environmental associations became professionalized during the seventies, run by technicians and legal experts (Darnovsky, 1992; Sale, 1993b). Sale (1993a) reported that environmental careers were available, and people often shifted between association, government, and industry. The emphasis was on practical gains rather than on ideologies (Hays, 1987).

## **Summary**

Contemporary environmentalism rose up out of an increased public awareness of the dangers inherent in a technological society. Leaders came from various quarters. Rachael Carson and Barry Commoner were scientists who brought science to the people. Senator Edmund Muskie and Stewart Udall fought legislative battles to protect the environment.

Active protests by several groups and movements helped link environmentalism to daily life. Public spaces were provided for these movements within American society. Political activism was a mainstay of the sixties. Environmental groups politicized issues, took them to lawmakers, and expected results. Conflicting societal goals often prevented regulations which were passed to have any enforcement ability.

## **THE LOVE CANAL EXPERIENCE**

The environmental events of the sixties and early seventies were important as they opened up public space and created public awareness and knowledge of the potential danger of chemicals being manufactured in the post World War II era. It took the hazardous waste disaster at Love Canal, New York in the late seventies and grassroots organizers who were able to force governments to take drastic actions on behalf of citizens to deliver the message that chemicals dumped in areas where people lived were dangerous to people's health.

### **A Brief History of Love Canal**

The town of Love Canal, New York was founded by William T. Love who wanted to connect the upper and lower Niagara River with a six to seven mile Canal in 1892. When Love learned that Nikola Tesla had invented a way for alternating current to cover long distance with only small loss of power his Canal idea was abandoned. There was no longer any need for plants to be next to a generator. The land was sold at public auction in 1920, and became a municipal and chemical disposal site until 1953 (Gibbs and Levine, 1982). What became the Love Canal story actually started in the 1940's when Hooker Chemical Company began dumping wastes into the old canal. Until the 1950's, more than 20,000 tons of chemical wastes had been dumped and the Canal was filled. Garbage was also dumped by the City of Niagara Falls and later there were claims that the army had dumped possible chemical warfare material as well as parts of the Manhattan project (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981, Gibbs and Levine, 1982).

In 1953, Hooker sold the now chemical filled and dirt covered land to the Board of Education for one dollar. In the deed a disclaimer stated that the company had filled the premises with waste products "resulting from the manufacturing of chemicals" and that the company assumed no liability, nor could any person or persons ever make claim against Hooker for any injury or loss caused by the industrial wastes (Love Canal Homeowner's Association, 1984, p.1).

The Board of Education ignored this proviso and opted to construct an elementary school on the site in 1954. According to documents written by the Love Canal Homeowner's Association (LCHA, 1984), the Board decided to move the school eighty-five feet north and scrapped plans for a basement even after finding waste at the original site. The 99th Street School opened its doors to about 400 children in 1955, but the school board did not inform potential homeowners about the filling of the Canal.

## First Complaints

Complaints about smells from the Canal began in the 1950's. These complaints were not made public, so the majority of residents knew nothing about the Canal's contents. A working, middle class community of approximately one thousand homes grew up around the canal. By the late sixties, many of the fifty-five gallon drums buried beneath the surface for twenty years had rusted, and caused holes up through which bubbled black oily substances which were foul smelling and burned the eyes (Levine and Stone, 1985; Stone and Levine, 1985; Shaw and Milbrath, 1981). Not understanding that there could be potential harm in these substances since no one knew of the potential dangers at the time, the city covered them with dirt (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981).

Not until articles in *The New York Times* and *The Niagara Falls Gazette* appeared in 1976 questioning the safety of the Canal did the state Department of Health take action. From 1976-1978 some state agencies had very quietly begun to conduct studies of the area. Water samples were taken by the Department of Conservation. In 1976, Calspan Corporation, a consulting firm hired by the city of Niagara Falls, surveyed the area and found high concentrations of toxic chemical residues in air samples as well as in sump pumps. They recommended that "the canal be covered with clay, sump pumps be sealed off, and a tile drainage system be installed" (LCHA, 1984, p.55). Local government ignored the recommendations and did nothing.

In February 1978, the city hired Conestoga-Rovers Company to initiate a groundwater pollution plan (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981), and by March the New York State Department of Health (DOH) had begun studies of possible health problems of two hundred thirty-nine families who lived in the immediate vicinity of the canal. Michael Brown, wrote articles in the *Niagara Falls Gazette* which pointed out that the school had been built on the dump, and also described the various chemicals which had been dumped there along with some of the reactions to them. Brown also described scientific studies where monkeys exposed to chemicals had miscarriages.

By August 1978, the New York State Department of Health was heavily involved. The New York State Commissioner of Health called a public meeting to inform residents of test results from studies conducted earlier in the year. The meeting was scheduled for August 2 in Albany, some three hundred miles from Love Canal. By holding the meeting so far away, the DOH was able to keep Love Canal citizens from attending. The Commissioner ordered the temporary closing of the 99th Street School in order to initiate engineering plans to stop the movement of toxics, and to do further environmental and health testing. The DOH recommended that pregnant women and children under the age of two leave the vicinity adjacent to the canal (Whalen, 1978; Stone and Levine, 1985; Levine and Stone, 1985). Furthermore, DOH recommended that people not spend any amount of time in their basements nor eat homegrown vegetables.

The few residents who had attended the meeting had expected an announcement that the school would be closed, but not the information given which they believed was an endorsement of health problems experienced by residents. A few days later, New York Governor Cary told residents that the state would purchase the two hundred thirty nine homes in the immediate area of the canal and provide help to find new homes.

## AN ACTIVIST IS BORN

Love Canal has been described as a typical middle class, working community with roots in family life. It was little wonder, then, that the sudden announcement that they lived in a potentially dangerous place created such a strong outpouring of emotion. Although there were several actors in the Love Canal saga, one individual began and spearheaded the efforts to save the community. In *Love Canal My Story* (1982), Lois Gibbs recounts her experiences in the Love Canal crisis. She had moved to Love Canal in 1972, a twenty-six year old married mother of two children. She liked the area because there were lots of trees and the 99th Street School was within walking distance. Nearman (1983) wrote that at the time Lois had little realization that the events of the next two years would place her in a nationally prominent role, generate new knowledge about the dangers of toxic wastes, place toxic waste site cleanup on the national agenda, and change her life in ways which she would never have been able to imagine.

In her account of the Love Canal story, Lois described herself as someone who believed and had faith in the system. If something was wrong, then public officials had been elected or appointed to correct the problem in order to protect citizens (Nearman, 1983; Gibbs and Levine, 1982). This was one of the hardest lessons Lois learned early in the Love Canal struggle.

When she found out that the school was on top of Love Canal, she began some investigation. She turned to her brother-in-law, Dr. Wayne Hadley, a biologist and professor at State University of New York at Buffalo, who had experience working with environmental problems as well as a strong knowledge of chemicals. As Wayne looked at the list of chemicals he concurred that some of them caused central nervous system damage. Lois began to make the first of many connections linking the chemicals in the canal with health problems in her family and later in the community. Her son, Michael, had begun having seizures soon after he started school; he had developed epilepsy and his white blood count was down (Gibbs and Levine, 1982; Nearman, 1983). In 1978, Lois decided to take Michael out of the 99th Street School and send him to another public school. Lois called the superintendent of schools, and she was told that “he couldn’t transfer a child merely because the child’s mother didn’t want him to go to a particular school” (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p.11). This began Lois’ activism. She obtained doctors’ excuses, but the superintendent refused to accept their legitimacy, because they suggested the area was contaminated. If that were true, he would have to close the school.

Lois became motivated out of “anger, frustration, and motherly concern” to take some kind of action (Hess and Wandersman, 1985, p.112). The PTA president was not interested, and her state and federal representatives agreed only to study the problem and get back to her in six months to a year (Hess and Wandersman, 1985). Cora Tucker, whose name she found in some literature from the National Toxics Campaign, advised Lois that she would need to go talk to her neighbors, find out their problems, and get a petition going to get results (personal interview with C. Tucker, January 11, 1996). Cora had been a civil rights and environmental grassroots activist in her community of Halifax, Virginia for many years, and knew Lois would have a struggle.

Deciding that under no circumstances would Michael go back to the 99th Street School nor would she send him to private school, Lois began a petition drive to get signatures to close the 99th Street School. This proved to be the transformative moment as she began to deal with her fears. Afraid of being laughed at and making a fool of herself, Lois, after much reflection, decided she had to continue with the petition or she would consider herself to be a coward, according to an article published by Nearman in *The Washington Post* in 1983. She decided it would be easier to go to friends’ homes first, and she visited more than one hundred homes without a single negative

response. She wrote that “something began to happen to me as I went around talking to these people...something drove me on” (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p.14). As she walked her neighborhood, she discovered that people wanted to show and tell her of their various illnesses and problems. She became more frightened as she recognized that these chemicals were poisoning the whole community, and the issue went well beyond just closing the school. During this time, Lois had talked with her brother-in-law about the resident’s concerns. He and Lois went to see Dr. Beverly Paigen, a biologist, geneticist, and cancer researcher at Roswell Park Memorial Institute in Buffalo. Dr. Paigen agreed that there could be a potential problem and she began conducting some soil tests to gather preliminary data.

A further step in Lois’ commitment to activism occurred one afternoon when she visited the home of Debbie Cerrillo. Lois enlisted Debbie’s help with the petition, wrote down everything for her to say, and encouraged Debbie to take action. In June 1979, the two women formed the Love Canal Parent’s Movement (LCHA, 1984). By the end of July, one hundred sixty one names were on the petition and Lois, along with Wayne, decided to talk to an attorney, Richard Lippes, who was an environmental lawyer as well as a Sierra Club officer to see if he could first assist in getting the school closed, and second to provide help for what Lois believed to be broader problems caused by the Canal. After reviewing their petition and anecdotal health evidence, he took the case pro bono.

## **Government Involvement**

The next step in the movement came in response to the New York State Department of Health. The DOH decided to hold a meeting to inform the residents of test results in Albany rather than in Love Canal. Lois, Debbie, and Kathy Aul, another Parent Movement volunteer, began to gather questions from residents which they wanted asked at the meeting. The women went to Albany believing they were prepared with enough information to get the school closed. Unfortunately, the meeting served to reinforce the negative images of public officials which Lois and Debbie had begun to formulate. When Commissioner of Health Robert Whalen read the order which temporarily closed the school, encouraged residents not to eat home-grown vegetables, and recommended that pregnant women and children under the age of two be evacuated, Lois and Debbie, shocked at this news, began to ask questions. This news came as a complete surprise. The two women talked almost nonstop for nearly fifteen minutes, but received no helpful answers from the Commissioner (Gibbs and Levine, 1982). Dr. David Axelrod, who was to become the next state health commissioner, responded and advised them to get a lot of people involved because “government would only respond to a large number of angry people” (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p.31). Before Lois, Debbie, and Kathy had returned to Love Canal, the closing and evacuation recommendation was broadcast over the radio. When the women returned to Love Canal, there were four hundred angry residents waiting for them to tell their version of the meeting. Lois was asked to speak before the group, something she had never done before. She encouraged people to cooperate with the health department by documenting all illnesses and aberrations in their health, no matter how small.

Because of the press coverage of the previous day’s meeting, Dr. Axelrod came to Love Canal on August 3 to a meeting attended by nearly five hundred people to explain the DOH recommendation. People wanted to know what the readings which had been taken in their homes meant, but the DOH experts did not know because standards had only been established for men who worked forty hours per week in factories. There were no standards for residential areas which were exposed to chemicals. This woefully inadequate, though truthful, report, caused more panic among residents.

This episode became another stimulant in Lois' growth as an activist. Immediately after the meeting, Lois received a call from the press asking for a statement. Buffalo's four television stations and newspapers from all over the US visited Love Canal in the next two days and *The New York Times* ran a story. Lois was deluged with questions so Wayne taught her how to write a press release which enabled her to provide the same information to everyone and not have to speak continuously to the mass of reporters who were converging on Love Canal. As a result of the August third meeting the DOH had become an antagonist at which Lois and the residents of Love Canal could direct attention and energy, and gain media coverage.

People had been taken by surprise by the DOH announcement, and some families feared that loved ones were at serious health risk. Lois feared there would be some sort of violence on the part of the residents. She and Wayne met with their attorney, Richard Lippes, and made the decision to form a homeowners association. On August 4 more than six hundred families came to a meeting called by Lois to advance the movement to the organizational level. At this meeting held at the Frontier Fire Hall the Love Canal Homeowner's Association (LCHA) was organized. Lois was elected president, Tom Husner, vice-president, Karen Schroeder, secretary, and Debbie Cerrillo, treasurer. Richard Lippes was voted the association attorney. A one dollar token membership was taken as well as signatures from those who joined. Five hundred fifty people signed. The group established four goals that evening: (a) get all the residents within Love Canal who wanted to be evacuated, evacuated or relocated, especially during the construction and repair of the Canal, (b) do something about propping up property values, (c) get the Canal fixed properly, and (d) have air sampling and soil and water testing done throughout the whole area so they could tell how far the contamination had spread (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p. 40). The association was offered office space and one man discussed fund raising. Committees were established. Once the general meeting ended, Lois sent a telegram on behalf of LCHA to President Jimmy Carter. The Love Canal problem had become politicized.

In just three short months, Lois had become a changed person. She had exhibited leadership talents which ultimately aided in her election to the presidency of the LCHA (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981). She was catapulted from a self-described shy, ordinary housewife with little education and self confidence to a major public figure in her hometown. She was learning about the importance of a strong citizen's organization in dealing with government. The LCHA stayed surprisingly intact during the entire two year struggle, due in large measure to Lois' talent and ability. The Love Canal Homeowner's Association was formed to allow the citizens of Love Canal a vehicle to voice their concerns and displeasure with government agencies which were perceived as less than honest.

### **Key Role of Activists in the Homeowner's Association**

Social movement literature shows that a movement's message is communicated through its organization. Through various organizational forms, the different impulses and concerns of a movement are brought together (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991). Goldberg (1991) says that leadership, strength, and image are important for a movement's survival. Legitimacy must be conferred on a movement by a broader public. Various community leaders and journalists act as filters to the outside world. Continuous change causes revisions in strategy, definition of roles and movement organization (Goldberg, 1991). The LCHA became the next element in the movement. Through its structure the association was able to call together over 500 members of a community. The media became involved and the Love Canal message was transmitted to a broad national and international audience.

Organizationally, the LCHA Board of Directors had four elected officers and five standing committees. Decisions were made by majority vote at board meetings, and open meetings were held when decisions which affected the residents were needed. Members were asked their opinions at every critical juncture. Most of the citizens attended association meetings, sometimes making attendance nearly six hundred (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981; Gibbs and Levine, 1982).

Leaders of the movement volunteered for the association, receiving no compensation. A core of between eight and twenty people considered homeowner issues a full time job and spent many hours per week on furthering LCHA goals (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981). It is important to note who the rank and file members were, as well as to relay the significance of the nucleus of those eight to twenty members who coordinated association activities. Citizens who participated in some way to show their worry about what was happening, tended to be those citizens who had lived and worked in Love Canal for six to ten years, had young children, moderate incomes, and high school educations. One adult member of the household was typically more active than the other. These people were “rooted in the community” (Stone and Levine, 1985, p.166).

The core group of activists served various important functions within the organization. First of all, they educated themselves about toxic chemicals, laws concerning waste disposal and political processes, and they conducted health surveys (Levine, 1982; Edelstein, 1988). Second, they served as transmitters of this knowledge, not only to their own community, but to a broader society. They kept detailed health records provided by families, attended and testified at public meetings, and wrote countless letters to local, state, and national politicians (Levine, 1982; LCHA, 1984). In short, they did what Dr. Axelrod had suggested—they maintained a presence and put constant pressure on politicians who could make a difference.

No one ever received any financial compensation for time. Money was raised from “dues and donations, speaker fees, raffles, rummage sales and cake bakes” to finance the business of the association (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p.54; Shaw and Milbrath, 1981). The State of New York also financed “office, telephone, and photocopying expenses for LCHA (Stone and Levine, 1985).

For some functions, LCHA drew on the expertise of professionals who donated time to the association. These professionals had no voting privileges, and they were never allowed to dictate activities of the association. The association utilized their experts to interpret data, stay within the law, and develop surveys, but control of the Love Canal movement stayed with its rank and file members.

### **External Opposition and Internal Conflict**

The LCHA encountered opposition from several sources. Three other citizens’ groups at Love Canal opposed the LCHA because they did not believe that the LCHA best represented their interests. The Concerned Area Residents Group and the LaSalle Development Renters Association included renters whose objectives were primarily to gain financial assistance in relocation efforts and health testing. The 93rd Street group, homeowners who lived on the periphery of homes being purchased, were concerned with property devaluation.

Other opposition came from Niagara Falls city government which was concerned about tourism and the chemical industry (Stone and Levine, 1985). The mayor of Niagara Falls accused the association of hurting tourism in his city. He put pressure on LCHA members by saying that other citizens would not like it if Love Canal residents got tax breaks and no one else did. The mayor’s tactic failed because residents felt that he was blaming them for the crisis.

