

CHAPTER 6. BEING MORE ABOUT SPIRITUAL THINGS THAN ENVIRONMENTAL ONES

Palmerton has witnessed the industrial infiltration of the lifeworld of its residents. There has been a concomitant active refusal by most members of the community to listen and to apprehend alternatives to the dominant normative narrative, allowing the perpetuation of industrial-based economic, social, and political systems in the terrain where people come together and define themselves, their beliefs and values. This has resulted in the occlusion of spaces for democracy within civil society.

In the United States during the past decade there have been only “isolated protests against environmental polluters” (Dowie, 1995, p. 129) despite polls which indicate that millions of Americans sense they are at-risk from chemical (and nuclear) toxic exposure (Szasz, 1994, p. 40). This dissertation opened with the positioning of a civil war in Palmerton--a Community-at-Risk. The industry-based dominant narrative of control, regulating social arrangements and civil order to meet industry needs, and to fulfill the unstoried lives of residents, led to paternalism and dependency. However, with PCCE, some residents have learned to transgress and to write their narrative--a story penned largely in the language employed by environmental professionals. Their growing eco-literacy was situated within a critical paradigm. PCCE was engaged in a transformative process that affirmed Palmerton could become, at least for some, a Community-at-Promise; hope and possibility were its central moments. Aligning with makers of official knowledge allowed members to break feelings of dependency on the company, even while transferring dependency from one authority to another. They believed that the government had a social obligation to act on their behalf, in a way that the industry never had. Bolstered by official knowledge, their fate at the hands of an industrial discourse was less threatening. Codified knowledge was the terrain of possibility, not marginalization.

In the face of community silence about environmental problems, and in contest with industry boosters, government help was largely what PCCE members recognized as available. This study illustrates that power politics of the *elite* group are not necessarily immutably bound

to official knowledge. It is insufficient to say that dominant knowledge inherently transports specified politics and power arrangements as is often articulated in environmental studies. In this case, official knowledge opened a space for the cultivation of a will to resist almost one-hundred years of industrial culture, and was a promise of possibility. PCCE showed that power symmetries are contingent on the social and ideological relations in which official knowledge is inscribed. It was through official knowledge that some adults learned to transgress--to develop an "oppositional consciousness" (Harding, 1986). In this context, the grassroots community inhabited a cultural space built on democratic possibilities, that struggled to broaden the social discourse.

A Pedagogy of Promise in a Community-at-Risk

Hope is a "daydream" projected into the future

(Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 1973, p. 216)

In 1996, Louise Calvin, representing the PCCE, testified before the Pennsylvania State Citizen's Advisory Council (CAC) which was holding regional meetings in the vicinity of Palmerton. She began her testimony with the "story" of Palmerton, and a long litany of the characteristics of that story. Her description painted the experiences she and others had, including fear, intimidation, abuse at the hands of industry in a company town--an industry "whose long arm reached into our educational system, into our hospital, into determining where people could live, into how people would think, and about what issues people could speak." Yet she concludes, "in spite of all that, we still believe now, as when we began, that [Palmerton's] is a story of hope" (testimony to the CAC, October 8, 1996, p. 1).

The theme of hope, faith in ordinary people, a sense of personal and community pride, and courage repeatedly emerged in the interviews with PCCE members. Sandy Peters

expressed the belief that, despite current or past company employees' participation on the Hospital Staff, or on Borough Council, "the tide has turned and the majority of people in Palmerton want to address [the] environmental situation and they want to get it over with [in a way that ensures public health and safety]" (7/22/96, lines 650-654). Tess, too, often talked of the community's "silent support" which she read as a sign of hope and possibility. Early in her involvement, Sandy was recognized by the Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste. She reported, "I was so excited and proud to be in that room with those other people that stood up. I was crying, I [was] so happy, but I don't really need that" stating that what she needed was a community where "one more person [called USEPA to have] their property cleaned" (lines 2358-2364)--helping to build a community of promise. Many of the members supported the position that ordinary people would "make the right decisions...about something that's gonna affect the welfare of their children" if they were allowed to do it "within [the safety of] their own homes." (Sandy Peters reiterating a strong point of Tess Roberts belief system, 7/22/96, lines 2385). On numerous occasions, Louise Calvin described the actions of Palmerton's grassroots community as "acts of courage."

Ethical Decisions as Social and Political Acts

On one level, ethics can be viewed as the field of study and the application of "oughts," that is, reflection on and practice of the things one ought to do, to be the kind of person one believes she or he ought to be. The basis for the grassroots' focus on hope in a Community-at-Promise was steeped in multiple ethical dimensions--understandings of how things ought to be, based on how individuals and groups ought to behave. For PCCE members, the point was more than parts per million, $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$, and how much contaminated cookie dough a pig could eat; it was about matters of "right" and "wrong." Ethics saturated their rationale for: assigning responsibility to the industry, taking up a pedagogy of hope, feelings of pride and courage, and

for mobilizing the desire for a bright future. Kada Rehrig expressed, “once you have it [knowledge], you have to keep at [the environmental problem solving]...because it’s the right thing to do” (7/19/96, lines 970-980). Louise Calvin put it tersely, “bad things do happen when people don’t speak out. I really do think it is a moral obligation to speak...[both] singly and collectively” (7/30/96, lines 700-704). She continued, what is happening in Palmerton is “a moral issue and...[an] ethical issue...and [a] religious issue, and we’ve [referring to PCCE] thought often--as a group--that we had a spiritual drive to [seek effective solutions to the contaminated environment]” (lines 1305-1312).

