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, àpropos 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-

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trator Warren Muir. On 16 May, some 100 EPA employees, including a number of scientists in the toxic substances program, joined in signing a letter to Biles that sings his praises and criticizes Muir and Assistant Administrator Steve Jellineck, chief of the program overall. "We believe . . . that the circumstances that led to your resignation reflect a serious mistake in judgment on the part of OPTS management," the letter said.

Some who signed the letter, and perhaps many, agree with Biles' view that Muir involves himself too much in administrative details and does not delegate authority to the extent necessary for the running of a large, complex regulatory program.

Jellineck says it was "an excrutiating situation" that could only be resolved by Biles stepping aside. "I would much prefer to see him [Biles] still there, but it just wasn't going to work," he says.

Under a reorganization plan still awaiting final approval, Jellineck has given Muir responsibilities once divided among three deputy administrators. "His is more of a directive style [than Biles'], but once a program is put together, he is a delegator," Jellineck says.

The present discontent in the toxic substances program may reflect no more than a passing bureaucratic perturbation. But some of Biles' partisans believe that it is a sign of a crippling weakness in one of EPA's most important and demanding programs.

Hostages in the Arctic: The Porcupine Caribou

Among the last big, free-ranging herds of ungulates left on earth are the caribou herds of the North American arctic, and one of the largest is the Porcupine herd that migrates between northeast Alaska and Canada's Yukon Territory. By late June, the United States and Canada are expected to begin negotiating a treaty aimed at protecting this migratory herd of some 100,000 animals.

Although U.S. and Canadian officials are said to be basically in agreement as to what the treaty should provide, prospects for success in the negotiations appear clouded by a lack of consensus among the players on the American side. In particular, the state of Alaska and the Alaskan congressional delegation may not yet be ready to go along with such a treaty. In part this is because the Alaskans resent efforts by the Carter Administration to push through the House-passed Alaskan lands bill that would have far more of the state preserved as wilderness, parks, and wildlife refuges than they believe is desirable.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Photo

"It's possible that the caribou treaty could be held hostage," says Rod Moore, an aide to Representative Don Young of Alaska.

Moore indicated that there is also concern on the part of Alaskan officials and natives that a treaty might result in unreasonable and unfair restrictions on the taking of caribou for subsistence use. The International Whaling Commission's ban of a few years ago on the taking of bowhead whales is cited as a case in point.

The Porcupine herd is at the moment believed to be healthy and stable, but, as many wildlife biologists view the matter, the proposed treaty cannot come any too soon. Oil and gas exploration and development in the Arctic could eventually put the Porcupine herd and other large herds in jeopardy. Populations of some other herds have collapsed in the past at least partly from alteration of their habitat and overhunting. For example, the Fortymile herd of east central Alaska and the Yukon, now down to some 4000 caribou, is a surviving remnant of the enormous Yukon-Tanana herd which in the 1920's is said to have numbered a half million animals.

The Porcupine herd has its calving grounds and summer range on the Arctic slope of Alaska and the Yukon. Most of the herd winters in the boreal forests to the south of the Brooks Range and the British Mountains, with one major migration route crossing the Porcupine River, a Yukon tributary from which the herd takes its name. So far, the greater part of this vast area remains little changed.

A draft of "principles" to guide the treaty negotiations is now being circulated for comment. A six-member caribou commission, half U.S. and half Canadian, would be created to monitor the Porcupine herd's size and stability, decide how many caribou can be taken each year, and apportion the take between Alaskans and Canadians. In Alaska, the state fish and game agency would continue to regulate hunting, with subsistence users to be accorded priority over sports hunters. The commission's recommendations on these matters would be binding unless either government, following prescribed procedures, chose to take formal exception.

The commission would also make recommendations with respect to habitat protection, but these would not be binding. The thinking on this point is that decisions having to do with such major questions as oil and gas development will inevitably be decided at the highest levels of government.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William A. Hayne has been trying, with limited success, to develop a consensus among all the American interests to be affected by the treaty: the state of Alaska, the natives, the sports hunters, and the environmental groups. Each of these interests, together with the Alaskan congressional delegation, has been invited to be represented on the U.S. delegation that will negotiate with the Canadians. But unless things soon take a more positive turn within the next few weeks, the negotiations may fail, not from differences with the Canadians, but from dissent on the American side by the Alaskans and possibly others.

Luther J. Carter