Opposition sometimes occurred within the association. People blamed Lois for lowering property values, and some neighbors told her she should go home and 'behave herself' (Gibbs and Levine, 1982). People from outside of Love Canal had come to help protest, and some tried to dictate what the group did. They pushed for an organizational structure and formal bylaws. Some suggested that Lois was the enemy (Gibbs and Levine, 1982). To lessen the tension, committees were formed. At other times, it appeared that there was envy that some people received more recognition than others. Lois stated that she often took the criticism personally.

During the early spring of 1979, some association members began to call for Lois' and Debbie's resignations. At the May meeting, Lois and the board came prepared. Lois told members she would be happy to resign if they felt her goals were not the same as theirs-to get out of Love Canal and take care of her family. She remained as president. The association weathered external opposition and internal conflict and was able to stay on course.

### **Stress and Active Citizen Participation**

Even though Love Canal is generally categorized as an environmental disaster, the consequences of events fundamentally affected the lives of Love Canal residents. Stone and Levine, (1985) conducted research during the actual time of the crisis, unlike many studies which are conducted after a catastrophe. Stone and Levine's study determined that the residents were in a time of collective stress, defined by Barton (1969) as "a situation where many members fail to receive expected conditions of life from the system" (p.38). Many members of the Love Canal community had realized that their homes were unsafe, and that "the full extent of their health and financial problems was not known" (Stone and Levine, 1985, p. 158).

Some people responded through activism. A comparison of "activist families" and "non-activist families" found that "activist families" felt they had a "stronger feeling of personal efficacy in affecting government decisions" (Stone and Levine, 1985, p. 153). There was a perception that positive personal changes had been made, within themselves as well as in relations with others.

Following Love Canal, Hallman and Wandersman (1992) summarized various sources of stress and coping strategies that accompany living near a hazardous waste landfill. They discovered that people often turn to social or institutional networks to help them cope. Sometimes these are inadequate, and residents who are geographically close to each other form "grassroots organizations which appear to play a key role in attempts to cope with the demands of toxic exposure for individuals, families, and the newly defined community as well" (p.111). One of the major reasons for people to become involved with a grassroots organization was "concern about the health of children and the quality of the community in which to raise children"(Hallman and Wandersman, 1992, p.112). Freudenberg's 1984 survey of 110 community groups involved with environmental health issues suggested that groups formed because citizens were worried about health hazards appear to substantiate these findings. Hallman and Wandersman (1985) also suggested that stress could be generated by a grassroots group as it attempted to cope with the environmental hazard. Grassroots groups often generated publicity, got media attention, and tried to disseminate their information to as wide an audience as possible. As publicity spread, property values fell, and those residents who were unaffected by the environmental threat "resented the efforts of those who actively sought publicity" (p. 106).

Stone and Levine's (1985) study showed that the citizens of Love Canal quickly discovered that governmental agencies were ill equipped to handle the enormity of the situation. Residents learned not to trust conflicting messages, such as reassurance that there was "no evidence of harm to specific individuals" (Stone and Levine, 1985, p.112). Residents who

participated in Levine and Stone's (1985) interviews told of personal changes. Most people felt a loss of control over their lives. Fear for health of family members, particularly children, and fear of inadequacy to handle the problems was high among residents. This is substantiated in the studies of Fowlkes and Miller(1982) and Edelstein (1988). There was also a sense that Love Canal residents now lived with a stigma from a broader outside world.

Various coping strategies became essential, and those residents who coped the best throughout the crisis were those who took part in the LCHA activities (Levine and Stone, 1985). By participating in LCHA activities, these citizens felt they had a greater sense of control. They discovered "the importance of participating in ...government and the community by attending public meetings, by voting, and by taking roles in various organizations"(Stone and Levine, 1985, p.124). Another coping strategy was found to be in the manner in which people were learning and taking charge of their lives. One woman learned to drive, others reported greater self respect because of newly developed abilities. Many learned about toxic chemicals and garnered a basic knowledge of science. Others learned about government and politics. Some found their talents lay in the creation of the homeowner's association (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981; Levine and Stone, 1985; Edelstein, 1988). Not only did participation in the association help them cope, they also learned and exhibited skills in public speaking, office management, and fund raising. Education, then, became a key to reducing the stress of many people during the Love Canal disaster.

### **Gathering Information**

In 1978 the association decided to undertake its major educational activity. A health survey was developed due in large measure to the distrust which residents felt toward the more than thirty governmental agencies involved with Love Canal. Often times communication had been ineffective and/or inaccurate between agencies and citizens (Shaw and Milbrath (1981). Residents never received information relating to the tests which had been conducted in their homes and neighborhood. Often government employees did not feel comfortable talking with residents.

LCHA solicited Dr. Beverly Paigen's expertise. At the time she was studying "genetic variation in the metabolism of chemicals and trying to determine whether such differences might explain differing susceptibilities to environmental toxins" (Paigen 1988, p.30). She helped members of the association design the survey and taught them data collection procedures. She also helped analyze the results which showed a pattern of illnesses following the course of swales and other swampy areas within the neighborhood (Paigen, 1988). After much discussion, Dr. Paigen was invited to present the research results to the health department on November 1, 1978. She showed statistical correlations between health problems and people who lived in swale areas. The health department released a statement to the press that the study was invalid because "it was put together by a bunch of housewives with an interest in the outcome of the study"(Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p.81). However, on February 8, 1979 Dr. Axelrod announced that women in homes in wet areas were more likely to have reproductive problems (Paigen, 1988). In March 1979, Dr. Paigen presented the research to the US House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations at the invitation of Congressman Albert Gore. These findings, along with state health department data which was released on February 8 and which "took cognizance of Dr. Paigen's swale theory" (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981, p. 8), provided the basis for Dr. Axelrod's order for evacuation of pregnant women and children under two (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981). A second health survey conducted as a follow up with one hundred one relocated families found that sixty-seven had family illnesses which were dramatically improved once they moved out of the Love Canal vicinity, thirty-seven had no change, and four were unknown. The association released the results to the press and sent a copy to the health department who failed to acknowledge the study (Gibbs and Levine, 1982).

These surveys showed a relationship of people's health to chemicals in their environment. No one had ever thought that buried chemicals would rupture from their containers and then travel substantially into the surrounding environment. Even as authorities told residents not to eat vegetables from their gardens, go into their basements for any length of time, or to run sump pumps, these same authorities would not acknowledge a connection between the leachate and health. Residents believed their surveys demonstrated the connection clearly. With the assistance of Dr. Paigen, residents had gained knowledge about how to conduct a careful, scientific survey. Through Dr. Paigen's persistence, their results were finally recognized as valid information.

### **Media as a Tool to Disseminate the Information**

The media played an important role in keeping the message of the movement in public view. Events could be transmitted virtually instantaneously into living rooms around the world. Social movement theorists have reported on the importance of media to a movement. Goldberg (1991) stated that "television may confer legitimacy on a movement and enhance its credibility by mirroring discontent" (p.226). Darnovsky (1992) suggests that media was "crucially important in defining environmentalism as a salient category for articulating very different experiences of daily life" (p.30). Morrison (1973) notes that all sides use 'propaganda processes' to gain public support (p.77) which is conveyed to authorities who then must respond. Activists' morale can be raised through coverage as they see their message being conveyed to a broader audience.

Lois realized that the association had to keep the media's attention since "they educated the public about toxic chemical wastes" (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p. 96). The LCHA learned to exploit local and national media to their advantage. Local radio, television, and press began to carry stories frequently. Daily coverage came in May 1980 when results of chromosome studies were made available.

Papers such as *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* as well as major weekly magazines did features on Love Canal. Shaw and Milbrath (1981) suggested that this coverage served an important educative function as it "elevated the consciousness of the people and public officials about the dangers of toxic wastes that are improperly disposed" (p. 20). Local media kept the story at the forefront in the community and state; however national coverage kept pressure on officials and made Love Canal part of the national consciousness. Network news granted extensive coverage, sometimes worldwide (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981). More visibility was gained through television specials such as ABC's *The Killing Ground* and CBS' *60 Minutes* on which Lois was interviewed in 1979. Phil Donahue had Lois on twice, once in 1979 and the second time in the summer of 1980 with the mayor of Niagara Falls and several residents (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981; Gibbs and Levine, 1982).

In keeping the media involved, Lois played a key role. After two years, her ability to exploit the media was extraordinary. She became adept at eliciting "comments on camera from public officials" (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981, p.20). This made it difficult for officials to later deny what they said. LCHA also made sure that all LCHA protest activities received coverage. In midwinter of 1980, members picketed the construction workers who were working on the cleanup at the canal. An eight-foot fence, erected to keep residents out, became a symbol to LCHA that chemicals could leave, but the residents were trapped, being poisoned (Gibbs and Levine, 1982). Even though the association did not achieve its stated goal of stopping construction, the six weeks of picketing served a greater purpose in keeping the public informed of the issues because media carried stories frequently. A second protest was held in Albany, New York in 1978 when a small group of LCHA members took a child's and an adult's coffin to Governor Cary. They held a

press conference in Love Canal that morning and then drove to Albany. The Albany media were not as kind as the local Niagara Falls press. They badgered the group, asking why they did not just move out of the area. The LCHA held a third protest at the Democratic National Convention in New York City. Their theme was the "Love Canal Boat People," modeled after the people coming out of Vietnam at the time. Rubber rafts were blown and painted with the slogan "Carter's Boat People." Pickets were made and the group marched and chanted all day. They received national coverage, in part because they came early in the day and were the first ones to march. Their goal to keep media pressuring politicians at election time was successful.

One of the greatest risks which ended positively was one taken out of desperation. In May 1980, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) had sent two officials to talk with residents about results of chromosome tests which had been conducted by the agency. EPA released the information to the press before they talked with residents, so the citizens were angry and upset when the two men arrived. They called for taking the men hostage. Lois and other members of the homeowner's association, who were with the men, did just that. Lois called the White House and informed the president's chief of staff's secretary that the men were hostages of the Love Canal people. The association received calls from a regional EPA administrator, Congressman LaFalce, and the FBI, who gave seven minutes for the men's release. Reporters carried the story all over the country. The next day, Lois called the EPA press office. With reporters, television lights, cameras, and microphones in front of her, Lois repeated the words of the EPA press release to the crowd. Eight hundred ten families would be temporarily evacuated from Love Canal, and costs would be paid by the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration. The citizens had won!

By the second Donahue show invitation on June 18, 1980, Lois recognized a great press opportunity which could keep pressure on the politicians to keep their word. A small group of LCHA members appeared on the show, each taking one issue and incorporating that issue in any response to a question. Members requested the audience to send letters of support to Washington. The LCHA received thousands of letters and telegrams following the show, and many wrote to the White House.

Lois appeared on ABC's *Good Morning America* on September 19, 1980. This was national coverage close to election, and she believed she could get good publicity. She was able to educate the public about health effects of toxic wastes, and temporary living arrangements of the residents. She accused the EPA and President Carter of "washing their hands of the Love Canal issue" (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p.165). On September 30, the association received a call from the White House informing them that President Carter would be coming to Niagara Falls to sign the authorization bill for permanent relocation.

In summary, the press had served a basic, fundamental role in keeping the message in front of the people. LCHA used the press as a vehicle for producing the movement's meaning. This meaning was conveyed in new ideas and relationships between science, politics, and people. This continual bombardment over the course of two years kept pressure on politicians, and they were forced to respond. The fact that it was a national election year also helped the citizen's cause because environmental issues were kept at the forefront and the American public was very interested in government's response. The movement created a space which demonstrated that citizens within communities could have an impact if their message was focused and they had the people to work and fight the battles needed to win.

## SUMMARY

Love Canal was the most visible toxic waste disaster during the 1970's. Reasons for this prominence can be discovered by exploring the events, people, and circumstances which brought

citizens of Love Canal together. With the politicization of Love Canal, a citizen's grassroots movement sprang up which carved out a new social space. The collective identity of the movement came out of citizens' fears and anger at the way government ignored health problems caused by the toxic waste from the canal, and the way in which authorities dismissed citizen input into the process of discovering these dangers.

Education was a vital functional process within this movement for two reasons. Ordinary people such as Lois Gibbs educated themselves, initially learning about the situation from news articles; neighbors and friends learned from each other as they observed and asked questions. Citizens learned a host of abilities and skills in various arenas such as public speaking, writing, organizing, and understanding scientific data. There never was any formal instruction given to residents to learn basic scientific knowledge about the hazards of toxic chemical wastes. Families altered their values, lifestyles, and priorities. Men and women reflected and reevaluated their lives, and matured through the process. Women found a new independence because of their activism, and several went on to become active in other community groups or moved into the workforce.

Second, education became the means to an end as residents taught others on the state and national levels about the potential hazards of toxic wastes. No one was untouched in this tragedy. Divorce was common, and displacement of nearly a thousand families was traumatic. People who became involved as activists in some way coped better and felt more in control over their destinies than those who did not participate. Citizens, through their participation, brought out various dimensions of the toxic problem. They were "teaching the nation", according to Shaw and Milbrath (1991, p. 191). This movement learned the power of and communicated its message through constant media coverage to a national audience. Events covered by the press "permeated the consciousness of the public and the leaders...made policy on this case" (Shaw and Milbrath, 1981, p.12). The efforts of the LCHA helped demonstrate the credibility and strength of local grassroots organizations which become involved in a struggle to participate in a democratic society.

### **CHAPTER III GROWTH OF A GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT: 1981-1986**

Castillo (1993), writing of the work of CCHW, contends that Love Canal marked a transition from “visible problems...towards an attention to the more insidious and invisible ills of toxics”(p.29). Events at Love Canal had placed toxic wastes in the forefront of American consciousness and the success of the Love Canal movement became the motivation for other citizen activists who were fighting toxic wastes in their neighborhoods. Communities wanted to copy the direct action model which had been so successful at Love Canal. Throughout the crisis at Love Canal from 1978-1980, the LCHA had received over three thousand letters from neighborhoods across the United States and from several foreign countries asking for assistance in getting their own neighborhoods cleaned up (Stone and Levine, 1985). Lois decided to form the Citizen’s Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW), so that people interested in cleaning hazardous wastes from their communities would have a central location in which they could get helpful, accurate information.

#### **FOUNDING OF CCHW AND EARLY STRUGGLES**

The idea for the creation of a national clearinghouse for hazardous wastes in 1981 was the direct result of Lois’ experiences in traveling around the country and from receiving requests from other communities during the Love Canal disaster. As Love Canal events had become more publicized and people in other communities who were experiencing similar hazardous waste problems heard about Love Canal, Lois and other members of LCHA were invited to discuss their direct action strategies. In these meetings, Lois saw the need first hand for an organization where communities could get accurate information and help in their struggles to win battles against toxic waste polluters (Lois Gibbs, personal interview, October 13, 1994). The stresses of Love Canal had taken its toll on Lois’ family as well. Now divorced, Lois chose Washington, D.C. as the headquarters. It was close to federal government, and she would not be as recognized as she was in New York which she believed would be detrimental to her chances of starting an organization (Nearman, 1983). Stephen Lester, the toxicologist who helped at Love Canal, came to Virginia with Lois to get CCHW open for business. With little publicity or money, headquarters was in the basement of Lois’ home for the first two years. They had a telephone, some file cabinets, little money and a vision of a “large movement of people who would work locally on environmental issues to effect change nationally” (personal correspondence, Lois Gibbs, 1995).

Several things happened in February 1981, soon after CCHW was established, which provided an unprecedented opportunity for publicity. CBS aired a docu-drama called *Lois Gibbs and Love Canal* with Marsha Mason playing the role of Lois. Lois saw the show as a good opportunity to communicate that CCHW was in business to begin assisting grassroots groups. She and Stephen began to recruit volunteers to build a staff. Among those who volunteered were Ron Simon, an attorney who became CCHW’s general counsel, Will Collette, a program developer and Iris Rothman, a writer. These five individuals sought to get some exposure for CCHW.

To help promote CCHW and raise revenue for the first year, a fund raising program featuring Ralph Nader and Lois was planned early in 1981 in Washington, D.C. (CCHW, 1986). A turnout of four hundred fifty exceeded expectations, and most of the \$25,000 first year budget was raised. Additional publicity was gained when Lois’ autobiographical book, *Love Canal My Story* was published in 1982. This book, coauthored by Murray Levine, told the story of Love

Canal from Lois' perspective as a victim. Levine noted its importance when he stated "it adds to our knowledge of the relationship between citizens and their government and of the relationship between experts and those whose lives are influenced by their decisions" (Gibbs and Levine, 1982, p.i).

The mission of CCHW, developed by the core group of volunteers, was to help local grassroots organizations to fight local polluters and make government agencies more responsible and responsive to citizens. This mission was based on Lois' Love Canal experience and the deep belief which had developed from those experiences that people had the right to an opinion in areas which affected their lives. Lois' idea was that CCHW would be a clearinghouse which promoted grassroots democracy and which helped communities help themselves (Lois Gibbs, personal interview, October 13, 1994).

The staff formulated CCHW's statement of beliefs which was published in the *Membership Services Handbook*. The statement said that CCHW had "a fundamental belief in grassroots democracy." There is a belief that "people have a right to participate, as equals in decisions affecting their lives and homes. True social progress comes from the grassroots up"(p.1). CCHW also believed in a global approach to solutions; "one community's solution shouldn't be another community's problem, which the grassroots movement expresses as "Not In Anyone's Back Yard"(*Membership Services Handbook*, p.1).