One key informant associated with PCCE claimed, “I think I’m a spiritual person. A lot of my spirituality comes from children and animals and the earth itself, so my environmentalism is kind of like my religion...my activism is kind of like my spirituality” (7/22/96, lines 550-555). Tess Roberts described the role of religion as ambiguous. A pastor once told her, it was moral to believe that “what God put here he wanted everyone to use, and to use it to the fullest.” It was equally tenable to be a “caretaker” of God’s creation. She resonated with the latter position (7/19/96, lines 781-793). On the other hand, for Ray Carazo, his involvement was simply based on the fact that “everything God made, I’m interested in” (8/9/96, lines 9-10) stating, “I think it’s our responsibility to take care of the earth” (lines 813-814). Ron Monty expressed that his environmental ethic, which was a basis for his involvement, stemmed from his boyhood “upbringing,” and the “value system of concern” given to him while in the Boy Scouts.

One member reported that during a Palmerton Environmental Task Force meeting, she unexpectedly became “overwhelmed by deep, deep feelings of love” for the women who had accompanied her to the gathering. She was not thinking thoughts related to this at the time these feelings surfaced, but was attempting to follow the technical language of a presenter. She recounted strong feelings that Palmerton’s struggle was more about “spiritual things” rather than “environmental ones.” In fact, she confided that when I first contacted the group to study with them, she cast her vote in my favor after learning that I held a theology degree. It was her conviction that the contest was a spiritual battle.

For some, an ethical position brought them into the struggle, however, their ethical understanding matured as a result of commitment and involvement. Sandy Peters' situation is model. She reported, "When I first was involved with [environmental conflicts] I...had [the situation] broken down into...good/bad, black/white, good/evil. That was one thing I have grown out of....[I no longer feel that] the people ...who believe differently than I do in this community are...evil" (lines 1323-1326). She corroborated Finger's assertion (1989) that the members of the broadly defined environmental movement, a "new social movement," act from deeply held moral, even religious, motives.

Industry was more often seen as functioning in a moral vacuum, that is, as not having morals (amoral) rather than as immoral, although at times it was characterized as "unfair." All PCCE members interviewed expressed the belief that industry had an ethical responsibility which was betrayed by them. The Everts^{pseud.} were typical of a group that was angry at the company, not only for having some responsibility for the pollution, but for industry's "constant denial" (7/22/96, lines 469-480). Linda Holland felt that the zinc industry should have said, "OK, we did that [referring to 'killing the mountain']. We'll fix it. We put it in your yard and we're sorry...we'll do a good job [in the future] at our industry" (7/22/96, lines 772-779). To her that would have been the morally courageous act. But the company's response was, instead, "an injustice to the town" (lines 791-791). Her sense of "justice" was based on what she described as the "American ethic," including the right to be free, to speak what a person feels is honest, and to live in a nice clean pollution-free environment (lines 797-806). She bitterly objected to industry's attempts to "control your thoughts, the way you feel, [and] how you live your life" (lines 806-808). Linda located herself within a patriotic discourse. Many positioned the industry's attitudes in terms of feckless and irresponsible citizenship and unpatriotic behavior.

Most informants expressed the hope that their actions would lead to a future filled with "justice" and freedom from contamination. PCCE took up a public language of justice that articulated specific claims about how things ought to be. Not unlike one of the tenets of liberation theology, their hope was positioned in the "forward march" of those who hold history

in their hands (Freire, 1986, p. 128ff). Gustavo Gutierrez, in *A Theology of Liberation*, reminds us that hope is a “daydream” projected into the future (1973, p. 216) which opens up the possibility of political acts. PCCE’s pedagogy of hope was a practice that chose life. It was a denunciation of the existing order found in the dominant narrative, and was an embrace of how things ought to be. There was an overwhelming power in the “yet unrealized,” future and in the hope that reached out to it, in anticipation of what was possible (see Block, 1968). Making that “daydream” a reality was fraught with political connotations.

