

Ironically, while families are disintegrating, the community as a whole has become more cohesive. Love Canal was not a close-knit neighborhood, but now people who never socialized with each other are sharing their problems and neighborhood quarrels have dissolved. "We could have some wonderful street parties now," says Gibbs.

Robin Bannerman, geneticist at the State University of New York (SUNY) in Buffalo, which has been supplying genetic counseling services to Love Canal residents, believes that "when the smoke has cleared, it may turn out that the greatest damage to health will be psychological and social." But so far, there has been virtually no social research done on the situation except by Adeline Levine, a sociologist at SUNY in Buffalo. Levine, who used graduate students to interview residents in August 1978 and again 6 months later, observes that tremendous additional stress to the residents has been caused by indecision on the part of government agencies and their failure to keep people informed. Levine also confirms that, like the alleged victims of Agent Orange, the people have been getting psychological help mostly in the form of self-help. They consider it stigmatizing to deal with mental health agencies, and in any case they do not believe any outsider can understand what they have been going through.

The federal government has no plans to conduct research other than toxicity studies. Calvin Frederick, head of disaster assistance and emergency programs at the National Institute of Mental Health, said that he would indeed like to be able to conduct research on Love Canal, but there is no way to get money for it unless the area is declared a disaster area by the President.

Love Canal may be the first of its particular type of disaster, but it is very likely not the last, as there are many hundreds of other sites around the country, mute witness to the old days of free and easy dumping. Now that the Love Canal situation has erupted, Gibbs says people are calling from all over the country for information on how to get organized, how to get appropriate health tests done, and so forth. In New York State and elsewhere, officials are undoubtedly wondering how many other communities—people who have been living for years with what appear to be unusually high rates of cancer and other problems—are going to get it into their heads that they, because of government negligence, are being slowly poisoned.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN

## Big Boost for Solar Energy, Conservation

"If solar can't fly with this, then it can't fly," said a congressional staffer the other day, apropos of the Solar Energy and Energy Conservation Bank that is part of the omnibus energy bill. House and Senate conferees have already approved the bill in the main and it may become law before the 4 July congressional recess.

Public attention has focused principally on the omnibus bill's \$20-billion synfuels program, but the solar and conservation bank may be equally important and perhaps more so. It has been a high priority item for advocates of the "soft path" to energy sufficiency. If Congress actually appropriates all or even most of the money authorized for the next three fiscal years—a total of \$1.625 billion for conservation and \$525 million for solar energy—the "bank" (which will in effect make grants, not loans) should have a substantial impact.

Indeed, the government will pay 40 percent of the cost of a homeowner's solar installation, up to a maximum of \$5000; and, if the homeowner is in a low-income bracket, the subsidy will be up to 60 percent, although the \$5000 maximum will still apply. Moreover, the subsidy is available not just for homes with "active" solar hot water or space conditioning systems employing an array of collectors but also for homes built to "passive" solar designs.

Builders and owners of apartment houses and commercial buildings will also qualify for help, with the subsidy amounting to as much as \$100,000 for commercial structures.

Whereas the solar subsidies will be available for both new solar structures and old ones with retrofits, the conservation subsidies will be only for retrofits and are designed principally to benefit low and middle-income people. For example, a middle-income family will be eligible for a 30 percent subsidy for conservation improvements to its home, or up to \$750.

Solar and conservation tax credits were authorized under the previously enacted windfall profits bill, but such credits can be of little use to a low-income family without much tax liability

(also, passive solar systems have in effect been disqualified for credits). One can choose to take either the tax credit or the subsidy, but not both. For active solar systems, the credit is 40 percent, or up to \$4000; for conservation improvements, it is 15 percent, with a \$300 maximum for a single-family dwelling.

The Solar Lobby is enormously pleased that the solar and energy conservation bank is about to become a reality. John Wilson, one of those who works Capitol Hill for this group, says that the next goal is to see that Congress appropriates the full amounts authorized for fiscal 1981, \$100 million for solar subsidies and \$200 million for conservation. "We think we can get \$300 million out of the Congress as long as the Administration doesn't fight it," Wilson said.

The subsidies will be in the form of either reduced interest charges or reduced principal on loans, and will be applied for through regular lending institutions. According to Arthur Reiger, an official at the Department of Housing and Urban Development where the program will be administered under a special interagency board, it will probably be next spring before the bank is set up and the subsidies become available.

## Discontent at EPA

Implementation of the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 has been agonizingly slow, but there was good news recently when the first orders were issued under TOSCA's critically important premanufacture review program and they went uncontested. The companies that had applied to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to register the six new chemicals in question simply withdrew them when informed that recent research indicated that the compounds represented a health risk and that the necessary safety tests had not been performed.

But now comes what many at EPA perceive to be bad news: Blake Biles, director of the premanufacturing review division, has been replaced because of personality conflicts and irreconcilable differences in "management styles" between him and his new boss, Deputy Assistant Adminis-