CCHW further defined itself as a service center for the Grassroots Movement For Environmental Justice which helped people help themselves and fight their own fights. Further, CCHW assisted people in forming groups, and created occasions for groups to come together and discuss common concerns.

Many early observers believed that CCHW could not survive and build a national movement from the grassroots (Gibbs and Collette, 1987). However, citizens began to prove them wrong. CCHW received hundreds of calls from across the country for assistance in the first few months of 1981. Community visits took up most of the staff's time and was considered to be of primary importance (Edelstein, 1988). Because it was impossible to visit all communities, guidelines were established to help the staff set priorities.

Membership categories were established and sent out as recruitment flyers. Individual memberships were \$15; lifetime memberships were \$500; corporate/institution or individual patrons fees were \$100; and citizen's groups and sponsoring individuals paid \$25 per year. Citizen's groups who joined CCHW were considered in good standing and given first priority for visits. Second, CCHW preferred to go into areas where grassroots groups were already well organized and where the group had a sponsor before the site visit was arranged. This was done because CCHW believed that a group in the early stages of development would be too likely to be dependent on CCHW rather than rely on its own strengths. Preference was also given to those groups which were rural, low-income, and of color.

CCHW brought together local groups from the same region of the country so that they could pool their resources and energies. This strategy, along with their belief that "organized grassroots citizen action is the most effective way to get action taken to address local environmental problems" (Langton, 1984, p.63) made the difference, made CCHW unique in the environmental movement. Most of the mainstream organizations relied on top down communication with members and litigation from a national perspective to gain victory. With CCHW, communication was from the grassroots up to CCHW, and the decision to take legal action was made at the local level. CCHW served as an agency which pulled together information and people.

## EARLY FOCUS-CARRYING OUT THE MISSION ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

### Strategies

During the early months, CCHW clarified three strategies which helped it meet its mission. The first of these strategies was to establish networks of citizens who could assist each other. Lois and her small staff traveled around the country to more than forty communities during the first few months to help grassroots citizen's groups form or to provide encouragement and inspiration for already organized groups to move forward. (CCHW, 1986; Castillo, 1993). One of the biggest problems encountered by CCHW during these visits was that local citizens considered CCHW members outside experts who would give them the answers to their problems. Staff members were true to their mission of not telling communities how to solve their problems, but allowing citizens to come up with their own answers (Lois Gibbs, personal interview, October 13, 1994). Citizens began to discover, partially through the visits and efforts of CCHW, that their communities were experiencing similar problems as had happened at Love Canal, and with perseverance and determination they, too, could prevail against the hazardous waste polluters.

As local grassroots groups began to form around the country, many of them began to contact CCHW for assistance. *Everyone's Backyard* (1983) had articles about toxic issues in south Jersey which moved Esther Slusarski, Susan Andrews, Bea Cerkez, and Susan Hughes to organize. These groups learned organizing tactics from CCHW and shared their experiences with others. Citizens of Ottawa, Illinois set up a speaker-equipped outhouse at the state capitol where it "talked" to passersby via a person who held a wireless microphone. One of the first statewide coalitions was formed by Pennsylvanians Steve and Stacey Marsh, John Hiney, Nancy Troy, Hugh Coombs, and Phil Kaufman. In Maryland, Vern and Sylvia Thomas and Mary Rosso formed groups to fight toxic issues around the Baltimore area. In Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan, organizers took on companies such as Dow Chemical, and in Times Beach, Missouri residents fought and won relocation, more than once, from dioxin contaminated communities (CCHW, 1986). Between 1981 and 1983, no one was sure whether these new coalitions would have staying power and influence according to Lois.

In 1982, CCHW became involved in one protest which helped propel the toxics issue onto the national agenda as well as shift the focus of the movement. This protest, marking the first time African Americans had protested against toxic wastes, occurred in Warren County, North Carolina. Warren County was primarily rural, African-American, and low income. Highly toxic PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) were being dumped by Ward Transfer Company along the roadways (Bullard, 1990). The protest actually began as a local movement among citizens in 1978 when, under cover of night, dumpers illegally sprayed 210 miles of North Carolina roadsides with electrical transformer oil (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1983). The problem occurred when the decision to dig up and deposit the contaminated soil in Warren County was made by Governor James Hunt. Warren County Citizens Concerned about PCB's was formed the day after the announcement. After all legal means of protest had been exhausted, citizens began to march on the site to prevent trucks from entering the landfill. Over 500 protestors were arrested over several days.

The citizen's group gained national attention as church officials began to speak out. Dr. Charles E. Cobb, director of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, encouraged citizens to organize and fight against the dumping. This was the first time churches became involved as major actors in the toxic waste movement. United Church of Christ ministers Ben Chavis and Leon White helped raise consciousness across the country by informing citizens

that just because people were poor, business and governments had no right to put them at risk. Also joining the coalition was The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and District of Columbia Delegate Walter Fauntroy of the Congressional Black Caucus who also spoke against the injustice around the country (Bullard, 1990). Because of these activities and publicity, several national denominations declared that the national policy about hazardous waste was immoral (CCHW, 5th anniversary, 1986). CCHW's role was to help keep media attention focused on Warren County at the national level. It was also the first time CCHW had formed a strong national alliance with other groups. The alliance gained more attention nationally when EPA acknowledged it as the first in the country to use mass civil disobedience to halt a hazardous waste landfill (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1983). *Everyone's Backyard* noted that the community had unified and crossed race and economic barriers to protect their families. "They have set an example of informed action and creative nonviolence for other communities" (1982, p. 2).

An important outcome of the Warren County protest came when the governor signed an executive order which banned all new hazardous waste landfill construction in North Carolina. Another outcome of the protest occurred when Delegate Fauntroy initiated a General Accounting Office study of hazardous dumping in the area. This study found that there was "a strong relationship between the siting of offsite hazardous-waste landfills and race and socioeconomic status" (Bullard, 1990, p. 32). This fight was important because it raised questions about the relationship between race, poverty, and environmentalism. In the Warren County effort, the toxic waste issue was transformed into a moral, social justice issue.

Keeping communities in touch with one another and keeping waste issues in front of the American public was not an easy task. Credibility for grassroots groups was difficult to attain. Masterson-Allen and Brown (1990) characterized the toxic movement as unique because "most of its members...have neither professional orientation nor ...high level of education" (p.491). Because of these factors, many of the established environmental groups as well as government officials and experts failed to see the importance and strength of organization of what they considered single issue groups or NIMBY'S (Not In My Backyard) (CCHW, 1986).

Progress occurred, but was incremental, one community at a time, primarily because there was so many obstacles along the way. Companies, such as Dow Chemical, Waste Management, Inc, and Browning-Ferris Industries fought communities, insisting there was no danger to people living near these hazardous waste dumps (Castillo, 1993). Various factions within communities had competing interests. Property values were always an issue, and those who did not live near the dumpsite or who favored economic development opposed those who fought the companies who were dumping. Politicians were hesitant to enact laws against waste dumping.

Grassroots activists learned quickly that it was necessary to gain knowledge about the power structure within a community (Castillo, 1993). Each community was unique. Each community affected brought forth new knowledge about chemicals and their health effects, since many chemicals which were being dumped had not been studied before. Out of every struggle new leaders were emerging and hard lessons being learned. Sociologists Masterson-Allen and Brown (1990), referencing the toxic waste movement, stated that people involved in toxic waste struggles learned that their faith in the democratic system was unfounded because government and corporations subverted the basic principles of democracy by their actions. Alford (1975) wrote that working class interests were repressed in society unless these individuals mobilized and applied political pressure.

Citizens in the toxic waste movement learned they had to actively participate in the democratic process to achieve change. Citizens also discovered they could force politicians to

listen through sustained active protest, and public policy began to change in these communities as issues were politicized (Castillo, 1993).

### **Focus on Outreach-Publications**

A second strategy which CCHW implemented was that of becoming the central clearinghouse for reliable information which citizens could understand. CCHW believed that a publication program was essential to convey information to the large number of citizens who were seeking assistance, to share tactics and experiences, and to record a history of the movement. No matter how disconnected the movement appeared, CCHW was the location for knowledge. The Clearinghouse amassed quantities of scientific information on over 350 chemical substances from the scientific literature including journals and books as well as publications from industry. Documents collected “covered all areas of hazardous waste prevention through cleanup (Castillo, 1993, p. 114). Stephen Lester translated scientific language into terms understandable to average citizens through articles such as ‘Baffled by the Terms’ in *Everyone’s Backyard* and in *Citizens Guidebooks* such as *Environmental Testing* (1985). Dr. David Ozonoff, chair of Public Health and Professor of Public Health at Boston University School of Public Health, wrote in 1993 that CCHW and its members had made “immense scientific contributions toward our understanding of health effects of hazardous wastes”(p.34).

Love Canal had demonstrated that ordinary people could learn scientific principals and apply them. CCHW also recognized that the scientific community needed to learn that knowledge generated by citizens through health surveys could be credible and of great value in pushing knowledge forward in the area of hazardous wastes.

In 1982, CCHW launched its eight page quarterly newsletter, *Everyone’s Backyard*. This publication, published quarterly, provided columns on legal issues, explanations of scientific terms, and organizing strategies for members. In the first two issues, a column called ‘Organizing Toolbox’ provided information about how to talk to people to get them interested in your issue and how to conduct various kinds of meetings. Much of the space was allocated to citizen’s groups which sent in articles about their organizing efforts, their tactics, and what they learned throughout their struggle. CCHW staff also wrote articles about their participation in various communities. By the end of 1983, *Everyone’s Backyard* had a circulation of 3500.

CCHW published *Citizens Guidebooks* which were aimed at teaching citizens how to effectively organize and to explain technical scientific information. These guidebooks were distinctive in that information was written for the lay person, and often gave step by step instructions and ideas for carrying out programs and actions. The first, *Leadership Handbook on Hazardous Wastes*, published in 1983, gave leaders practical organizing guidance for fighting against hazardous wastes. Other guidebooks were written on *Conducting a Health Survey* (1984), and *Environmental Testing* (1985). In *Conducting a Health Survey*, step by step guidelines, as well as an actual health survey, were provided. The publication described what a health survey should and should not be used for, what the legal ramifications of doing a survey might entail, and practical suggestions for actually conducting and analyzing the survey.

In 1983, CCHW initiated a third publication, *Action Bulletin*, which reported on fast breaking news which needed immediate political action by the grassroots (Edelstein, 1988). This newsletter format publication used “primary and secondary sources—from our own direct work with our members, from information sources we’ve cultivated, and from material our members send us from all over the country” (*Action Bulletin*, October, 1987, p.16).

## **Focus on Outreach-Training**

A third strategy CCHW initiated involved delivering training to grassroots leaders so they could be more confident in their abilities, possess accurate information, and ultimately, effect change in their communities. Staff wanted training opportunities to come from citizen requests and so most program development ideas evolved from various phone conversations held between Lois, her staff, and community leaders (Lois Gibbs, personal interview, October 13, 1994). One important educational program which was initiated from the grassroots was the Leadership Development Conferences. The first conference, held in Ohio in late 1983 had the purpose of helping local leaders learn organizing and technical skills. Fifty leaders from twenty-two organizations in the Midwest attended the two and one-half day conference. A second conference held in Ohio in 1984 had educational sessions on getting and keeping people together, chemicals and their effects, using health information, and health surveys. There was time for planning, role playing, and caucuses where topics were determined by the participants. Two caucuses held at the second meeting were on family stress and future trends. The family stress session was the direct result of leaders calling and telling CCHW staff that the activities involved in being a full time activist caused substantial problems and stresses in the family. The closing session had break outs on developing leadership, evaluations, and a closing song.

Lois created a second training opportunity in 1985, called the Leadership Roundtables, an innovative way for grassroots groups to express their concern over various issues (Edelstein, 1988). The impetus for this program came from her frustration at a meeting held in 1983 in Keystone, Colorado to which she, the only victim of toxic wastes, was invited to attend. The group, comprised mostly of lawyers and other professionals, was to come to consensus and build a national policy regarding victims' compensation. They had nearly reached consensus to use the workman's compensation model where insurance carriers would pay damages to victims, but Lois disagreed. Based on her moral conviction that those affected should be consulted, she argued her case. After her ideas were rejected, she decided to convene the Leadership Roundtable. A grant from the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation enabled her to bring in several grassroots toxics leaders from across the country to meet with the people from the Colorado meeting. At this meeting, invited grassroots leaders decided they would get a fairer deal if they had the tools to "fight and speak for themselves" (CCHW, 1986, p. 23). Essentially, participants decided they wanted an emergency response system which would provide information on whether they should stay or leave and whether they should fight for compensation. Most of the concepts which were adopted at this meeting were subsequently placed in Superfund legislation.(CCHW, 1986). The Roundtables became an important educational thrust for CCHW after the Colorado conference. Their purpose was to make sure that grassroots leaders and their communities had their interests represented in Washington during all the deliberations.

The Roundtable's emergency response recommendations were the model for legislation for the portion of the Title III Congressional Right to Know legislation which included the Local Emergency Planning Act. This act gave citizens the right to know to what chemicals they had been exposed. Title III laws provided for emergency planning committees at the county level, and empowered localities by allowing citizens to have a say in how they handled a crisis (CCHW, 1993). Companies now were held accountable for polluting through the legal system.

The federal government did not pass this legislation easily. Pressure for passage of these laws came from labor groups followed by grassroots pressure on politicians. What leaders had learned was that there were ways to alter public policy other than through traditional efforts.

## CCHW'S ROLE IN PUBLIC POLICY

Castillo (1993), in his book examining CCHW's work, noted that as networks grew, CCHW decided to become involved in more comprehensive public policy issues. The Love Canal experience had taught Lois that politicians ignored issues unless citizens strongly vocalized support for action in the form of laws and regulations, and then followed up to ensure that those laws were being enforced. In 1983, a critical juncture for CCHW and the movement came when CCHW coordinated its first national effort. Public pressure had been building on the EPA and President Ronald Reagan about EPA policies and the head of Superfund, Rita Lavelle, who often sided with industry on environmental issues. In February 1983, CCHW planned a demonstration at Rita Lavelle's home in Virginia. The theme was "Rita, George Washington wants you to stop telling lies" (CCHW, 1993, p.6). More than sixty organizers from twelve states marched. Twenty more sent letters of support for the protest which were read at a news conference.

From the first national effort, CCHW learned three things: First, CCHW had the knowledge and ability to organize a broader constituency. Second, that grassroots constituency was willing and able to work together for a national goal. Third, a national movement could succeed which was based on grassroots activism. Peter Montague, executive director of the Environmental Research Foundation, writing about the history of the toxics movement in 1993, stated that a truly national movement was forming which had its own voice and demanded that it be heard.

CCHW worked on the national level in getting the passage of laws which established Superfund in 1982. The Superfund was a pool of money from taxes levied on oil and chemical companies, "meant to be spent on identifying, containing, and cleaning up toxic dumpsites, at sites where the responsible polluter couldn't be forced to pay for cleanup" (CCHW, 1993, p.6). CCHW's role in getting this legislation passed was in assisting local groups in their organization efforts. As more and more toxic waste dumps were discovered, and more activist groups formed to fight them, states turned toward the federal government for funding.

Formal passage of the Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) program in 1986 enabled local communities to hire their own technical experts at Superfund sites, with grants of up to \$50,000, to help balance the reports of government and industry. CCHW's Western Regional Organizer, Penny J. Newman, was active in obtaining the first technical advisor with Superfund dollars which had been set aside for pilot projects in 1984. This advisor was hired by Concerned Neighbors in Action (CNA), and Ms Newman administered the work done by these experts (Lester and Newman, 1989). Though TAG funding formally began in 1986, "CNA's experiences provided Congress the model for the TAG program" (Lester and Newman, 1989, p.i). CCHW published *Technical Assistance Grants A Users Guide* in 1989 based on the experiences of Stephen Lester, the first national technical advisor at Love Canal, Penny J. Newman, and others' experiences with the Superfund legislation. The purpose of the *Guide* was to assist communities in getting and using their own TAG grants and technical experts. The *Guide* offered advice on how to hire an expert and what to expect the expert to do.

CCHW also served as a corporate watchdog for communities on a national scale against the waste dumping industry. A waste siting consultant industry had formed, responding to activities of the grassroots movement against toxics. During the 1980's industry had begun to develop various tactics to site new facilities. Castillo (1993) noted the 'GUMBY' (gotta use many backyards) tactic where companies would select several potential sites with the intent of getting communities to fight each other. CCHW taught groups how to forge coalitions to counter this

strategy. Industry also dumped toxics along highways illegally at night to avoid levies (Jasen and Akwitney, 1980, Omang, 1979, Brown, 1980).

Industry wanted places to dispose their wastes, and they hired consultants to determine the most feasible locations. CCHW exposed the industry when it "leaked the Cerrell Report in 1984" (CCHW, 1993, p.8). The California Waste Management Board paid \$500,000 to Cerrell Associates, a Los Angeles consulting firm, to determine areas of the country which would be least likely to resist the siting of a waste management facility. This report, along with research by Setterberg and Shavelson (1993), found that these targeted communities were most often poor, rural, poorly educated, had a high percentage of Catholics, high unemployment, had many long time residents, no history of social activism, and were predominantly in the South and Midwest. Other research confirmed the Cerrell report and found that areas chosen as least likely to resist were primarily inhabited by people of color (Hoff and Polack, 1993; Krause, 1994; DiChiro, 1992; Ferris, 1994).