Recent polls in the United States show that Linda’s anger over the way industries place corporate interests ahead of the community is commonplace (Klein and Molyneux, 1996). This study showed that the ethical dimension had significant political and policy ramifications as a growing grassroots movement translates moral feelings into popular support for more aggressive efforts to alter irresponsible corporate behavior. Seven out of ten people favored purposeful government action to promote more responsible industry function and to penalize bad corporate actors (p.2). Kada Rehrig, too, assigned responsibility to the industry, stating, “I look at [the situation] and I think, ‘How can they be so wrong?’It’s a moral thing, a principle thing. And I think that’s the long and short of it” (7/19/96, lines 119-122). For most members, “personal ethics” were the foundation for a much-needed “public social ethic” that mediated between knowing (*doxis*) and action (*praxis*).

Several individuals felt that understanding and forgiveness of the company for its responsibility in the pollution were possible. Too, they were often willing to absolve the company for “thwarting clean up.” However, they expected the company to confess culpability and become a contrite and willing partner in full and safe remediation. Theirs was an ethic permeated with immense political and economic consequences. Confession of wrong-doing, whether intentionally or inadvertently, could position the company for legal, economic and health related liabilities.

The grassroots community’s ethical expectations spilled over to government as well. Some professionals, such as Brown (1988), a Pennsylvania state environmental attorney, have advocated that government decisions are positioned between weak theory and incomplete data.

They exhort government agencies to “deal with the ethical and value dimensions of our environmental problems” rather than rely on mathematical estimates and scientific models alone (Brown, 1987, p. 348).

Louise Calvin suggested that the two, industry and government had distinctly different ethical responsibilities. She contended that corporate profit would always be the overriding motivation for industry which placed it in a different ethical context than government. To her, government was needed to protect citizens from the corporate *ethos*. In Palmerton, the grassroots community, armed with a complex set of ethical “oughts,” registered concern for governments’ adequacies to function as the authorized civil authority in the community. At one point Louise pointedly stated, “The only thing that really gets shocking is how much [the government] knew and how little they did about it” (notes, 1/29/97). By outcome, if not by design, PCCE assumed many of the roles of government.

“Only an informed and active citizenry can restore equilibrium when those entrusted fail”

(Adams, Grass roots: how ordinary people are changing America, 1991, p. 10)

“Why couldn’t [the state Department of Environmental Resources] notice the condition of [Horsehead Resource Development Company’s] facility without ordinary townspeople telling them what needs to be done to make their plant operate safely?”

(Louise Calvin, President of PCCE, before the State Citizen’s Advisory Council)

PCCE members rallied around the intersection of two converging (self-generated) vectors: (1) community education was inextricably linked to participatory democracy, and (2) a political ethic which yearned for a future of environmental justice. Repeatedly interviewees suggested that all information must be made available to citizens for effective democratic public life, and for competent environmental decision-making-- items they felt the dominant narrative struggled against. These two vectors were constructed largely as a result of citizens’ experiences which showed that the federal, state and local governments were inadequate to the task of looking out for the community’s best interests. Most respondents expressed anger, surprise or dismay when they learned their governments were not fulfilling the trust and confidence they had placed in them to safeguard human lives and the environment. The experience of staff at the Highlander Research and Education Center showed in environmental struggles, citizens “learn not to trust the official process to protect them” (Highlander, July 1993, p. B1). Women in the anti-toxics movement “confront more than the issues of toxic wastes; they must confront a government indifferent to their needs. In so doing, they learn about a world of power usually hidden from them” (Krauss, 1993b, p. 111). Palmerton’s grassroots women were of this mold.

Members' experiences exposed the presumptions they held which fettered their ability to see clearly. Mezirow (1991) describes one component of perspective transformation as "becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world" (p. 167). Mezirow's transformative learning theory, however, does not fully explain how the members moved from awareness to action, since it is weak on addressing social change as an outcome, as Collard and Law have pointed out (1989). Members were moved to act, as Freire says, "to transform the society that has denied them [the] opportunity of participation" (1992, p. 9) after recognition of the restraining assumptions.

Tess Roberts reported that she had always believed that surely there were no problems at the industry or the government would have intervened. She reported, "I didn't realize I had to keep vigil 'cause I was under the impression that somebody was watching out, but...I realized that nobody was, I realized I had to keep the vigil [if we were to have the necessary environmental protection]" (7/19/96, lines 1321-1327). Linda Holland described the state permitting process, "Can you imagine having a permit looking like that [referring to the conditions that previously, but no longer, existed at the plant--such as a leaking bag house which emitted metals into the environment from windows and roof eaves, an open conveyor belt that allowed wind dispersal of contaminants, etc.]? Did DEP have blinders on? And that's what frightens me. You think DEP is there to protect us and do their job and make sure an industry is doing theirs. That's how I always felt and that's why [in the past] I never got all [that] involved in all these environmental things." However, once she became environmentally active, she could sadly report, the belief that government is doing its job "is the greatest untruth ever!" (7/22/96, lines 524-534). It was inevitable that during a conversation the failure of the various levels of government would be articulated. Comments such as this were a predictable occurrence: "I felt victimized and rather than turn the victimization into fear, I decided I would do what local government had failed to do" (Fried, 1994a, p. A12).

