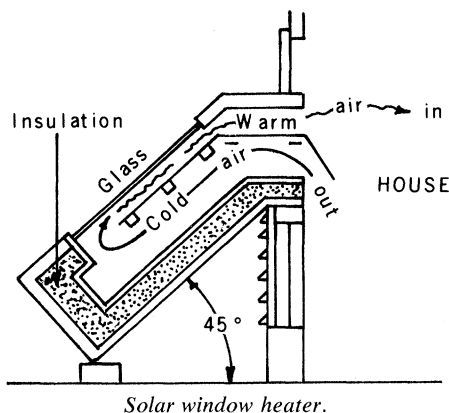


tive director, James Schmidt, a former CAP director, and is looking for office space to house an eventual staff of around 30. Outreach workers from the center will be planted in CAP offices and regional CSA offices around the country. The center plans soon to shower CAP's, appropriate technologists, and community groups with its Request for Proposal, and the first grant may be made as early as next month.

Aside from promoting appropriate inventions, just what sort of undertakings does NCAT hope to stimulate? Perhaps the best available example of the combination of community action, self-reliance, and appropriate use of technology in a poor community is supplied by the East 11th Street project in lower Manhattan. East 11th Street was born from a crisis, a not uncommon facilitator of new ideas.

According to Travis Price, who was on the NCAT planning committee and who has been advising this project, it all started when a dilapidated building was allegedly burnt out by the landlord who hoped to collect insurance money on a losing deal. It was a classic ghetto neighborhood, populated mostly by Puerto Ricans whose average annual income was \$1500. A group of people on the block got together to buy the shell of the building before it was demolished by the city. This was 3½ years ago. After a year and a half of trying to get a mortgage (the area was "red-lined" and no bank would give them a loan) they got a loan from the city, and started rebuilding the thing themselves. Price got involved somewhere along the way, and tried to help the group look for ways to reduce fuel bills. They finally obtained money from the CSA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development to install a windmill and solar collectors on the roof, and to insulate the building. Now, says Price, not only the building but the neighborhood is transformed. It is owned and maintained by its 30 tenants. Using "sweat equity"—labor instead of capital—construction costs have been 40 percent of what they would have been normally. The flat plate solar collectors have supplied 85 percent of hot water needs, and the windmill supplies virtually all the common electricity needs (in fact, says Price, they got into a fight with the power company because the windmill was feeding power back into the grid—the consumers were becoming producers! The dispute was eventually resolved with the help of lawyer and former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark). Price says the project has had side effects throughout the community. A few years ago, the main "cottage industry" was stripping



cars. Now the strippers are working to rehabilitate several other buildings on the block.

The actual technology that has been used to transform this particular neighborhood involves nothing novel. In fact, as Price points out, "appropriate technology" in this case can be as simple a thing as using a roller brush instead of a paintbrush. He already looks to future developments, such as greenhouses (even without special heating, a greenhouse can prolong the growing season by a couple of months), hydroponic roof gardening, aquaculture (growing fish in the basement), and starting small companies to produce the relevant products. In the far future, he talks of such projects

as establishing cooperative farming within a 50-mile range of the city so residents can bypass the local supermarket.

Appropriate technology is not going to be all that easy to sell. The country and its scientists are, after all, still in the grips of the idea that new, higher technologies—rather than simplification of life-styles—are what are needed to solve our problems. And there are countless institutional obstacles, ranging from federal R & D funding priorities to loan policies and building codes, to the wide-scale adoption of small technologies.

The NCAT idea should get a good boost from the impending visit to these shores of E. F. Schumacher himself. Among other engagements, Schumacher was scheduled to meet with NCAT people in Butte at a governors' conference to be held in late February; this month he is to lead a workshop, sponsored primarily by NCAT, at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

No spokesman, however eloquent, is going to reorient this country's values to small is beautiful; however, as prices continue to climb and resources diminish, more and more people will find themselves resorting to appropriate technology, whether or not they call it that.—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

NIH Seeks Law on Gene-Splice Research

Federal regulation of gene-splicing research is now inevitable, and the National Institutes of Health will just have to try and settle for the best terms available. Conveyance of this message seemed to be the purpose of a high level meeting held last week at NIH for the deans of medical schools and other science leaders.

The NIH has long striven to keep its research guidelines voluntary. An interagency committee chaired by NIH director Donald Fredrickson succeeded in persuading all agencies, including even such unruly satrapies as the Departments of Defense and Agriculture, to promise they would adopt the NIH guidelines. But the pressure of events, such as public disquiet and the laws being passed elsewhere, has made the voluntary route untenable. The interagency committee has tentatively concluded that no member agency has existing powers to regulate gene-splicing research. (Some officials in EPA disagree, but EPA is unlikely to be able to wrest control of the issue from NIH.)

No one at last week's meeting disputed that NIH-sponsored legislation now is necessary, especially after being treated to a view of the teeth—\$10,000 fines, liability without regard to fault—in the bill introduced by Senator Dale Bumpers of Arkansas. One speaker suggested that laws in just one country were inadequate: "What happens in a little lab in a South American country is ten times more important than all the labs on the East Coast." Another speaker replied that the United States could exert "tremendous moral power in doing our own thing right." Fredrickson, back from talks with Europeans on the issue, suggested that national authorities will have to draw up their own regulations and then hope for a coalescence of views.

The next step is for the interagency committee, probably in the next few weeks, to draw up at least the main elements of a bill, one of which would doubtless be to preempt all laws passed elsewhere. Would NIH have done better to create a law a year ago, before Mayor Vellucci and others had forced the issue? Perhaps, but the good will engendered by scientists' initiative will still ensure a sympathetic hearing for any NIH-sponsored bill from the House and Senate health committees.—NICHOLAS WADE