### **MOVEMENT GROWTH--CCHW EXPANSION**

Nineteen eighty four marked the beginning of rapid growth for CCHW. About 300 local groups were members of CCHW at the beginning of 1984 and by December, membership had increased to nearly 900 organizational and individual members (CCHW, 1986).

CCHW was becoming recognized around the world as an important resource for citizens fighting against toxic waste and for environmental justice (Masterson-Allen & Brown, 1990; Edelstein, 1988). Growth also necessitated larger headquarters. With grants from the Beldon Fund and Arca Foundation, CCHW moved from Lois' basement into an office and began paying a small salary to some of its staff. CCHW was also now utilizing college work study students on the staff to help do research and maintain science data.

A second turning point for CCHW in 1984 came as groups were beginning to form strong statewide coalitions labeled larger than locals (Masterson-Allen & Brown, 1990). States such as Vermont, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, North Carolina, Missouri, and California developed powerful statewide grassroots alliances (CCHW, 1986). CCHW provided leadership roundtables, funded by the Unitarian Church's Veatch Program, to bring grassroots leaders together to look at existing and alternative technologies for waste. This Roundtable "linked local leaders, environmental lobbyists, experts and policy makers to take a fresh look at disposal methods and critically analyze how each method fits into overall hazardous waste management policy" (CCHW, 1986, p. 28). One important outcome of these Roundtables, according to CCHW, was that local leaders gained confidence in their ability to formulate solutions which were as good as the experts. They were equals at the table. *Citizen's Guidebooks* were published after each of the five roundtables and made available to CCHW members and the public through CCHW for a nominal fee.

The People's Bill of Rights was a significant document adopted in 1984 by CCHW' Board of Directors. The Bill of Rights, adapted from the National Campaign Against Toxic Hazards, gave a voice to the values and principles which grassroots activists held dear. These principles included the right to be safe from harmful exposure to substances which could poison them. Second, persons have the right to know what poisons are being brought into neighborhoods and work places. Third, citizens have the right to total cleanup of any hazardous spills. A fourth principle was the right to participate equally in decisions about hazardous wastes in neighborhoods. Fifth, citizens have the right to expect compensation for damages caused to health, homes, and ability to work. Sixth, citizens have a right to public policy which utilizes

technology to prevent toxic pollution. Finally, people have the right to laws which control toxic wastes and are enforced vigorously. The document was published in the fifth anniversary convention book and subsequent *Everyone's Backyard* newsletters.

Perhaps the most significant milestone for CCHW during the first years of its existence came when it declared May 5, 1984 a National Day of Action. CCHW's tenth anniversary convention book (1993) noted that this was the first large scale action for the organization, and proved to be a defining moment bringing the movement from "crisis management one community at a time to a national grassroots movement" (p.7). Staff had thought of holding an event where activities were coordinated from the central office. After talking with local leaders, they decided to provide kits of suggested activities and assistance if asked, to locals around the country. The staff left Washington, DC on May 5 so there would be no hint of central planning. CCHW's fifth anniversary history (1986) recorded that hundreds of local groups took part in marches, prayer vigils, rallies, and educational forums (CCHW, 1986). Lois wrote that people proved that they were the movement, and when called upon, could and would act on behalf of their communities. This event demonstrated the solidarity of the grassroots movement, as well as the strength which was found in the diversity of its members.

Perhaps the most compelling confirmation of CCHW's success in keeping the grassroots movement vital and recognized was stated in the fifth anniversary history (1986): "In the four years from 1982-1986, no group CCHW has helped has lost a fight to block a site (p. 5).

### **FIRST NATIONAL GRASSROOTS CONVENTION ON TOXICS: A FIVE YEAR PLAN ADOPTED**

By 1986, on its fifth anniversary, CCHW had a membership base of more than one thousand groups in all fifty states, Canada, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Western Europe (CCHW, 1986). To celebrate their successes and look to the future, CCHW sponsored the First National Grassroots Convention on Toxics on May 31 and June 1, 1986 in Washington, D.C. Keynote speakers included Ralph Nader, who told some 400 delegates that it was their civil responsibility as well as the right time to get angry. He encouraged participants to keep politically active in order to affect change (CCHW, tape 5, 1986). Most of the twenty six workshops were led by local grassroots leaders and a variety of educational sessions were offered ranging from organizing tactics and technology to fighting a proposed incinerator.

Sessions were controlled by the participants. At one general session, participants voted to change the structure of the entire session (CCHW, tape 1, 1986). An official from EPA was scheduled to speak for twenty minutes with ten minutes for questions. The moderator explained the format to the participants while the EPA official waited outside the meeting room. The format was changed to ten minutes of speaking and twenty for questions. Much dialogue and sharing of information occurred throughout the meetings. Cora Tucker, an activist from Halifax, Virginia, recalled her experiences at the meeting, remembering that being with people who had the same interests as you was very rewarding and exciting. It was a time to network and find what worked in other communities. Energy was renewed (Cora Tucker, personal interview, January 11, 1996).

Awards were given out to leaders from every state. The 1986 Dishonor Roll was presented to conferees. This list represented individuals and corporations which, in the opinion of CCHW and local leaders, had committed travesties against communities either by their action or inaction.

One important outcome of the convention was the formation of the first five year strategic plan for CCHW. Lois came before the group and asserted that it was time for building national coalitions which would work together on broader strategies. She told the group that it was up to

them to define the grassroots movement for the next five years (CCHW, tape 5, 1986). Seven resolutions committee were formed at the conference. Delegates from these resolution committees went into session, and emerged with a working five year plan of action. These committees were: Land disposal, incineration, source reduction and alternative technologies, cleanup”somewhere else, USA”, regulation and enforcement, workplace exposure, plant emissions and ‘jobs vs environment,’ and the toxic nuclear waste committee. Each committee determined objectives and strategies for achieving them.

Goals which were part of the five year plan included making toxics a priority public issue, holding government and corporations accountable for their actions, promoting prevention rather than just stopping pollution, and broadening the movement to include all environmental hazards while maintaining local control and autonomy (CCHW, 1986). To reach these goals, each committee developed objectives and strategies. The land disposal committee called for “closing all existing land disposal sites,” holding companies and individuals responsible for their actions through strengthening and enforcing laws. The committee also recommended that before non-hazardous materials could be disposed that local citizens give approval to the method and site, and that the disposing company provide full disclosure of the material to be disposed. The incineration committee called for a ban on several types of incinerators within five years, suggested a national coalition on incineration be formed and recommended a comprehensive national waste management plan.

The source reduction and alternative technologies committee demanded that recycling be mandated throughout the country and made a budgetary priority. Research on companies which pollute was recommended, with the information being shared with groups. The goal would be that no permits would be granted to companies who pollute. An end to the production of toxic materials which harm the environment was called for, utilizing victim’s compensation and right to know laws as enforcement as well as substantial mandatory fines against those who generated toxics. The development of national standards for determining “how clean is clean” would be done by citizens according to the objectives of the cleanup/somewhere else, USA committee. This committee also called for direct citizen representation in all decisions made concerning clean up of pollution.

The objectives of the Regulation and Enforcement committee included the development of a national toxics strategy, the requirement that EPA and industry provide and distribute information on “location, amount, identity, use and fate of toxics.” Clean up costs would be borne by industry, not the public, and finally Superfund, the national cleanup program would be enforced. Several ideas for ‘actions’ were presented by this committee. Super Sample Day would be a day when samples from dumpsites would be delivered to elected officials. Black Ribbon Ceremony was a day where ribbons with names of victims would be placed around sites.

Workplace exposure, plant emissions and ‘jobs vs environment’ committee members focused on demanding jobs and health as well as educating the public, doctors, and others of the potential dangers of workplace exposure to toxic substances. The committee called for a united effort on the part of workers and communities which were exposed to hazardous substances through the creation of model citizen task forces. This committee also called for more stringent enforcement of laws and the creation of stricter laws which make the polluter pay.

The goal of the Toxic Nuclear Waste committee was to oppose and block the generation of nuclear wastes “in all their forms.” Action steps included not cooperating with federal laws, insisting on local control by citizens to determine if the waste would be dumped, and a united effort on the part of those who lived in dumpsites as well as those who did not.

Never before had this sort of document been pulled together. The plan of action was accepted in full by convention delegates and then put before members for final adoption in *Everyone's Backyard*. In *Everyone's Backyard*, groups were encouraged to discuss the document, modify it, endorse it, and to take action on it. The goal was that each grassroots group would take ownership of the document in whatever way met their group's needs.

## SUMMARY

From its inception in 1981, CCHW was a remarkable organization formed by a relatively nonprofessional group of people who had no formal training in association management. The basic tenets of CCHW were that grassroots groups had to be proactive and learn to take action in their communities to address environmental concerns. Members of CCHW in many communities across the United States engaged in activism locally and nationally. Perhaps one of the most unique characteristic of the grassroots movement which Lois Gibbs had helped found was its ability to transcend politics, and to involve people from all walks of life in the struggle for environmental justice.

Learning took place in communities all across America one community at a time, as citizens were informed, through various publications and leadership training opportunities sponsored by CCHW. CCHW amassed a significant science library and made science understandable to the average person. People gained confidence in their abilities to make informed decisions once knowledgeable, and they were not afraid to stand up, fight, and talk to the experts about their issues. They were united in purpose, and as they became empowered by their knowledge, they won victory after victory against corporate giants and politicians who were forced to take action.

Their efforts lead to public policy changes with regards to how the United States handled its hazardous waste. In four years, no community CCHW assisted ever lost their fight.

CCHW also grew and matured into a recognized national organization which could provide assistance to local communities as well as coordinate national actions and campaigns. The first five years was one of impressive growth of community networks and membership in CCHW. The first conference on toxic waste and the establishment of a five year plan of action in 1986 were the steppingstones for the future.

## CHAPTER IV TOWARD A UNITED GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: 1987-1991

As CCHW's first five years of existence came to a close, the five year plan of action crafted at the 1986 national convention served as the steppingstone for the future. CCHW still remained focused on hazardous waste problems and making toxics a public issue, and CCHW staff and local members began to work toward the goal of broadening and uniting an active social justice movement in the United States. This was accomplished by forging "larger than local" coalitions, working with labor and Native Americans, and spearheading three national actions-the McToxics Campaign, Operation SLAPP-Back, and the Contaminated Site of the Month Campaign. CCHW also continued its work in education, sponsoring an Environmental Health Conference, creating a leadership development campaign, and built on and maintained a significant library with extensive toxicity data on over 350 chemicals.

The effectiveness of CCHW's direct action approach was recognized nationally in 1990 when they received a number one ranking among the top twenty five national environmental groups by *Outside Magazine*. *Outside* also named Lois Gibbs to its ten person "Outsider of the Year Honor Roll" for being relentless in forcing corporations to be accountable (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1990). The Goldman Environmental Prize was also presented to Lois in 1990. This international award, begun in 1989, and modeled after the Nobel Prize, is given each year to one "grassroots environmental hero" on each continent (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1990).

This chapter focuses on the period of 1987-1991 with emphasis on the processes CCHW utilized to facilitate participants in the grassroots movement to confront power in their communities, the training methods utilized in communities and for CCHW staff as the movement grew and matured, the organizational structure which was maintained during this time period, and the national campaigns undertaken.

### BUILDING COALITIONS

Edelstein (1988) suggests that as a movement evolves it becomes less decentralized. Community groups which share similar concerns begin networking more often which helps keep the movement infused with energy because of increased awareness of the severity of the fight which is being staged by activists in the movement. There is evidence to support this occurrence within CCHW and its member groups. CCHW's staff, according to Steck (1991) saw the emergence of "larger than locals" (LTL), defined by CCHW as "two or more groups working together," as an "important, logical direction for the continued growth and development of the environmental justice movement" (p.6). As part of the five year plan of action, CCHW members had expressed the need to "broaden the movement to include *all* environmental hazards, but maintain local control and autonomy" (CCHW, 1986, p. 63). This goal was thought to be necessary to keep the movement viable and growing. Steck (1991) says that the acronym NIABY (Not in Anyone's Backyard) became a self-descriptive term used by the larger than locals to let industry know that it could not get turned down by one community and then move to the next to site a hazardous waste dump. The term demonstrated unity within communities and the movement.

CCHW also began to forge alliances with labor, encourage biracial and multi-cultural groups, and work with Native Americans to broaden the membership base, and to open discussion

with these groups about their concerns with environmental hazards. Additional work was done with churches, and international assistance was provided by CCHW to several countries.

## **Larger Than Locals**

Larger than locals often arose as local grassroots groups fought and won their battles against hazardous waste polluters. Once a victory was secured, many leaders became aware of a greater potential and wanted to continue the fight. As more communities became engaged in similar struggles, often against the same companies and in the same state, the promise of forming regional or statewide grassroots groups took hold. CCHW encouraged larger than local formation by providing names and phone numbers of grassroots leaders to other leaders, providing literature, or sending staff to towns to assist in organizing (Lynch, 1993). Linking groups, according to Steck (1991), a CCHW field organizer, helped the groups know that they were not in isolation, gave them an opportunity to learn from other's experience, and to build networks.

Lynch (1993), who founded a larger than local in Indiana, observed in CCHW's tenth anniversary convention book that there are two types of LTLs: The first type was issue driven where the organization remains focused on the issues which brought them into the environmental movement. She suggests that these groups are needed because "they are so passionate" (p. 48). Lynch notes, however, that these groups have to "work toward sustainability if they are to stay around for the long haul" (p. 48). A second larger than local organizational type began as an issue driven group but refocused on more long-term goals, working on changing the rules and regulations of their state or nationally. An example of this kind of larger than local would be one which had won a victory against a hazardous waste site in their community and then refocused to work on changing regulations against landfills across the country. Szakos (1993), a coordinator for Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC) since 1981, suggested that larger than locals of this nature "take an offensive strategy...to affect policies, programs and practices at a broader level" (p. 50). He also suggested that using a multi-issue approach allows a larger than local the flexibility to work on state and national issues simultaneously, as long as there are members willing to do the work.

An example of a larger than local initiative was when a small group of citizens in Rutland, Vermont formed to stop a proposed garbage incinerator in 1988. With only twenty families the task appeared daunting. The Rutland group enlisted help from CCHW which put them in contact with Theresa Freeman's Vermonters Organized for Cleanup (VOC), a statewide issue driven coalition. A study by VOC in Rutland determined that recycling, rather than incineration, was the best option. The groups then contacted other local towns nearby to inform them that the VICON company would want to put their burned ash in their neighborhood if Rutland was triumphant. By working together, these towns defeated VICON. As a result, over sixty towns in Vermont developed recycling programs which were less expensive and quite successful.

Another very successful larger than local was Kentuckians for the Commonwealth (KFTC), a statewide coalition. One of KFTC's successful actions was a mock funeral for the state of Kentucky held on May 31, 1989 at the Kentucky capitol building in Frankfort. The goals of the action were to bring publicity to KFTC and to (a) demonstrate that Kentucky's environment was in serious danger, (b) to act as a morale booster for members of the groups, and (c) to lobby legislators to support stricter environmental regulation (CCHW, 1993). According to Steck (1991), this group was successful because they worked diligently to actively involve their members, and paid close attention to their organizational structure. KFTC had as organizational goals the following: "empowering individuals, building the organization, fostering democratic values, winning issues, and changing institutions" (Steck, 1991, p.5). All goals were determined

by people in the grassroots who then were active in achieving those goals. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth provided training to CCHW's staff in order to help them when they went out into communities, as well as to help staff understand the pitfalls of not keeping such a large group organized and focused.

CCHW promoted larger than locals at every opportunity, publishing their victories in *Everyone's Backyard* and writing of the importance of larger than locals to the movement. By 1991, nearly every state had some form of larger than local according to Steck (1991). CCHW facilitated their growth and provided assistance to support that growth.

## **Industry and Labor**

Before and during the Love Canal years in the late seventies, industry often dismissed activists as uninformed and uneducated. As the environmental justice movement won more victories against industry in the 1980's, industry had developed strategies which would give them leverage. A 1991 *Everyone's Backyard* editorial claimed that the issue of jobs versus the environment was the "weakest link in our movement"(p.2). Often environmental issues turned into jobs versus the environment, and activists and workers in the same community fought each other. In the tenth anniversary convention book Lois Gibbs (1990) identified a real problem in communities: the issue of environmental justice dividing families. Women took action against the companies their husbands worked for. Lois Gibbs said that men "were silent partners, not because they don't care, but because they're afraid the boss will retaliate" (p. 9). An internal Union Carbide memo, sent to CCHW in 1991, called on employees "to start a grassroots initiative to educate people to the wonders of plastic. If employees don't take up the challenge, jobs could be lost" (*Everyone's Backyard*, October, 1991, p.2). The jobs versus the environment tactic by industry came about, at least partially, because of the many victories that grassroots groups had won in derailing and preventing hazardous waste sites, landfills and incinerators from being built. As grassroots groups proved they were both informed and educated about the issues surrounding hazardous wastes this tactic began to fail.