At the 1996 meeting of the Citizen's Advisory Council, Louise Calvin opened with a powerful indictment of the government's failures. An attenuated list of what she had to tell includes: DER's failure to "stay on top of cleanup plans" by not working with USEPA; DER's failure to know "the day-to-day struggles at securing a clean up;" DER's failure to openly support the federal Emergency Interim Cleanup Action; DER's failure to issue the industry a hazardous waste treatment permit for 16 years while allowing operations to continue; DER's failure to control, for twelve years from 1980 to 1992, a listed hazardous waste (KO61), nor to prevent fugitive emissions from escaping into the environment; DER's failure to ensure that the trucks carrying this waste were driven around, rather than through the community's streets; DER's failure to require that the trucks use tarps to prevent dusting of contaminants as they navigated through the community, and to require the trucks to be washed; DER's failure to block the company from giving away Iron Rich Material (IRM), a substance with known heavy metal composition, to local municipalities for application on roads as a winter anti-skid (and also a free means of disposing a material that would otherwise have been costly to the industry to dispose of safely); DER's (and the current DEP's) failure to stop on-going contamination in a community with historical pollution; and DEP's failure to say "no" to industry's request to include 11 more hazardous substances into its waste stream for local processing; DER's failure to take seriously the many calls citizens made to the government offices to report violations, which resulted in patronizing or ignored behavior; and DER's failure, in light of known official data indicating problems, to stop air pollution.

According to her testimony, the interim-permit under which the company operated was "grandfathered" into existence in 1980. Louise chastised the state regulatory agency saying, "You should be ashamed of a delay such as this." Within two days of her testimony, the "final permit" was issued after 16 years of allowing the company to operate on an interim-status. At the time of her testimony, I emailed the DEP regional director, Mr. William McDonald, asking what had delayed the issuance of the permit. My Email was never answered by him.

In the end, Louise stated, “The agencies have failed us....EPA failed us by waiting for 11 years from 1983-1994 to begin our Superfund cleanup, and PA DEP failed us by permitting the terrible emissions to continue through the 80’s and early 90’s” (p.5). The theme of being “abandoned” or “let down” was a common one. Tess Roberts told a group of college students in an environmental policy class, “If there’s any place you have a right to say ‘The government’s let us down,’ Palmerton is the place” (notes, November 16, 1996, p. 4). Louise reported that PCCE performed both the educational and the informational functions of USEPA because “[PCCE] realized that the EPA wasn’t promoting their [own] program” (7/30/96, lines 817-823).

Of course, government is not monolithic, but is distributed among federal, state, and local levels of authority and not all people or programs at these agencies were failures. However, bureaucracy at the federal, state, and local echelons were charged by the group with forsaking their duties and obligations to the people. In the (at least partial) vacuum created by the governments’ failure to protect human health and the environment, apolitical, immature housewives--women who did not start out as border-crossers--assumed the roles of social and ethical responsibility for the governments as resisting- and activist-intellectuals. Many of the women of PCCE journeyed from never engaging in public articulation to become outspoken voices of civic leadership.

Three Governments Falling Down

It has been shown that government agency staff frequently believe that citizen’s understandings of technical issues or official evaluation processes are incommensurate with their ability to join effectively in decision-making processes (Kellogg, 1993, p. 55). Agency personnel often do not understand how to integrate what they evaluate as citizens’ ill-defined, impractical or emotional responses (p. 56).

During the study, numerous examples were provided by informants to illustrate governments' deficiencies in affording environmental protection and in responding to PCCE members' environmental concerns. Several have already been cited throughout the dissertation. It is helpful to illustrate a few instances in somewhat more detail of each of the three levels of government--federal, state, and municipal--falling down on their jobs.

**Failures of the federal
Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)**

“The capacity of science to authorize and certify facts and pictures of reality [is] a potent source of political influence.”

(Ezrahi, The political resources of American science, 1971, p. 121)

“[The USEPA is] designed to serve as the public’s advocate for a livable environment.”

(US Government Manual, 1987-1988, p. 525)

The US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) was created in 1970 “to have primary responsibility for enforcing environmental regulations in the United States” (Smith, 1992, p. 56). It has been the subject of attacks for both lack of enforcement of regulations, as well as for too rigorous enforcement of laws (Williams, 1993). USEPA enforcement of its regulations “has...been motivated as much by political considerations as by real intention to elicit compliance” (p. 57).

Currently the Environmental Protection Agency is under siege from anti-environmental advocates, both nationally and at Palmerton. One particularly contentious program administered by USEPA is Superfund. Although some authors believe that “communities all

over the country with [environmental] problems...strongly supported [Superfund] legislation” (Kauffman, 1992, p. 26), this was not the situation in Palmerton from the outset. And, today, for various reasons many communities are backing away from this support. Superfund has been characterized as “among the most poorly crafted and counter-productive statutes of recent years” (Mahoney, 1995, p. 1). More than 30,000 hazardous waste sites are scattered across the American landscape (Lewis, 1990, p. 173). An expenditure of \$28 billion through FY 1994, resulting in limited clean up, is listed by some as a failure of the initiative.