As early as 1987, CCHW began to notice another shift in industry tactics as grassroots groups began to report their experiences (Collette, 1989). A major public relations campaign was initiated by industry in the late 1980's to convince the public that there was minimal risk associated with chemicals. Companies such as Browning Ferris Industries (BFI) presented their message in local ads "near its most controversial sites" (Collette, 1989, p.3). Management awarded grants totaling over \$600,000 to several mainstream environmental groups, and Browning Ferris Inc's CEO, Dean Bunstock, was a member of the National Wildlife Federation's Board of Directors.

As this strategy was discovered and brought to the public's attention by groups such as CCHW, yet another new strategy was developed by industry. GUMBY, or Gotta Use Many Backyards, was formulated. The term, first seen by CCHW in the trade journal *Waste Age*, suggested that waste problems are a result of everyone's lifestyles, so the most effective way to handle waste is to spread it around to lots of sites in many locations (Collette, 1989). Companies targeted many sites in localities and tried a divide and conquer technique. Collette (1989) cites an example where Union Carbide in Institute, WV played white workers with jobs against black citizens who lived down river and had to breathe toxic fumes.

Industry finally resorted to the legal system to stop organized protest by filing "Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation" (SLAPP). SLAPP was coined, according to Collette (1989), by George Pring of the University of Colorado Law School to "describe lawsuits aimed to 'chilling' free speech"(p.21). SLAPPs were tailored to prevent activists and grassroots groups

from speaking out against companies by suing individuals and groups for millions of dollars (Mansfield, 1990). Irene Mansfield, an activist in Texas, was sued in July 1986 for calling a landfill a dump, and her husband was sued for not controlling his wife! The amount of the suit was five million dollars (Mansfield, 1990). In 1989, CCHW reported that there were more than a dozen SLAPPs against leaders in their network. By the start of 1990 all but one SLAPP was won by the movement (CCHW annual report, 1990).

To counter these suits, CCHW launched Operation SLAPP-Back. Two Citizen's Guidebooks, *The Polluter's Secret Plan* (1989) and *How to Deal with Trouble* (1987), were developed to help citizens understand the various strategies and tactics employed by industry to undermine their grassroots efforts. A workshop called 'How to Deal with Trouble' was also initiated as part of CCHW's leadership development program and offered ways of turning the threat of a lawsuit into an effective organizing strategy. This workshop was one of CCHW's most popular in 1990.

In addition to these direct strategies by industry, entrepreneurs saw an opportunity for profit and a business was created which published newsletters, magazines and guides on how to avoid government hazardous waste regulations. For example, in 1989, McCoy and Associates introduced *The Hazardous Waste Consultant*. *The Generator's Journal* was published by USPCI, a hazardous waste disposal company, to provide readers advice on how to "work their way around their legal obligations" (Collette, 1989, p.33).

During this time, CCHW began to work on building relations with labor. CCHW believed that technology existed that could ensure safe working conditions for workers without polluting the environment, and that labor and grassroots activists had much in common for which to fight. This was the message which CCHW promoted at several conferences. Lois attended a conference in November, 1989 sponsored by several major organizations. These included the New York State AFL-CIO, Toxics in Your Community Coalition, New York Environmental Institute, New York State Council on Occupational Safety and Health, Ecumenical Task Force, LCHA, UAW 686, IBEW 2212, New York State Council of Churches, Statewide Occupational Health Center, Public Employees Federation, and the Environmental Planning Lobby.

The goal of the conference was to demonstrate that labor and communities had a common cause (Gibbs, 1990). Lois and twenty five other grassroots leaders attended the 3rd Annual Labor and the Environment Justice conference held in Albany, New York in 1991. Stephen Lester attended the Conference on Occupational and Environmental Reproduction Hazards in Woods Hole, Massachusetts which brought together a conglomerate of industrial and environmental organizations "involved in work related to reproductive hazards of toxic chemicals" (*Everyone's Backyard*, December, 1991, p.12).

The *Action Line* column in *Everyone's Backyard* began carrying stories of labor-community common cause struggles as well as brief news concerning labor and environmental hazards (Hayes, December 1991; *Everyone's Backyard*, June, 1991). CCHW's Grassroots Convention '89 sponsored workshops on jobs versus the environment. At the regional level, CCHW awarded the Southern Appalachian Labor School Foundation (SALS) of Kincaid, West Virginia a community training grant in 1990. SALS, a ten year old multi-issue grassroots organization, held workshops on environmental health and how communities could support each other. A second workshop concentrated on coalition building (CCHW annual report, 1990).

To show further support for labor, CCHW participated in "Solidarity Day '91" on the mall in Washington, D.C. where over 300,000 "organized labor members, health care activists and

environmentalists turned out”( CCHW, 1991, p.15). Speakers called on Congress and the government to enforce safe workplace and other environmental laws.

These and other actions by CCHW and its members helped propel a Union Carbide vice president to circulate an internal memo citing CCHW as “one of the most radical coalitions operating under the environmentalist banner. The account by CCHW went on to claim that the vice president stated if CCHW’s agenda was accomplished in total, it would restructure U.S. society into something unrecognizable and probably unworkable. It’s a tour de force of public policy issues affecting business for years to come”(CCHW annual report, 1990, p.3). According to the 1990 annual report of CCHW, what the executive did not realize was that the “agenda” was the platform of the movement which had been developed by over 1000 people who attended the Grassroots Convention ‘89. The report goes on to say that when the vice president was questioned by the media, he apologized, “saying his attempt to smear CCHW is perhaps an indication of how effective your organization has become that I felt constrained to use the strongest possible terms...If we did not believe that at least some of the agenda were achievable, we certainly would not be concerned” (p.3).

## **Native Americans**

Native Americans also became a strong link in the grassroots movement for environmental justice. Historically, Native Americans have had high poverty rates, which make them prime targets for waste industry proposals to use their lands for waste storage sites. Their lands, according to Winona LaDuke of the Indigenous Women’s Network, are strategic to United States policy because “so much of US energy production is dependent on resources which are harnessed from Indian-owned areas” (Williams, 1991, p.4). Many Native American grassroots groups were formed to take on these environmental issues. Taliman (1993) stated that “in recent years Native Americans have...successfully organized opposition to more than sixty...cash-for-waste proposals from government and industry” (p.55). One of the ways CCHW assisted Native American grassroots groups was through training grants. A Community Training Grant to Native Americans for a Clean Environment (NACE) from Tahlquah, Oklahoma, a group founded by Cherokee Jessie Deer-in-Water, enabled NACE to hold The Tribal Environmental Conference-Quest for Survival in 1990. The grant brought thirty-nine Oklahoma tribes, NACE members and community activists together to learn from each other and to work together on the issue of threats posed by a nuclear processing facility.

CCHW field organizer Mike Williams traveled to Oklahoma at the request of NACE to visit with tribal members and provide organizing assistance. *Everyone’s Backyard* carried an article about his trip, which described in some detail how various tribes had placed moratoriums on waste dumping on their lands, as well as how Indian Nations across the United States were “forming grassroots groups to fight pollution”(Williams, 1991, p.4). According to Lance Hughes, director of the Native Americans for a Clean Environment, many Native Americans looked “at these organizing efforts as an opportunity to strengthen tribal structures” (Williams, 1991, p.4). The *Action Line* column regularly carried Native American grassroots activities.

Throughout the period of 1987-1991, CCHW worked diligently on strengthening the grassroots movement for environmental justice by helping grassroots groups form coalitions. Working with 180 labor groups in 1990 alone, CCHW and its members were able to fight industry tactics aimed at breaking down grassroots groups and opening new hazardous waste sites.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP**

By 1986, CCHW was serving more than 1000 groups, more than one office could handle effectively. CCHW staff met with local grassroots leaders across the country to determine what best fit communities' needs. The increased emphasis on larger than locals was an effective strategy which helped CCHW provide local assistance quickly and effectively.

CCHW also initiated field offices in 1986 which allowed a quicker response to local groups. Often offices were located near or in isolated, more rural sites. Field offices were located in California, Texas, Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and southwestern Virginia in 1990.(CCHW, 1990). By locating field offices in these areas, the industry strategy of locating sites in isolated, rural areas was effectively countered. Field staff organized communities, answered phones and mail, and developed programs for various communities and groups.

CCHW was governed by a ten member Board of Directors. Cora Tucker related that one point of discussion in the late 1980's was that the Board of Directors and staff should adequately represent the grassroots constituency which CCHW served (Cora Tucker, personal interview, January 11, 1996). Ms Tucker meant that minorities should be represented in higher level positions, not just as clerical staff. By 1990 the goal was reached. The Board of Directors consisted of five local grassroots leaders, one labor union representative and four professionals. Six were female, three were African American, and one member was Latino. Three African Americans and nine women represented the grassroots constituency. Members served a three year staggered term.

According to CCHW's 1990 annual report, membership by the end of that year consisted of 7,289 volunteer grassroots groups, 986 traditional environmental groups, 285 multi issue neighborhood groups, 394 environmental and health professionals, 201 environmental attorneys, 180 organized labor leaders, and 232 church groups. Thirty one percent of CCHW's 1990 \$680,000 budget was derived from membership dues, donations, and purchase of CCHW materials. By 1991, CCHW listed 10,139 members of which about 7500 were grassroots groups, 1072 traditional environmental groups, 313 multi issue neighborhood groups, 419 environmental and health professionals, 611 journalists, reporters, and writers, 220 environmental attorneys, 180 organized labor leaders, 232 church groups, and 7 Native American nations. The 1991 report indicated that members contributed twenty four percent of income.

Throughout the late eighties and nineties, CCHW continued to be a vital, growing organization which served a niche like no other mainstream environmental group. Other larger, more mainstream environmental organizations were concerned about the environment; however, CCHW was the only national clearinghouse dedicated to serving the grassroots environmental justice movement.

## **WOMEN ORGANIZERS IN THE GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT**

Research has shown that almost eighty percent of the leaders in the grassroots movement were women (Dichiro, 1994; Zeff et al, 1989; Krause, 1991 and 1994; Garland, 1988). This was also true of CCHW. According to Lois Gibbs, women constituted approximately seventy to eighty percent of the grassroots environmental leadership in CCHW (Lois Gibbs, personal interview, October 13, 1994). CCHW served as a catalyst in helping women assimilate to their roles as community activists. Writing in *Everyone's Backyard* in 1989, Karen Stults recounts some women leaders' reflections on the environmental justice movement and CCHW's importance to them. Diane Steck of North Huntington, Pennsylvania, Kaye Kiker of Emelle, Alabama, and Theresa Freeman of Vermont, women who had been active locally and who had moved up to board positions with CCHW, spoke of the connections which were made with other leaders who

had similar concerns with the help of CCHW. Kiker says that “I know it’s a movement because I hear from these people all the time. We’ve stopped being NIMBY’S and become NIABY’S” (p.1). Kiker also talks of the common cause which crosses racial barriers. Jessie Deer-in-Water from Native Americans for a Clean Environment reflects on the unifying aspects of the movement. She says that Native Americans from across the country contact NACE, and that their group stays in touch with them because they have a common cause.

Many of these women reported to CCHW that they were struggling to make the transition from working mother or homemaker to activist, and that their activism caused great stress on the family. Many marriages ended in divorce due in large part to the woman’s activist work. In 1986, at the national conference in Arlington, Zeff et al (1989) noted that women would gather and talk about their experiences. Several women expressed a need for a conference specifically geared toward women organizers. In response, CCHW sponsored a conference on family stress in February 1987. Following that, regional workshops were held across the country. These workshops targeted children, and allowed the children to discuss how their parents’ involvement as activists affected them. CCHW had published a Guide in 1984, written by Michael Lindsey entitled *Hidden Dangers: A Toxic Waste Survival Manual and Coloring Book for Children* which was used as a teaching tool for children in these workshops. Michael Lindsey was a reporter for the *Boston Herald* who had investigated the toxic waste site in Holbrook, Massachusetts where the contaminated site was a youth hangout called “The Pastures” (Lindsey, 1984, p.1). The Guide showed children the signs to look for to determine if toxic waste was present in play areas. It encouraged children to tell their parents where these areas were located so that parents could report it to proper authorities.

A committee of grassroots organizers from around the country organized a third conference on Women in Toxics Organizing which was funded by the Joint Foundation of New York, and held in Arlington, Virginia in November 1987. Zeff et al (1989) reported that “forty three women representing twenty five groups from around the country spent two and a half days sharing thoughts and experiences as leaders and organizers” (p.2). Out of this conference, a guidebook *Empowering Ourselves, Women and Toxics Organizing* was published. Its goal, according to Zeff et al (1989), was to “provide support to grassroots leaders who feel isolated” (p.3). The Guide had portions of speeches which were given at the conference as well as articles on women in leadership and personal growth. The articles were encouraging to women and offered many suggestions from women about how to overcome various obstacles in organizing. Topics included how to handle stress, changing their world views, losing anonymity as a spokesperson, and dealing with men. Since 1987, three more women’s stress conferences have been held. Lois noted that CCHW staff learned that these conferences had to have some strict guidelines and rules (Lois Gibbs, personal interview, October 13, 1994) because women tended to want to share continuously because, according to Lois, they had not had the opportunity to talk to people with similar concerns. A format was developed which provided sharing opportunities as well as solutions to obstacles.

CCHW also found that these conferences worked well on a regional or national level, but not at the community level. Lois stated that it was CCHW’s “theory that women are neighbors of other women and so it is a little more difficult to talk about your husband hitting you or other sorts of personal things with your neighbor”(Lois Gibbs, personal interview, October 13, 1994). The local community did not serve to alleviate stress because women felt they couldn’t be completely honest.

Another kind of stress sometimes happened to women who successfully got energized, organized, fought, and won a local battle. Setterberg and Shavelson (1993) noted in their book on

toxic waste organizers that the fight became a passion transcending politics, and afterward, there was literally nothing to fill the time. This happened to Sally Teets, an organizer from Spencerville, Ohio. Her group, 'Dumpbusters', fought Waste Management Inc. for eleven months in 1987 to prevent a 500 acre landfill from being opened in their town. On the day of the victory Sally admitted that she "was never more depressed in my life"(Setterberg and Shavelson, 1993, p. 102). She called Will Collette, the organizing director at CCHW, and told him the news of victory. Will told her there were other fights and three weeks later Sally called and asked Will "to give me a title so that I can speak on behalf of CCHW. I want to be part of something bigger"(Setterberg and Shavelson, 1993, p. 107). After nearly a year, the Gund Foundation in Cleveland offered CCHW funding for a Midwest regional organizer and Sally was appointed to the job. Her responsibilities included covering fourteen states and she often traveled fifteen of every thirty days. As she described it, "it's terrible to be away and it's great to be away. This isn't politics to me. It's a moral issue and a passion. It's a change of life"(Setterberg and Shavelson, 1993, p. 107).

The story of these and many other women acknowledges a little known story of the environmental justice movement, particularly in the South, which is the role women actually played in successfully organizing against toxics in their communities. Each of these women and countless others had a personal motivation and satisfaction for becoming involved in grassroots organizing. Often, women went on to become full time organizers because they learned of their talents and abilities during a local struggle. Regardless, their history demonstrated that women played an important role in the foundation and structure of the environmental justice movement.

## **EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

### **Focus on Outreach-The McToxics Campaign**

From August 1987 to November 1990, CCHW and local grassroots groups across the United States and internationally were involved in one of their most successful protests against a single product item. The McToxics campaign, as it was known to grassroots organizers, targeted polystyrene containers which were used to package fast food items.

The protest evolved from a Roundtable meeting in November 1986 which CCHW had called for grassroots leaders to tackle the problems of the hole in the ozone layer and the large amount of garbage generated in the United States. At that conference meeting, participants concluded that consumers, who were being blamed for demanding styrofoam packaging, were not really to blame at all. Consumers liked the food product and actually had no say in the type of container in which the food was presented. CCHW worked with the Roundtable to design a campaign to educate consumers about the ways garbage could be reduced, and second, to educate consumers about how styrofoam packaging could create problems through its manufacture as well as cause mass quantities of garbage to enter into the waste stream (Lois Gibbs, personal correspondence 1996). The desired goal of the campaign was to reduce the amount of waste, not just recycle it. Once CCHW helped the grassroots initiate the campaign, others got on the bandwagon. Although CCHW nor the grassroots received any credit for the protest, the grassroots were instrumental in getting polystyrene out of fast food restaurants.

The McToxics Campaign was initiated with McDonalds as the target since the company has an "influence in shaping industry practices and American culture" (CCHW 1990 annual report). The campaign kicked off on August 1, 1987 in Vermont with Vermonters Organized for Cleanup with "statewide actions aimed at banning polystyrene food packaging"(CCHW 1990 annual report, p. 15). Media was present as parents and children walked into local McDonalds and asked for

sandwiches and beverages in paper containers. On August 6, five days after the campaign began, Terri Capatosto, McDonalds' director of media relations, announced "that because there are reasonable alternatives to possibly harmful CFC's (chlorofluorocarbons), it was beginning a prompt phase out"(Moore, 1989, p. B3). Other fast food chains, such as Wendy's, followed. In an October, 1987 *Action Bulletin* article, CCHW carried the news but also warned that McDonalds was trying to "diffuse your action" (p.1) with the public relations effort. The article reminded the grassroots that the goal was to 'stop using styrofoam and switch to recycled paper" (p.1). The *Washington Post* carried an editorial applauding McDonald's for discontinuing foam containers (August 20, 1989).