The political climate in the 1990s has been toward deregulation of environmental laws. Begun a decade earlier, the nation’s economic downturn provided an impetus to question the merits of USEPA’s Superfund program. The “leading segments of the business community, the major trade associations, and spokespersons for the largest corporations” (Szasz, 1994, p. 118) had balked at the environmental laws as too burdensome on their bottom line. They strove to alter the discourse by promoting regulatory relief as the only solution to environmental legislation. USEPA was constructed by the conservative agenda--represented in Palmerton by the co-founder of a national anti-USEPA organization, SCAM--as too radical, too absolute, too restrictive, and too extreme. In response to intense industry attacks on the program, in 1995, the Clinton administration announced 20 administrative reforms of Superfund, not requiring legislation (Rader, 1996). This was done to avert the deep reorganization threatened by the US Congress which some citizens fear would weaken environmental protection.

It is in this vilified milieu that USEPA Region III has approached Palmerton. The federal agency found itself in a community ready to take up anti-government rhetoric. Situated in both a local and national maelstrom, USEPA’s Palmerton unit has constructed themselves as moderate, centered, balanced and neutral. A way to achieve this was to actively position the polar citizens groups in the community, PCCE and PETF as the “true” extremists. USEPA’s success at executing its own agenda was subject to its ability to inventory the players’ positions, to monitor their articulations, and to adjust to and take advantage of the shifting distributions of power on the social landscape.

During this study, one USEPA official, who asked not to be identified, said that if PCCE disbanded, life in Palmerton “would be much harder for us...we are in the middle now--that’s good. If we were [seen as] the radical fringe our job would be difficult--if we’d not have community support, we’d be out of here--like Aspen [referring to Colorado], they’re [referring to the USEPA western region] out!--no support.” This was followed with an expression of gratitude that PCCE had not “radicalized us [referring to USEPA] but put us in the middle.” In the course of events, USEPA used PCCE to its advantage. In meetings with PCCE leadership, USEPA was courted in hopes of finding or keeping an ally. In meetings with USEPA officials, PCCE membership exhorted USEPA “not to be taken” by the Task Force’s rhetoric. On the other hand, USEPA stroked the PETF and did not object to industry’s influence on Task Force. The contest for USEPA’s allegiance, jockeyed between PCCE and the Task Force, positioned USEPA exactly where staff desired it to be--in the center. This standpoint helped to nullify the community feelings that the agency was extremist.

At one meeting when a PCCE member mentioned that the Task Force was biased and “imbalanced,” a USEPA agent responded, “[We] can set conditions with which [we] will work--[we] asked that [the Task Force] *offer* all [groups] representation. They’ve done that...[we’re] satisfied.” Yet, the federal agency never challenged the authority and hegemony of the *actual* representation, instead expressing satisfaction that at least an attempt had been made. To have actually gotten a balanced representation, rather than the attempt to achieve it, would have destabilized the polarity of the two groups, which USEPA capitalized on so as to construct a location that was neutral and central to the arguments.

In private discussions, one USEPA official in Palmerton offered, “we can’t get involved in local political issues, but we know who pulls the strings here, we have no illusions.” Although this individual did not offer names, the common wisdom in the community is that the industry, together with its surrogates, worked hard to remain in charge of the public discourse. A federal official suggested that the Palmerton Environmental Task Force started with the intention of coopting USEPA, but that process was now “occurring in both directions.” The seeming admission that USEPA was modifying its position due to Task Force influences was

corroborated by the official's statement that USEPA would do what "political reality allows us to do."

Who has the key?

Numerous examples were provided by residents to substantiate their claims that USEPA could do more to protect both public health and environmental safety. During one meeting in late 1995, while leafing through a scrapbook of press clippings, Louise Calvin lamented that there was so much to do, and that the hours allotted in the day were far too few. Her remark was stimulated by a news article indicating that polychlorinated biphenyl, or PCB¹, had been detected in a storage area at the zinc facility from leaking supplies. She cited the issue of PCB contamination as an example of something that had to be set aside for items that demanded more immediate resolutions--it "fell through the cracks." On February 15, 1996 I initiated a Freedom of Information Act request (FOIA number 03-RIN-00307-96) to obtain facts surrounding the disposition of this case. Five months later an incomplete set of information was provided to me. This began a series of telephone, fax, and mail correspondence that after 14 months remained unresolved concerning material data and access of documents from the USEPA.

On March 30, 1990, USEPA Air, Toxics and Radiation Management Division notified Horsehead Industries, Inc. of a "Complaint and Notice of Opportunity for Hearing" concerning violations of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) based on a facility inspection at Palmerton. Despite the apparent absence of clarity, USEPA assessed a civil penalty of \$11,300. The company answered the charges with a request for a hearing, contested the material facts upon which the complaint was based, contended that the penalty was excessive, and asserted that the company was entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Preliminary resolution came in early December, 1990; a Consent Order sealed the case on December 31,

1990 with a civil penalty of \$9,600. Although the case was resolved with the Consent Order, some material that I requested was marked “Enforcement Confidential.” It puzzled me that material could be confidential *after* a decision had been made concerning it. I was especially interested in the verification as to whether the company had, in fact, disposed of PCB items as required. This interest was stimulated because at the time of the inspection for compliance, “the company could not find the key to unlock the door to the storage area” (inspector’s notes received under FOIA).

Inquiries to USEPA concerning numerous issues went unaddressed by them, including: whether the federal government had all of the facts when it entered into the Consent Order; was there “proof” and certification that the PCB items were in fact disposed of; and perhaps most importantly, how a citizen can petition and receive redress for material denied her or him under FOIA. There was never an explanation why I could not have the material marked “Enforcement Confidential” and no appeal process was provided. As a researcher, with this single example, I had some inkling concerning the skepticism that residents had concerning USEPA’s ability to provide the protection they felt was necessary from industrial contamination.

Federal failures at Palmerton extended beyond USEPA. The USDA has also failed the residents of the community. For instance, an internationally known scientific figure, Dr. Rufus Chaney, has been at the center of the federal government’s miscarriage of impartiality. As mentioned previously, there is a “ring of consultation” that includes researchers from institutions such as the University of Cincinnati, the US Department of Agriculture, the PETF, and others that police the borders of what is sayable and therefore knowable in Palmerton. Responses from the USDA to a Freedom of Information Act request in February, 1997 revealed numerous examples of strategizing among the elements of this ring.

Dr. Chaney is unabashed in sharing his ill feelings toward USEPA with members of the “ring” and other outside industrial players. In a memorandum dated December 15, 1995 he excoriates USEPA for a report he characterized as “worse than a bad joke,” “revisionism at EPA” and suggested that “maybe Horsehead has to sue [USEPA] region 3 and [the report’s author] to challenge this crap.” The memo was distributed to a member of Gradient

Corporation (whose executive officer facilitated the Scientific Symposium at Palmerton), DuPont and other non-USDA individuals. That week he also wrote a letter to Dolores Ziegenfus of the PETF, providing her with his critical analysis of the report for their fight against USEPA, suggesting that he “would be happy to [send copies of articles refuting USEPA] within a few days of the request” (letter to Dolores Ziegenfus from Chaney, December 13, 1995, p. 3).

Dr. Chaney’s positions changed, depending on the context in which they were formulated. When writing to colleagues about microelement deficiencies in soil, and the role of his research in remediation of Superfund problems, Chaney characterized the Palmerton situation as environmentally grave (for instance in a letter to Dr. Jeri Berc, August 29, 1994 where he mentions the death of horses). This was an important position to take if his lab was to receive funding from USEPA’s Superfund program. At times Chaney wrote that eating vegetables grown in Palmerton would be a health risk (1988), then refuted his own claims at the Scientific Symposium (July 29, 1994). By taking up the corporate discourse of “no industrial pollution” (lead paint was the human health problem) at the Symposium, Chaney situated himself for access to Palmerton, a unique research site, and the possibility of grants from industrial sources. However, less than four months later, he reiterated the “environmental contamination discourse” in a memorandum to Robert J. Wright, stating, “[Palmerton] is the first large contaminated site which is known to strongly affect farmers miles from the source as well as possible adverse effects on humans in the Borough...through garden crops or soil ingestion” (November 4, 1994, p. 1). This internal memo provided the rationale for USDA approval for travel to the site. On September 20, 1994 he wrote to R. J. Wright acknowledging that there was a “company responsible for the soil contamination [zinc and cadmium]” but that lead exposure in the community was “predominantly from paint, not from the smelter, but some soil [lead] came from the smelter.” Finally, in a memo to Robert Norton concerning inquiries from the television show “60 Minutes” about Palmerton, Chaney reported that “Palmerton soils have only normal levels of soil Pb, largely coming from exterior paint weathering” (p. 2). He was

highly critical of USEPA in the Norton memo, although he stated that he agreed his role would be “not to publicly criticize EPA regardless of their failings” (p.4).

Dr. Chaney wrote on December 11, 1991 to Dr. D. V. Waddington of Pennsylvania State University that it was essential to establish ground cover to “reduce the accessibility of soil metals to children.” In his letter, Dr. Chaney never mentions lead-based paint, but extensively refers to industrial (historic) pollution as a source of health concern. In a letter to Tess Roberts on November 4, 1991, he reported that ongoing rather than historic pollution was a concern, stating, “Current dustfall Pb (lead) does comprise greater risk than soil Pb since the dustfall is mobile in the environment and enters homes readily.” In February 1992, he reported a reversed opinion to the community stating, “lead paint poses a far greater threat to Palmerton children than does lead deposited in the soils from former zinc smelter operations in the borough” (McKee, 1992k). In a letter that Dr. Chaney wrote on behalf of the PETF for a US Housing and Urban Development Lead-based Paint Abatement Grant he mentioned (July 26, 1996) that lead paint was “a significant source of excessive blood Pb in Palmerton area children, as it is an (sic) any older community.” He, however, goes on to say that the paint abatement program is a good way to solve “the rest of the demonstrated lead risk to children in Palmerton that Superfund cannot address,” implying both industrial and paint-related sources of contamination. His opinion varies from time to time seemingly contingent on the audience to whom it is addressed, and based on the way it will be applied.