The campaign quickly gained momentum. Vermont Governor Madeline Kunin ordered state agencies to stop purchasing and using styrofoam. Suffolk County on Long Island, New York banned polystyrene in 1988. Other city wide bans included Berkeley, California, Minneapolis, Minnesota and Portland, Oregon. The Navy and Coast Guard banned Styrofoam cups at sea. By 1990, the protest had become international. Canada had a campaign to reduce excess packaging, Italy had the 1000 mayors against plastic packaging, and in Tasmania the hamburger action group was formed.

To counter the negative public perception of plastics, the polystyrene industry began a massive recycling effort. Holusha (1988), a reporter for *The New York Times*, wrote an article in the *Times* in November 1988 that Mobil Chemical and Genpack Corporation had set up a recycling effort in Leominster, Massachusetts called Plastics Again. In 1989, the plastics industry united behind National Polystyrene and promised to recycle 250 million pounds of polystyrene by 1995. Company officials said this would meet the Environmental Protection Agencies' goal of twenty five percent recycling (Holusha, 1990).

Industry efforts were not enough as more and more groups became involved in the direct action campaign. In a 1989 *New York Times* article, James reported that a fifteen year old New Jersey high school student, Tanja Vogt, surveyed students who ate in the school cafeteria and asked whether they would pay more for paper trays. The response was overwhelmingly yes. The students took the survey results to the board of education which then instituted an all paper policy effective February 1, 1990. James (1989) noted that "the township council suggested using paper trays in all township buildings" (B4). The State Commissioner of Environmental Protection, Christopher J. Daggett, promised to stop using foam products in its Trenton, New Jersey cafeteria. For her efforts Ms Vogt was invited to speak to a United Nations International Youth Forum at which CCHW was also recognized for their efforts in reducing foam use.

Environmental stewardship brought churches into the foam protest. Smith, writing in *Lutheran Woman Today* (1990), reported that many churches returned to using china, glass, or hard plastics. "People are carrying their own mugs to meetings and mug exchanges have built community and commitment at several gatherings" (p.29). The article noted the actions of individual church members. One Lutheran church member gave the article to a Colorado woman, Linda Smith, who worked for the city of Littleton. Ms Smith proposed to the town that they end use of foam cups, and after study by the town council, her proposal was adopted. Ms Smith received an award from the town for her efforts. Another church member from Ditka, Alaska, took the article to her local store which did not carry hot/cold paper cups. The store responded by putting the cups on its shelves.

According to a CCHW editorial, The Natural Resources Defense Council, the Environmental Defense Fund, and Friends of the Earth, three environmental groups, made a bargain with the plastics industry not to publicly criticize the industry for five years if industry

searched for a less ozone destructive substitute in 1988 (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1990, p.2). The Environmental Protection Agency got involved on January 28, 1988 when the agency wrote a letter to the plastic/foam industry saying that since HCFC contained hydrogen it was not technically a CFC. On February 16, 1989, Moore reported that the Foodservice and Packaging Institute, the trade group for the industry, reported that the plastic industry had met their goal of eliminating CFC's in food service products. CCHW continued their fight, publishing information about the toxic side of polystyrene production. As more groups became involved in the protest, industry could not escape criticism. In 1989 Curtis Moore, an environmental writer and analyst, wrote an article in *The Washington Post* decrying the industry for not telling the truth about the use of CFC's. Industry had altered the structure of CFC by adding a hydrogen molecule and then announcing that they were no longer using ozone destroying CFC's. As Moore reported, the change was that CFC-22 was renamed HCFC-22. In reality HCFC-22 was the same chemical with the same potential damaging effect on the ozone. On January 5, 1988, according to Moore's article, Kathy Forte, spokeswoman for Dupont, said that "the term HCFC was not used publicly to avoid consumer uprising since it was essentially the same product. In response, CCHW coordinated the "Send it Back" campaign in 1989, whereby they asked consumers to send foam clamshells back to McDonalds' headquarters. Tons were sent to local McDonalds and to national headquarters (CCHW, 1993).

By this time, the industry was alarmed. In a confidential memo to leaders of the plastic industry in December 1989, the Society of the Plastics Industry, Inc. President Larry Thomas wrote of the poor image of plastics among consumers. He stated that 49 of 50 states had or were considering bans or restrictions on plastics and that consumers were knowingly not taking plastics because of environmental concerns. He set up a meeting for January 15, 1990 at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Washington, D.C. to discuss the issues and to determine strategies. A \$150 million public relations fund to counter the negative images of their industry was established.

In early 1990, McDonalds sent representatives to meet with CCHW since CCHW was recognized by the company as being the leader of the campaign against foam use. Staying true to their mission of not speaking on behalf of the grassroots, CCHW offered to put McDonald's in touch with the many local grassroots groups who were conducting the campaign against the company. McDonalds refused to take this action, and the campaign continued for several more months.

On August 1, 1990, McDonalds joined the Environmental Defense Fund and its head Fred Krupp to announce they had formed a six month task force whose goal it was to come up with ways to reduce trash (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1990). Articles appeared in the popular press such as *People Magazine* giving credit to the Environmental Defense Fund for working with McDonald's to end the use of foam containers. The Environmental Defense Fund received pressure from many environmentalists as well as its own board not to cave in to McDonalds and to work toward recycling and reduction of foam. On November 1, 1990 McDonalds announced they would stop using Styrofoam packaging for their sandwiches. Most other fast food restaurants followed suit.

CCHW had spearheaded and encouraged local grassroots groups in the fight which took three years and three months to achieve victory. CCHW's 1990 annual report stated that the "McToxics victory was won because it involved people in their own backyards; local groups could use the McToxics Campaign as a way to bring such large issues as the ozone hole, toxic waste, and solid waste into perspective for people right in their own backyards" (p.4). CCHW had published reports throughout the battle and in 1990 published the McFact-Pack which was a collection of articles from newspapers and scientific studies about the Styrofoam industry.

## Focus on Outreach-Environmental Health Project

It is well documented that many people get involved with the grassroots movement for environmental justice because their or the health of a loved one has been adversely affected (Gibbs, 1982; Levine and Stone, 1986; Stone and Levine, 1985). CCHW recognized this and instituted the Environmental Health Project in 1988. The purpose of the project was to provide accurate information on effects of toxic chemicals through publications and conferences for health professionals, and to help people find physicians who knew how to help toxic exposure victims. A second component of the project was that of educating doctors as well as forming a “network of physicians and scientists with expertise in the health effects caused by exposure to toxic chemicals” (CCHW annual report, 1990, p. P.16).

In October 1988 CCHW, along with Ohio State University Department of Family Medicine and the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, cosponsored the first scientific assembly on environmental health. Dr. Gary Gillen, a practicing family physician, described the importance of the meeting to family practitioners in an article in *Family Physician*. He stated that environmental issues were having an impact on many doctor’s practices, and that those in attendance had expressed gratitude that academic researchers were making similar discoveries in research which confirmed the same effects as they were seeing in their patients. At the assembly, speakers from around the United States presented current information on “epidemiology and toxicology of community exposure to environmental hazards” (Gillen, 1989, p.16).

CCHW began publishing *Environmental Health Monthly* in 1990. The science department of CCHW and an independent review board designed the journal to “educate health professionals and community leaders on the current scientific knowledge around environmental health issues” (CCHW, 1991, p.10). The targeted audience was family care doctors. According to the 1990 annual report, “it is the only periodical of its kind providing reprints of hard to find articles from such fields as toxicology and epidemiology” (p.9).

CCHW was further involved in the Environmental Health Project as a broker between grassroots leaders and the Agency for Toxic Substance Disease Registry (ATSDR), a unit in the Center for Disease Control. Grassroots activists were frustrated at the end of the 1980’s “because of the lack of attention being paid to contaminated sites” (CCHW, 1993, p.11). ATSDR was “responsible for assessing the health problems of communities at Superfund/toxic waste sites” (CCHW annual report, 1990, p. 16). The agency relied mostly on data from other government offices or industry, and most of their reports stated there was no correlation between health and toxic exposure. ATSDR contacted CCHW after the agency came under fire from grassroots groups, an investigation by Congress and a USGAO report which stated that their health assessments were flawed. CCHW arranged for two meetings with ATSDR top administration and over forty grassroots groups. At the meeting, the grassroots groups identified their need for support from the agency in getting accurate assessments as well as problems they had with the agency. Because of these meetings, activists won specific changes in assessments done in their communities. They also got Dr. Barry Johnson, ATSDR head, to admit there were links between toxic exposure and health problems (CCHW, 1993). Relationships with the grassroots groups broke down when ATSDR wanted CCHW to pick spokespersons from the grassroots or to act as the spokesperson to the agency. CCHW and the grassroots declined, and no further meetings were held.

Since all the issues were not resolved the grassroots decided to develop a campaign to put pressure on ATSDR and the Environmental Protection Agency. The “Forgotten Faces

Contaminated Site of the Month” campaign was born. Over two dozen community leaders asked CCHW to coordinate the campaign whose goal was to charge Bill Reilly, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, with child neglect for allowing children to be exposed to hazards (CCHW, 1993).

CCHW put together a profile on each community which applied for the Forgotten Faces of the Month. For a year and a half, fourteen Forgotten Faces groups were recognized and “filed formal child neglect complaints against Reilly” (CCHW, 1993, p. 12). CCHW issued press releases to national media and to the media in selected sites. Media provided additional coverage in some communities, and in some instances the Environmental Protection Agency sent a team to listen to citizens and refocus on the clean up of communities (Meyer, 1991).

### **Focus on Outreach-Community Leadership Development Grants**

In 1989, CCHW established the Community Leadership Development Grant Program with \$55,000 from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. “The purpose of the Community Leadership Development Grant Program was to provide grassroots organizations with funds for their own training and educational programs” (CCHW annual report, 1990, p. 11). Nineteen ninety was the first year communities could use the grants.

CCHW received 103 requests for a total of \$397,101 in 1990. The independent review board granted thirty proposals. Many of the proposals were aimed at generating community awareness of toxics issues. In Las Vegas, Citizen Alert held a “Toxics in Nevada: Finding the Right Antidote” conference. Eighty five people from several states attended. The group reported in *Action Line* that one outcome was the birth of a statewide toxics network, a newsletter and a volunteer coordinator. In Wyoming, the Powder River Basin Resource Council held a two day training conference they called “Waste Not the West.” The workshops focused on organizing, strategies and technical training.

These Community Leadership Development Grants proved to be immensely popular. In 1991 the North Shore Unitarian Universalist Veatch Foundation joined the Mott Foundation and CCHW was able to award \$95,000 in grants (*Everyone’s Backyard*, 1992).

### **SUMMARY**

By the end of its first decade, CCHW had established itself as a model environmental organization which assisted local communities to help themselves with the issues in their communities. The group had also garnered a national and international reputation for its work. This was demonstrated by the Goldman Environmental Award awarded to Lois in 1990.

CCHW also kept pace of the needs of its members through its organizational structure. By listening to the grassroots members, field offices were established in areas with little other available help. Larger than locals were encouraged and CCHW staff was trained by Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, a very successful multi issue larger than local to enable staff to help others in forming these types of groups. Alliances were forged during this period with labor, not only to broaden the membership base, but also to demonstrate to industry that there was much in common between labor and the grassroots environmental justice movement. By working together, industry tactics against labor and the grassroots were exposed and countered successfully. CCHW also formed alliances with Native Americans to help them in their struggles to stop hazardous waste landfills from being sited on their lands.

The most successful campaign ever initiated by CCHW and local grassroots groups was the McToxics campaign. Over a three year period, grassroots groups maintained pressure on the plastics industry and McDonalds to cease using polystyrene packaging and use recycled paper to package their sandwiches. Thousands of people became involved in the effort, countering every industry tactic. In November 1990, McDonalds announced they would quit using the polystyrene containers. Most of the rest of the fast food industry followed suit.

Knowing that many physicians did not receive adequate training on toxic exposure in medical school, CCHW established *Environmental Health Monthly* which was the first scientific journal of its kind to bring research on toxic exposure together in one place. A conference was held on environmental health at which scientific papers were presented over a two day period to physicians and other scientists in the health professions.

Keeping their emphasis on training, CCHW established Community Development Leadership Grants with the help of the Mott Foundation. These grants enabled communities to do training and education in their own communities. In the second year of their existence, \$95,000 was awarded to local communities. Another important training opportunity came for women involved in grassroots organizing. CCHW hosted several conferences specifically for women in the movement to help them understand and overcome obstacles they encountered as mothers, working women and activists

## **CHAPTER V TOWARD THE FUTURE: 1992-1995**

By the end of the first decade of its existence, CCHW had established contacts with over 7500 grassroots organizations. The hazardous waste industry had come to acknowledge that the grassroots were powerful local organizations who had been able to stop the siting of hazardous waste dumping sites across America.

At the 1993 convention held at the Crystal Gateway Hotel in Arlington, Virginia on May 14-16, Lois once again called those in attendance to look to the future. Subsequently, a second five year strategic plan was crafted to provide direction for grassroots groups. CCHW continued to recognize that it was not the movement, but a resource for those who needed accurate information and training about how to get action on the local level.

During the early nineties, CCHW began to focus attention on further training for those who had been involved in the movement for a long time, to analyze their organizational structure, and to redefine and reframe the debate over jobs or the environment to jobs and the environment. A major campaign to stop dioxin exposure was initiated. Efforts were continued to encourage the forming of coalitions of groups who historically had not worked with each other. An emphasis was placed on economic development in communities. This chapter details these struggles and brings CCHW to the present.

### **ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT**

CCHW had routinely assessed its organization every two or three years since its inception; however in September 1993 a major evaluation effort was begun according to an article in *Everyone's Backyard*. The impetus for the assessment was the quick and dramatic changes which were occurring in the movement. Lois called together a small group of activists and grassroots leaders to help determine the process of the evaluation. Then CCHW board members called over one hundred leaders and asked them various questions about kinds of organizing assistance they needed and about the issues they were working on. Since CCHW was losing its organizing director, Will Collett, leaders were also questioned about the qualifications which they felt were needed for this position which had been an important key to the organizing and training efforts by CCHW. By November 1994, "372 activists had taken part in answering these questions" (Brody, 1994, p.11). In December 1993 the CCHW Board of Directors met to report on the phone surveys and to develop a plan of action. The discussion "identified programs that CCHW should continue as primary to the mission, programs that should play a supportive role and new areas of work" (CCHW, 1994, p.2). Out of the assessment five major areas of concern were identified: Activists needed CCHW to help them with connection and longevity to the movement, collaboration, effective strategies, information and assistance on corporations, scientific and technical issues, and financial resources (Brody, 1994).

To meet the needs of the grassroots, CCHW established what they termed a national model of mutual aid. This model would build on the considerable leadership and organizational experience of the hundreds of grassroots groups which were part of the movement. Throughout the model was a theme of dialogue between CCHW and the grassroots activists which they served which helped meet the need of collaboration, and connection to the movement. CCHW proposed The Alliance of Citizen Organizers to help provide the training and financial support for grassroots organizations which the current organizational structure was no longer able to provide due to the sheer size of the movement. Eighteen organizations, selected through an application process from around the United States took part in the first phase of this new program. These organizations, in

exchange for the services mentioned, would serve as “citizen organizers assisting others in their area” according to Brody (1994, p. 12) who wrote of the assessment and reorganization process in *Everyone’s Backyard*. Groups were asked to commit to a two year contract with CCHW and to commit no more than ten hours a week of time to assist other groups. CCHW provided “direct reimbursement for expenses, an intensive training program, computer linkages, assistance with local fundraising, a structure for meeting with and learning from other groups, and scientific and corporate research” (Brody, 1994, p. 12).

Other parameters which had to be met were that the eighteen groups had to appoint two Citizen Organizers, one of whom had to be a woman, and no more than one could be a paid staff member. Three times a year CCHW would hold weekend training events. However most of the training would be done via phone conversations throughout the year.

Addition responsibilities were outlined for Alliance members as well. These included serving as strategists for helping other groups in their areas. Leaders would help grassroots groups initiate and implement action plans for a particular environmental threat. Roundtables would be held to “develop larger strategic campaigns” such as the McToxics Campaign (Brody, 1994, p.12). Moreover, Alliance members would determine what training needs existed in the groups they served. To strengthen skills, CCHW would offer Continuing Education for Organizers (CEOs). This training effort would broaden and deepen the skills of local activists and also provide opportunities for activists to form coalitions and larger than local networks (CCHW, 1994).

CCHW recognized potential problems within this structure. Alliance members who gave too much of their time might experience additional stress and potential conflict. Financial squabbles could erupt based on division of labor between CCHW and the Alliance members. Another area of concern was the time Alliance members spent on organizing in their own locality versus that time spent on helping and assessing other groups. CCHW stressed that each problem must be recognized as “a necessary struggle in building a movement and appropriate coping and resolution mechanisms must be designed” (Brody, 1994, p.13).

To ensure that the new structure functioned and developed the sense of connection and collaboration which it was intended to do, CCHW proposed a formal evaluation process for the first two years with the Alliance. The proposed outcome of the evaluation process was to determine if the organizing and technical needs of groups were being met, if the number of coalitions increased, were there more national campaigns which achieved a stated goal, were more calls for assistance being logged, and did the Citizen Organizers believe they had developed more skills. Additionally, CCHW wanted to discover if, through the Alliance, they had maintained their goal of fighting racism, sexism, and class bias. Finally, CCHW wanted to know if this structure provided for diversity and if it managed conflict in a successful manner.

The first Continuing Education for Organizers (CEO) event was held in Edison, New Jersey on November 18-20, 1995. Eighty leaders from Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey came together to “identify ways to move the issue of environmental justice to a tri-state level. Activists also worked to advance their skills in fund raising, using the media, economic development and more” (Gibbs, 1995, p.2).

## CONVENTION '93

“Ten Years of Triumph” was the theme of the third national grassroots convention held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott on May 14-16, 1993. Forty workshops were planned ranging from organizing skills to testing, media relations, environmental racism, and jobs versus the environment (CCHW, 1993). By the end of its first decade of existence, CCHW had become a recognized force in the environmental movement. They could now boast of having a network of over 7500 grassroots groups. According to Gibbs (1993), “environmental justice has become the battle cry of the nineties and the grassroots movement for environmental justice is widely recognized as one of the most powerful political forces thriving in the United States today” (p.3).

CCHW invited prominent speakers such as Ralph Nader, Tony Mazzocchi, the presidential assistant to the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union, Dr. David Ozonoff, Chair of the Department of Public Health and Professor of Public Health at Boston University School of Public Health, and Dr. Robert D. Bullard, Professor of Sociology at University of California, Riverside as keynote speakers. Mazzocchi noted that ten years ago jobs versus the environment was not an issue. He acknowledged that today it was an important issue and that jobs and the environment could coexist successfully with work and commitment. Dr. Ozonoff, who worked for fifteen years with communities exposed to hazardous wastes, called grassroots citizen’s groups the “engine of progress who have helped the few scientists working in the field of health effects from toxic exposure”(Ozonoff, 1993, p. 18). Ozonoff also noted that in “almost every case of scientific advance, the essential ingredient has been citizen initiative, input, and involvement” (p. 19).

Dr. Bullard stated that there needed to be an environmental justice framework for decision making. This framework would include: the right of all individuals to be protected, a public health model of prevention, the burden of proof would be on the corporate polluters, and redress of the wrongs with regards to siting of waste facilities in predominantly poor, minority areas (Bullard, 1993).

One leader from New York was quoted as saying “this convention reaffirms and deepens our commitment to organize and understand that the primary challenge is political and power not information” (CCHW, 1993, p.3).

In her keynote address, Lois called for the need to “build bridges and come together to fight for justice”(CCHW, 1993, p.2). She praised the movement’s most important quality-that of diversity, and encouraged those in attendance to use diversity as a “tool to win our fights”(CCHW, 1993, p.2).

Another speaker, Joey Days, an 18 year old who had to undergo painful chemotherapy for leukemia brought on by pollution where he lived, spoke of his struggles and commitment to fight against the incinerator which was proposed in his local community. At the end of his address, Joey and his mother Angela led a march of over 300 delegates to the EPA headquarters.

On Monday, May 17, a civil disobedience action was taken by convention delegates from East Liverpool, Ohio and Greenpeace who were fighting against the opening of the toxic-waste incinerator located there. Some of the estimated 200 demonstrators, including actor Martin Sheen, whose mother lived near the plant, shackled themselves to concrete columns inside a Greenpeace van which belched nontoxic steam (McCrary, May 18, 1993). Pennsylvania Avenue, a main thoroughfare, was closed for most of the day. Firefighters and police worked for five hours trying

to remove protestors from the site. On May 19, *The Washington Post* carried an article by staff writer Tom Kenworthy which stated the Clinton administration would “temporarily halt the hazardous waste industry’s growth while it seeks to impose tougher health and safety standards on existing facilities”(p.A3). EPA administrator Carol M. Browner announced a “de facto moratorium on the licensing of new plants for 18 months” (Kenworthy, 1993, p. A3).

## **PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS**

A five year plan of action was drafted and approved at the convention. This strategic plan set forth the long term goals and plans of the grassroots movement as developed by eleven resolutions committees. The draft was published in *Everyone’s Backyard* following the convention for grassroots groups to adopt. Out of the resolutions committees also came directives specific to CCHW’s involvement. These ideas became the focus for many of the programs and projects accomplished in the next two years.

### **Leadership Apprentice Program**

CCHW recognized that effective leadership was essential for the grassroots movement to move forward. To this end, CCHW developed programs “that give community activists opportunities to learn new skills and become tomorrow’s leaders” (CCHW, 1993, p. 11). One of the leadership development programs coordinated by CCHW was the Local Leadership Apprentice program. The goal of the two year program was to provide leaders opportunities for personal growth and to allow them to work in their own community with a close relationship with CCHW organizers and staff. Participants would take part in quarterly training which would focus on advanced issues and skill development. During the second year the apprentice would focus on skills and resources needed to initiate a program of their own design. In 1992 funding was approved to support the program in 1993.

The first local leadership apprentice, Marina Ortega, lived in Santa Ysabel, California, where she had been a community activist for ten years. She was one of the founders of the California Indians for Cultural and Environmental Protection. After helping to defeat a garbage dump on the Los Coyotes Indian reservation, she was asked to help other groups with their fights in Southern California (CCHW, 1993).

The Community Leadership Development Grants Program remained an effective venue for providing training and skills development as well as helping groups to progress with their work. In 1993, leaders from North Carolina, West Virginia, and Kentucky attended a mini-grant conference sponsored by the Southern Appalachian labor School (SALS) in Cabin Creek, West Virginia. Topics included “leadership development, coalition building, strategy development, medial skills, public speaking and group democratic processes”(CCHW, 1993, p.11). A second group which received funding through the mini-grant program was ESCAPE from Sparks, Georgia. This group, representing a low income African American community held a training seminar to assist residents to understand the environmental threats to their community. In all, 45 grants totaling \$130,000 were awarded in 1992. According to CCHW’s 1994 final report, funding from a three year grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation and the North Shore Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program provided \$90,000 in 1994 grants.

## **Technical Assistance**

One of the most often requested services of CCHW from grassroots groups was for technical assistance. According to a report by CCHW, this program is “unique among national environmental organizations” (*Everyone’s Backyard*, 1993, p. 13). In 1992 the National Center for Appropriate Technology selected CCHW to receive the Distinguished Appropriate Technology Award for “technical assistance to low income and people of color communities” (*Everyone’s Backyard*, 1993, p.13). The science staff of CCHW conducted extensive reviews of technical reports and data. A written report was then sent to the group requesting the service. Also included in the report were a list of questions which could be asked as well as information gaps. These gaps were provided so that organizers could request that the gaps be filled. In 1992 technical assistance was provided to 293 communities in 44 states and the District of Columbia.

## **Labor and Economic Assistance**

One goal of CCHW was to forge alliances with labor organizations and turn the issue from jobs versus the environment to jobs and the environment. This debate was often used in areas to divide communities and give corporations an advantage for locating their plants. According to the 1994 final report, CCHW worked with the Labor Institute, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union and other labor and grassroots groups to form a bridge between labor and grassroots environmental leaders in 1994. Along with the Labor Institute, training materials were developed which could be used at joint meetings. Workshops were piloted, including ‘Economic Development 101’ and ‘If Not This, Then What’. These workshops were designed to allow participants to discuss how pollution prevention can create jobs, as well as options other than landfills, incinerators, and other hazardous facilities (CCHW, 1994).

Workshops and training materials were important beginnings, but CCHW had a larger agenda. The plan was to help communities consider and develop ways for alternative forms of economic development. In 1994, a fact pack on local sustainable development was published. A Resource Guide was made available to groups and individuals who provided technical assistance on economic development (CCHW, 1994).

The first jobs and environment training was held in southwest Virginia in May, 1994. CCHW and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union organized the event held at the Radford Army Ammunition Plant. The arsenal had laid off over one half of its work force over several years due to decreased production. EPA was expected to identify over one hundred contaminated sites on the grounds of the arsenal which had to be cleaned. David Rouse, professor at Clinch Valley College in Wise, Virginia, noted that “the community environmentalist can make sure the cleanup is done timely and the workers can have the jobs” (CCHW, 1994, p.14). CCHW’s 1994 final report further documented that the “participants in this workshop developed strategies to build coalitions between workers and community activists, revoke corporate charters of companies that damage the environment and take advantage of workers, elect pro-labor and environmental candidates, and encourage investment in local facilities and the work force” (p. 14).

To further demonstrate the link between labor and grassroots activists in the movement, CCHW regularly carried articles in *Everyone’s Backyard* about the struggles and victories which communities were achieving. One such example was in Jay, Maine. Kellerman (1995) wrote that “the struggle in Jay demonstrates that we can fight and win struggles not to spite a corporation but to protect ourselves and future generations”(p. 10). Essentially, citizens from Jay decided to fight

for jobs and the environment taking on International Paper Company (IP) which had been part of the community since 1937. Over sixteen months, community activists fought for the right “to give the town the power to enforce state and federal environmental laws”(Kellman, 1994, p.12). Jay eventually established an environmental administrator and the town enforces its own laws.

In Sparta, Georgia, Cynthia Smith, CCHW’s Southern organizer, worked with citizens to develop a county wide economic development project aimed at “creative use of local resources to provide jobs, investment and recycling” (Corcoran, 1993, p.21). Lois conducted a workshop with residents who were struggling with the siting of an incinerator in their community. Rather than talk directly about the incinerator, Lois asked the residents to determine the root of the problem. Citizens determined that the basic problem was that they were poor, black and uneducated. Once participants had made this discovery, Lois turned the discussion to find an economic base and how they could turn that to their advantage. One gentleman spoke up, according to Lois and said, “Well, Ms Gibbs, nobody ever asked us to think about that. We have never been told we were allowed to think about that”(personal interview with Lois Gibbs, October 13, 1994). By the end of the workshop the participants had prepared an economic development plan to establish a recycling plant, and had also established a community development corporation to ensure that the plans go forward.

In January 1995 CCHW collaborated with the Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League, the Grassroots Policy Project, the Center for Responsive Politics and the Institute for Southern Studies to develop a workshop using development “subsidy information and campaign finance reports to identify and analyze sources of power in a community. Participants will then develop organizing plans for each identified power source.”(CCHW, 1994, p.14).

## **EDUCATIONAL MISSION**

### **Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaign**

The stop dioxin exposure campaign began in fall of 1994 when CCHW mailed 25,000 dioxin alert reports to activists and groups. The alert was to inform groups that EPA had scheduled public meetings in December 1994 in six cities and to encourage activists to speak. Throughout November and early December CCHW helped organize leaders to testify. Because of the great turnout, EPA had to hold an additional three meetings in Columbus, Ohio, Atlanta, Georgia, and Seattle, Washington. More than 500 grassroots leaders spoke at the nine meetings. In Texas, over 30 spoke against “toxic waste-burning cement kilns, medical waste incinerators, chemical waste plants, and Agent Orange-related dioxin contamination” (Gayusky, 1995, p.8). In Ohio, over 100 came out to support thirty two speakers.

The campaign was initiated in response to EPA findings about the hazards of dioxin. In September 1993, EPA had released a report concerned with the reassessment of health risks associated with dioxin exposure. In the 2,400 page report, EPA revealed that Americans have or are close to having levels of dioxin in their systems which cause adverse health effects. Dioxin is an “unwanted by-product of many chemical, manufacturing, and combustion processes. Any use of chlorine in industrial processes, including incineration, results in dioxin formation” (CCHW, 1994, p.2). EPA estimates that 95% of dioxin comes from combustion processes such as that generated from medical waste and garbage incinerators which are the largest identified sources. Furthermore, 90% of human exposure occurs through diet, with animal sources being the most significant avenue. Animals are exposed through dioxin emissions on soil, water, and plants. A later study by Dr Arnold Schecter of the State University of New York at Binghamton found dioxin in foods purchased in New York grocery stores. According to a CCHW report, Schecter

estimated “that the average daily intake of dioxin is at least 50 times greater than what EPA estimates is a virtually safe dose of dioxin” (CCHW, 1994, p.4) .

On April 28, 1995, forty people convened in Arlington, Virginia for a Roundtable on Dioxin called by CCHW. “The purpose of the three day event ...was to design the components of a national grassroots campaign to stop dioxin exposure” (Gibbs, 1995, p.xix). The meeting was attended by grassroots activists, scientists and representatives from national organizations. The participants determined the goal of the campaign was “a sustainable society in which there is no dioxin in our food or breast milk because there is no dioxin formation, discharge or exposure” (Gibbs, 1995, p. xix). They developed a list of strategies to help achieve the goal.

One outcome of the Roundtable was Lois Gibbs' book *Dying From Dioxin*. This book is divided into two halves. The first half discusses the science of dioxin. The second half covers organizing strategies to help grassroots develop campaigns in their own communities to stop exposure.

A second outcome of the Roundtable was the dioxin electronic bulletin board, established by CCHW to allow activists to know quickly what others were doing, what was successful, and to get updates on the book (Gibbs, 1995). T-shirts and buttons were designed for the national campaign.

In May 1995 Stephen Lester, CCHW science director, was asked to attend a meeting of the panel on dioxin reassessment of EPA’s Science Advisory Board. Thirty nine scientists were convened to review the EPA reassessment document and to make a report to the EPA’s Science Advisory Board. The panel agreed that the scientific basis of the draft was sound. “No new data was called for” (De Avila, 1995, p.29).

On June 29, Kathryn R. Kelly , a cement kiln advocate and toxicologist with Delta Toxicology in Seattle, wrote an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* which stated the independent panel had told EPA that the “agency had overstated the risks of dioxin, that its conclusions were not scientifically defensible and that it could not endorse the report as currently drafted.” CCHW responded to this article with an article in *Everyone’s Backyard* calling for a spin doctor alert, where they warned that corporations would attack EPA’s reassessment and the effort to stop dioxin exposure. To counter CCHW’s strategy in part, The Chlorine Chemistry Council (CCC) hired two public relations agencies, Ogilvey, Adams and Rinehart, and Ketchum Communications to develop an advertising campaign about the benefits which plastics play in providing a high quality of life in the United States. The CCC is a well financed organization whose budget rose from two million dollars in 1992, the year when chlorine was first called for phase-out, to over twelve million dollars in 1994. Staff jumped from two to twenty so that the benefits of plastics could be touted effectively (Gayusky, 1995).

### **Protect Our Children: Save Delaney Campaign**

In 1994 CCHW began the Save Delaney Campaign in response to EPA’s efforts to eliminate the Delaney clause from food safety laws. The Delaney Clause, passed in 1958, prohibited any agent which caused cancer to be introduced into processed food-zero carcinogen. EPA wanted to replace the Delaney Clause with a “negligible risk assessment formula defining permissible limits of chemicals” (CCHW, 1994, p.15). Representative Henry Waxman had also introduced a bill which called for the phase out of pesticides in processed and fresh fruits and vegetables. However, this bill also eliminated the Delaney Clause. CCHW informed grassroots

about these efforts and initiated a postcard campaign. According to CCHW, thousands of people wrote to request that the Delaney Clause be preserved.

CCHW also wrote to over 100 corporations asking for an opinion on Delaney. The response which caused CCHW the most anger was from Dole Foods. Dole Foods responded that they supported the elimination of Delaney, based on the premise that having a zero tolerance could impact the short term supply of fresh produce. CCHW published part of Dole's response in a campaign brochure and asked grassroots activists to request that their schools not purchase Dole products and that their supermarkets cease carrying Dole foods. CCHW published Dole's toll free telephone number and address so activists could send their opinions.

## **SUMMARY**

This period in CCHW's history brought an increased effort to forge alliances with labor, and to broaden its base of membership. CCHW sought to bridge the gaps between labor and environmentalists by hosting or participating in conferences and workshops designed to bring the two groups into dialogue.

An in-depth institutional assessment brought about changes in organizational structure with the goal of meeting the needs of an ever expanding membership. Focus was placed on creating continuing education for those leaders who had been part of the movement for a long period of time. Work in communities was still a primary function of CCHW. Many training sessions were held across America, and the thrust of much of that training became sustainable economic development. Community leadership development grants remained a viable source of funding for training.

Two national campaigns were designed and implemented: Stop Dioxin Exposure and Protect Our Children Save Delaney Campaign. These campaigns are still in progress and the outcomes are uncertain.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the research and draws conclusions about CCHW and its role as an agent of adult education. Implications for the field of adult education and future research themes will be advanced.

#### SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify the educational dimensions, processes, and critical events of the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste from its inception in 1981 to 1995.

The questions which guided the research and upon which a research framework was built revolved around (a) who the movement intellectual was in the toxics movement and what role did she have in defining the movement, (b) the circumstances and conditions which led to the formation of CCHW, (c) the evolution of CCHW from its inception in 1981 to 1995, (d) the educational processes within the movement, (e) the program of work which CCHW designed and implemented within local communities and (f) the role of women in the grassroots movement for environmental justice.

This research demonstrated the link and strong focus on education and the work of CCHW in the grassroots movement. The underlying foundation of the inquiry was the determination of the bond between political power, education, and the grassroots movement for environmental justice. The study provided an evaluation of the educative work and mission of CCHW and how it related to social change, as well as the role of adult education in change.

Using the historical method, the study traced the ways which CCHW emerged onto the national scene as a powerful political force fighting for environmental justice. The study identified distinct periods in the history of CCHW: the 1981-1986 period, during which the organization was formed and began to develop a mission and belief system; the 1987-1991 period when CCHW experienced enormous growth and began to exert its power nationally in campaigns such as the McToxics Campaign. It was also during this period that CCHW began the process of working toward a unified grassroots environmental justice movement; and the period from 1992-1995 which marked the beginning of CCHW's second decade of existence and in which CCHW conducted an in-depth institutional assessment.