Chaney acknowledged that his ties to industry were the source of money for research critical of USEPA. He wrote that he had “submit[ed] a proposal to the [PETF] to prepare a review [of a USEPA document]...and requested \$10,000 be given to [an investigator] at the University of Maryland” since he could not afford to spend too much time on a report with his limited research budget (memo to FOIA administrator V. Herberer from Chaney, dated April 24, 1997).

A Day Late, A Commitment Short:

The State Environmental Agency (DEP)

When Palmerton was placed on the federal Superfund National Priority list in the early 1980s the Department of Environmental Resources (DER) was in charge of guaranteeing environmental protection in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In July, 1995 DER was divided into two agencies in fulfillment of the new governor's campaign promise to create a new regulatory agency that would be more friendly and balanced in executing its regulatory duties; one of the new organizations was named the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Many of the "permanent government" staff remained the same after the breakup of DER. The following scenario was cited by several interviewees as typical of DER's "a day late, a commitment short" operations throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Late Tuesday night, July 16, 1985, and Wednesday morning, July 17 a dust cloud containing cadmium, zinc, and lead blanketed parts of Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon Counties, Pennsylvania (*The Morning Call*, 1985). It was the result of the collapse of part of the contaminated cinder mound at New Jersey Zinc Company. Three months later, the state Department of Environmental Protection was still questioning its origin, offering that it arose from one of three potential sources, an explosion from internal gas in the mound, construction activities at the cinder pile, or collapse of the mound (Lowry, 1985). A workman at the site reported that a similar "blow out," caused by fires in the pile, had occurred previously, but drifted along the mountain unnoticed. It is difficult to estimate the location and extent of the fires under the surface of the cinder pile. USEPA suggests that "much of [the cinder bank] is smoldering" (*Fact Sheet, Palmerton Zinc Site*, December, 1995, p. 3). Regardless, when the incident happened in July, the cloud rained contamination that could cause respiratory problems, along a twenty five mile zone. In some areas the toxic soot from the cloud was an inch deep. With the origins of the problem uncertain, no measures have been taken to minimize the reoccurrence of the contamination event.

Since the autumn of 1995, residents have called to the attention of DEP, a white plume forming over the lead concentrate storage collector baghouse at the East Plant. DEP has examined the problem and speculates that it is the result of an atmospheric chemical reaction between ammonia gas from a facility adjacent to Horsehead Industries, and chlorine emanating from the zinc company's lead concentrate stack. Many citizens are not satisfied with this explanation which they allege has been provided without supporting data or documentation. One evening while talking on the telephone with Louise Calvin she commented, 'I've been 'plant watching.' I've been driving through the smoke--down at road level and it smelled terrible! I called it in [to DEP]. Now I can only wonder what will happen?'" (notes, August 12, 1996). She reported later, that there was no response from DEP of which she was aware.

Water contamination, both underground and at the surface, is a concern at Palmerton. During the study, citizens raised the question whether DER/DEP actually examined the water discharges at the company. They asked, "If DER/DEP field (compliance) specialists visited industry facilities, how could numerous studies by government officials (see for instance Kime and Moyer, 1986 and Kime, 1987) report that cadmium and zinc were significantly in excess of state water quality criteria at several sampling stations in the Aquashicola Creek?" An interview on January 16, 1997 with a state official, who requested anonymity, revealed the allegation that the facility, in the mid- to late 1980s, was inadequately inspected by DER. The official reported that the hiring practices of the agency for the water quality inspector during this period should be investigated, raising the question whether a degree in sociology was appropriate for a person who would perform biological monitoring. The claim was made that it was common knowledge around the regional office: the zinc company was inadequately inspected relative to water discharges.

To many of Palmerton's residents DER/DEP had abdicated its role as the civil authority concerning water quality oversight. In addition to these allegations, numerous examples of the state government's inability, inadequacy or unwillingness to investigate or enforce air and waste issues, were cited. As Adams writes, inaction is a form of oppression (1991, p. 167ff).

Constantly asking questions, probing the state's behavior and taking actions of their own positioned PCCE as a new civil authority in the community.

“Kissing up to Industry”: Borough Hall

Martin DeSousa at a Borough Council meeting, charged that the Council was swayed by the parties potentially responsible for the contamination. He argued that PCCE was doing council's work since PCCE, not the borough, was reporting air violations, charging “although you have two men who are supposed to be [reporting air violations],” he asserted, they were not (*Resident lashes Palmerton council*, 1994). At that time he charged that council had been coopted by HRD, saying “the council has been kissing up to the industry for 50 years.”