The principal sources of information for the study included extensive archival materials from CCHW headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia, government proceedings, annual reports of CCHW, relevant books, newspaper and journal articles, and interviews with Lois Gibbs and Cora Tucker.

The beginning of CCHW came as a result of the hundreds of calls for assistance which Lois Gibbs had received while fighting against the toxic waste dumpsite at Love Canal, New York. CCHW's institutional belief system and structure came about as a result of the strong convictions Lois had formed during her experiences as elected leader of the Love Canal Homeowner's Association (LCHA). The research study shows Lois' influence on CCHW and how the organization carried out this vision.

## **Mission**

CCHW developed a belief and mission based on the strong convictions of the original staff that every person had the fundamental right to a clean environment, as well as the right to speak about situations in their communities which could cause harm to anyone. They also believed in the democratic process, where every citizen had the right and responsibility to speak. From its earliest beginnings, CCHW had the stated mission to help people only if they asked. There was strong resistance on the part of CCHW staff to be recognized as the authorities; CCHW staff had determined their role to be that of facilitator-those who guided people in local communities to help them derive meaning and answers to their problems themselves.

Lois believed that people had a fundamental right and the ability to help themselves once they understood the political power structure in their communities. These ideals were a key component in every session and workshop which CCHW designed and conducted. CCHW staff were trained specifically on topics ranging from organizing strategies to listening skills. Their primary function was to listen carefully to people and then begin to guide them through the process of changing circumstances in their communities through direct action.

Further evidence of the conviction to this belief was the fact that no CCHW staff member ever spoke to the media in a community without one of the local leaders. In fact, most often CCHW staff would be present only to lend some initial credibility and support to the activist group. Since many of the people who took part in protests were low income, minority, and poorly educated, one of the components of the early organizing workshops was how to speak to and use the media to a group's advantage.

A second very important part of the mission was that of information dissemination. In the early 1980's the health effects of toxic hazards on the general population were practically nonexistent. Most of the work which had been done by corporations about exposure had been conducted on men who worked forty hours per week. No one had done field work on those who lived in the communities which hosted a toxic waste dumpsite. Love Canal had been one of the first locations where citizens completed health surveys. These surveys had been designed by the LCHA with the help of a reputable toxicologist, Dr. Beverly Paigen. This data was reported to Congress, to New York state health authorities, and eventually was published in other journals. Out of these early works began to emerge data which indicated that there were hundreds of known carcinogenic chemicals buried in or near neighborhoods. However, the general population did not have access to or necessarily understand, the complex science.

## **Training and Technical Assistance**

One of the important contributions which CCHW made to the movement was in its training and technical assistance programs. Many training programs came about from phone conversations with grassroots organizers in the field. One such program, Roundtables, were small groups of leaders from diverse fields who came together with a single purpose in mind. The Roundtable format workshops were instrumental in developing national strategies such as the McToxics and Stop Dioxin Exposure Now campaigns. Conferences such as Women in Stress came out of Roundtable discussions as well. Many of the Roundtable discussions were eventually turned into Guidebooks which were provided to the grassroots at a nominal charge. As of 1995 there were over sixty such guidebooks on topics ranging from organizing, coping with stress, legal issues, and technical terminology to military toxics.

Technical assistance was provided to grassroots groups via the science department of CCHW. This small group of scientists compiled, edited, translated into lay terms, and disseminated complex scientific information to grassroots groups upon request. They also performed reviews of information for groups where there was a proposed site, and listed questions which might be asked at public meetings. Technical assistance helped the grassroots become prepared to handle the scientific jargon which industry representatives often used in their presentations to the public.

## **Publications**

To reach a broad audience, CCHW launched a quarterly newsletter, *Everyone's Backyard*. Early issues had organizing strategies, answers to legal questions, and columns written by grassroots activists to share their victories and successful ideas. It soon became evident that there were breaking issues which CCHW often wanted to be able to inform the grassroots members about between issues of *Everyone's Backyard*. A second publication, *Action Bulletin* was published to meet this need.

Recognizing that there was little scientific information which was made available in medical journals to physicians and other health professionals working in the discipline of environmental health effects prompted CCHW to publish *Environmental Health Monthly*. This journal brought together reprints of various articles found in many journals into one place and was aimed at these professionals. CCHW was given credit by Dr. David Ozonoff for generating reliable scientific knowledge and for advancing the field.

CCHW also kept a corporate watchdog file. Staff members researched various companies which were known to be polluters, and kept detailed records on them. When a community called or needed information, a report could be to them quickly. Eventually, CCHW published fact packs on various companies and routinely updated them to ensure they were current.

## **Organizational Structure**

As the toxic waste issue surged onto the national political agenda, CCHW staff found it more difficult to cover the entire United States from one location. Many of the sites industry was choosing for hazardous waste dumping or incinerators were in rural, low income, minority areas which had little access to help from other sources. This practice of citing hazardous waste dumps in rural areas had been unveiled by CCHW and others when they leaked the Cerrell Report. This report, commissioned by industry, had listed factors which corporations used to locate their waste dumping operations. To counter this strategy, CCHW established four field offices in rural, low income areas around the United States. Field organizers provided much needed assistance to communities in these areas in terms of organizing, phone aide, and helping groups determine the most appropriate direct action strategies. As people in these areas began to discover they were the 'least likely to resist' they sought more assistance from CCHW.

The environmental justice movement was coming into prominence. People not only began to recognize the environment as air, water, and business, but also the people who lived in an area. People had to exist in communities where there were hazardous waste problems, and by the mid-1980's it was becoming widely recognized by the general public that hazardous waste was indeed toxic to humans. Industry also was beginning to develop counter strategies, trying to divide communities and creating jobs versus the environment arguments. Corporations started suing activists.

In many communities people sought to work through the government system to defeat a proposed site. When that failed as it often did, CCHW was called. CCHW had kept watchdog files, and received information from the field about the various strategies which industry was using. CCHW countered many of these strategies, initiating programs of their own, such as the SLAPP-Back suit, in which people who had been sued by industry turned around and sued them back. Grassroots activists won all SLAPP-Back suits they entered into.

As more communities sought help from CCHW, CCHW determined that a structure was needed to help field organizers with their enormous workload. Larger than locals were initiated where local groups in the same region would form a larger group and work on larger, more institutional, issues. CCHW helped, through training of its own staff and then in the field, these groups form and work successfully toward the same goal. Many hazardous waste proposals were defeated and groups also won funds for cleanup of existing sites.

By the 1990's CCHW was working with over 7500 groups nationally and internationally. The Board of Directors, listening to the grassroots, recognized that field offices were no longer effective. The organizational structure was once again modified to meet the needs of CCHW's constituents. An alliance of organizers was established, in which a group would commit to a two year contract with CCHW and provide training assistance to other groups in their assigned region. In exchange, CCHW provided resource materials and training, expenses, and advanced skills development. As of 1995, this structure was in its initial stages, with the first eighteen groups signed on to participate.

## **National Campaigns**

CCHW had successfully orchestrated national campaigns and days of action in its early years; however, its greatest national effort came about against McDonald's Corporation in what became known to the grassroots as the 'McToxics Campaign.' Extending for over three years, grassroots organizers established strategies and were relentless in their goal of getting McDonald's to stop using polystyrene containers which were manufactured with CFC's, a known carcinogen. McDonald's resisted, placing the blame for the containers on the demands by its customers. Pressure continued to mount, and industry attempted to introduce a CFC free polystyrene. When it was found to be a ruse to calm the public, CCHW and the press put on even more pressure. Many organizations mailed hundreds of pounds of used containers to McDonald's. Finally, McDonald's announced they would cease using polystyrene, and the rest of the fast food industry followed. Grassroots activists never received credit and little press for this monumental accomplishment.

The most recent national campaigns were the Save Delaney and Stop Dioxin Exposure Now campaigns.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The field of adult education offers much opportunity for inquiry which can add to our understanding of theory as it relates to practice. In an historical inquiry there are many questions which must be answered, and then woven into a fabric which tells a detailed story of the subject studied. This particular study offered up several questions which must be addressed in order to determine the role of the CCHW as an agent of adult education in the environmental justice movement. These questions included: Is CCHW the movement? What are the implications of the grassroots movement for environmental justice for adult educators? What is the legacy of CCHW? What role did women play in the environmental justice movement? The following paragraphs will

draw some conclusions about the research which will begin to answer these questions as well as provide themes for future research in the field.

### **Is CCHW the Movement?**

The review of literature delineates between old and new social movements. Old movements, such as the worker's education movement, relied on more formal educational strategies to establish their identity and to transmit their message to a broader society. New social movements, such as the environmental movement, link political and educational dimensions. The literature clearly demonstrates the relationship between social movements and education. Social movements are built upon political and educational actions taken to change people's circumstances. Participants are actively engaged through complex psychological processes by which they can be educated and changed. Furthermore, social movements are often sites of knowledge creation. Through the various activities of a movement, new knowledge about a particular problem often comes to light. For the toxic waste movement, the activities of the Love Canal Homeowner's Association brought forth new information not only about the health effects of hazardous waste but also helped define hazardous waste.

Evidence from the literature suggests that no organization is a movement. However, there is a preponderance of evidence suggested from the research that CCHW is a movement organization. From the perspective of social movement literature, CCHW mobilized people and provided resources, leadership, and knowledge which empowered individuals and groups to make connections between their life situation and the power structure in their community and then to take action to better their situation, not only in their own communities but also across the United States and internationally.

CCHW addressed this question of their role in the environmental justice movement again and again during the first fourteen years of its history. It was a central theme in determining strategies and organizational structure of CCHW. CCHW has carved out a specific role for itself—that of facilitator—and remained true to it. To that end, CCHW was the backbone of the movement. CCHW was then, a movement organization that played a central role and played certain roles in developing methods which empowered the grassroots to take action for themselves, involved citizens in actions which entailed learning, and knowledge generators.

As evidence of this, the mission statement of CCHW states that “they assist people in building strong, community-based organizations” (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1995, p.2). As a movement organization, they have stayed true to this vision, taking on battles they were not sure of winning, remaining cautious in their approach, always keeping their mission in mind. Because they had listened to the grassroots activists from the very beginning, they were able to encompass an ever greater number of groups and to help them in their struggles. Lois recognized that diversity was a great strength of the grassroots movement, and encouraged members to value it and use it as a strength. CCHW assisted many communities of color, Native American tribes, and other ethnic neighborhoods. What CCHW asked for in return was that those who were helped would offer help back to others.

CCHW was not an advocate. They have never gone into a community without being asked. They never have spoken on behalf of any group or gone into a community with a preplanned agenda and program of action. Their strategy, through their training and organizing assistance, their meetings and conferences, and in their contacts with more than 7500 grassroots organizations with whom they are affiliated, was to guide the group to a clearer understanding of the political power structures within their communities. They did this through work sessions with

community activists where citizens developed their own strategies to combat corporations and nonresponsive governments. In short, they helped people become advocates for themselves and their communities. One of CCHW's greatest contributions to the movement then, was how it involved citizens in actions that entailed learning as the base.

The five year plans of action and organizational structure of CCHW were crafted looking forward. Recognizing that the number of member affiliates were too numerous for the CCHW staff to service adequately, grassroots groups were asked what kind of organization they desired. The Alliance of Organizers was initiated with the goal being that grassroots groups would provide training and assistance to other groups, widening the depth and breadth of the organization. CCHW never appeared to forget the people whom they set out to serve.

A second contribution was the methods CCHW used to empower people. This was accomplished through organizing and technical assistance. Once a group had developed an idea for action, CCHW would help them develop the skills needed to carry it out. Workshops about how to organize, how to make sense of scientific terms, legal implications, how to conduct a meeting, and how to raise funds were often requested by citizen groups of CCHW. Most of the program design done by CCHW came as a result of requests from the grassroots. Refinements to programs were made after visiting several communities, and through listening to those who had specific needs.

National campaigns emerged from educational programs sponsored by CCHW. Roundtables, small group workshop sessions at which people from various interests were brought together to cultivate a major program or campaign, were initiated to give the grassroots a voice in places where they otherwise would not have been heard. The McToxics Campaign and the Stop Dioxin Exposure Campaigns were outgrowths of national actions which came forth from Roundtables. A second development of these Roundtables were the relationships which formed with various groups between what once were opposing factions, such as labor and the grassroots. These contacts enabled CCHW to form alliances and develop strategies to counteract the industry tactic of environment versus labor. CCHW helped grassroots leaders and labor effectively turn the debate to environment and labor in many communities across the United States.

CCHW also served the movement as a resource generator. Fundraising was often a major issue for communities. CCHW recognized this, and applied for and received grants from various foundations to help fund the groups. CCHW developed and implemented the Community Leadership Development Grant Program which assisted groups from around the country in hosting workshops meant to develop their organizing skills and to further information about toxic problems within a community or region.

Social movements are often the site of new knowledge generation. Certainly this is true of the grassroots movement for environmental justice. Beginning with Love Canal, the dangers of toxic chemical exposure to humans, never investigated, was brought forth. For the toxic waste movement, the activities of the Love Canal Homeowner's Association brought forth new information not only about the health effects of hazardous waste but also helped define hazardous waste. Lay people with judicious use of experts developed knowledge not previously accepted by scientists. Scientists who heretofore had not given lay persons credibility for being able to comprehend complex scientific ideas, gradually came to recognize and accept the results of health surveys which had been designed, distributed, and analyzed by grassroots groups.

New professions emerged from the study of toxic chemicals. Physicians entered into the practice of environmental health medicine and sought the information which CCHW was able to

provide through its research. The waste citing industry evolved as a strategy against grassroots groups with the goal of discovering communities which were least likely to resist the citing of a hazardous waste facility.

### **CCHW's Legacy**

In 1981, Lois Gibbs and a small group of volunteers determined that CCHW would be established as a service center for "communities which were under environmental attack" (*Everyone's Backyard*, 1993, p.3). By 1995 CCHW and the grassroots movement for environmental justice were widely recognized as a powerful political force by industry and politicians.

Actions by grassroots caused transitions in industry, most notably in the fast food industry, when after a three year period, polystyrene food containers were eliminated. Secondly, every single community with whom CCHW worked through the eighties was successful in their battle against the siting of a hazardous waste dump or incinerator in or near their communities. Superfund money was granted due in large measure to the actions of the grassroots. CCHW initiated national campaigns with the purpose of ensuring that grassroots groups were part of the process in determining what happened in their communities. CCHW was successful in forging lasting relationships between groups which had been on opposite sides of the argument concerning the environment. Perhaps the greatest legacy was that CCHW empowered citizens to exercise their right to question and design their communities's businesses and enterprises and to have the confidence to fight the battles for the future.

With all these accomplishments, there are still questions about the leadership of CCHW. Lois Gibbs has been the visionary and guiding force, the movement intellectual, behind the organization. Her background was modest—a high school education and the role of housewife and mother. She demonstrated that from everyday experiences one could learn new skills and take actions which could effect change in a community. Lois came to lead a powerful grassroots organization against environmental hazards, one built on her convictions that people had the right and responsibility to be heard and listened to by government and corporations which could harm them.

She has said that it is important that her own ego not get in the path of the mission of the organization. She has worked hard to put the movement's needs ahead of her own. Will the organization be as strong without her at the helm? CCHW has attempted to put in place a structure that is governed by the grassroots for the grassroots. Lois can not be replaced in terms of her impact on the environmental justice movement, but perhaps her legacy is that, through education, the movement has grown so strong that the loss of one person, no matter how visible, will not cause the movement to falter.

### **Implications for the Field of Adult Education**

The study of CCHW and the grassroots movement for environmental justice provides important implications for the field of adult education and is significant in that the study demonstrated that social movements are important sites of learning. The study supports the work of scholars in adult education such as Lindeman, Welton, Holford, and Dykstra and Law. Eyerman and Jamison's social research on movement intellectuals and knowledge production in social movements is reinforced as well. The study links theory to practice.

In the grassroots movement for environmental justice, activists, primarily women who defined themselves as ordinary citizens, were mobilized and able to speak out against industry and

help determine the future of their communities. These women, most poorly educated, minority, and of low economic status progressed through the educative processes of making connections between political reality and their own life situations. Often women would become involved when they learned the health implications of toxic chemicals. Once these connections were made, activists carved a space from which to speak where they could make a contribution. Learning occurred through everyday life and its struggles, and as experience was gained, people became more confident and skillful in their abilities to stand against industry and government to state their cases. The movement provided many women leadership positions, and it is estimated that seventy to eighty percent of grassroots environmental justice leaders are women.

### **Future Research**

This study demonstrated the multimodal concepts of adult education as process, program, as a field of practice, and as a field of study. The educative components of social movements were shown. Further adult education research needs to be conducted to seek contributions to our understanding of the history of adult education, its important figures, especially those who are often neglected, such as women and minorities, and to come to a better understanding of the various ways knowledge is generated and disseminated. The field offers much opportunity for inquiry which can add to our understanding of adult education theory as it relates to practice. Following are possible areas for research: inquiry about the learning processes which occur in social movements, how women and minorities become energized; and how knowledge is produced about the problem of concern.

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