The blurring of boundaries between the zinc industry and the local government are frequently mentioned by residents. Ray Carazo, a self-styled “old-timer” reported, “every new employee that [the company] brought in here from college, in one way or another [if] they weren't working for the country club, [if] they weren't working for the [company financed] band, they were involved in borough work....All of our Borough Council were executives from the New Jersey Zinc Company.” He added, “I'm gonna tell you stories you will not believe” (8/9/96, lines 466-478).

Ellen Colangelo pointed out what she considered evidence of Borough and industry collusion by pointing to a newspaper report. She read to me, “Although Danielson [the Borough Manager] couldn't say for sure where the contaminants are coming from, EPA records indicate Zinc Corporation of America....” She laughed in mid sentence, then pondered whether he couldn't say because he did not know or because he was not allowed to tell (7/20/96, lines 850-865). It is possible to entertain the idea that he didn't know. Although he and Mr. Joseph Kercksmar were authorized by Council, trained and certified as host municipal inspectors to

perform industrial facilities' inspections, Rodger Danielson stated that he was not certain how many they carried out. Upon inquiry he said "to my memory only one or two field inspections were ever made" (letter from Danielson to the author on February 13, 1997). Amazingly, the person who was empowered by Borough Council to inspect facilities for compliance with environmental regulations, including reporting air and water infractions could not remember any details in carrying out this task.

During conversations with Sharon Milligan ^{pseud.}, her husband Henry joined her in discussing the conflict of interest that exists because so often a zinc employee is on the Borough Council. At the time of our discussion, she reported that the president of Council was a company executive. Henry piped in, "Is there a conflict of interest here? I mean, come on, give me a break!" (7/20/96, lines 673-676).

In the course of interviewing residents about Borough's role in the environmental discourse in Palmerton, several expressed the belief that because of their strong environmental and pro-USEPA stance, they have been the target of injustices by the Borough staff in their execution of duties. These feelings further aggravated their beliefs that Borough was too frequently a patsy to industry.

The Borough Council of Palmerton, a recipient of much benefaction from the zinc industry, readily takes up the industrial master narrative. Several cases illustrate the point. On October 14, 1994, USEPA posted a letter and report to the Borough Manager explaining that soils at several public park locations and ball fields were contaminated, and suggested environmental clean up. Cadmium--the industry-forsaken toxin--was detected at concentrations above 100 ppm, a level that could be a health risk to young people, one of the populations that used the parks (Laylo, 1995b, A1). The officials never publicly disclosed the USEPA report and letter. This prompted the PCCE group to assert at a Borough Council meeting one year later that the actions of secrecy violated state open meeting or Sunshine laws (Parker, 1995). It was noted in the press that the president of PCCE's questions concerning why the report was never released, and who was responsible for that decision, went unanswered. Although the council then authorized the Borough Manager "to seek out funding"

for the park's remediation (Collins, 1995h), another round of disagreement broke out. Some citizens wanted the parks to be cleaned through the USEPA interim action program which consists of soil removal, replacement and sodding. They expressed fear that the Neighbor Helping Neighbor program of the industry or some other combination of borough labor and grants of supplies would be used, offering less protection and wasting borough tax payer's money when federal dollars were available.

PCCE continued to educate the community that the Neighbor Helping Neighbor program was no more than assistance to re-vegetate lawns, while the USEPA initiative removed contamination (Collins, 1996, p. 1). A year later Linda Holland reported that PCCE's concession stand for the 1995 Palmerton Community Festival required members to "sit ...at a dust bowl serving food. We were just where there was no grass and that bothered us very much. And to think that that could have been fresh grass...free of charge to any of us...Why does the Borough care that much about the company having to pay for [remediation when USEPA collects from the responsible parties]? I look at it this way, they put [the pollution] there, now they have to pay to take it away" (7/22/96, lines 1612-1622). The next year, during the 1996 Festival, she was still asking the same question since a considerable number of barren spots remained in the park.

In the end, PCCE's fears proved to be founded. Council subsequently sought help from the Concourse Club--a local women's group--through the Horsehead Community Development Fund for reseeding the contaminated areas, not using the more protective federal protocol. It is more than coincidental that in 1913 the newly formed municipality turned to the company to maintain the town's parks, and again in the late-1940s to mid-1950s the municipality accepted large sums of money to improve the village green. Again, in 1995, they repeated the behavior of dependency. In the end, Council turned to the zinc company to revegetate the parcels that had historically received the company's attention. Interviewees reported that this time however the consequences of their actions were potentially more serious. By accepting the company's gifts, the Borough opted to lower the level of safety.

Another illustration of industry and Borough Council collusion offered by some citizens was the issue of uranium storage at the zinc plant. In 1992, the Palmerton Borough solicitor requested that the US Department of Energy (DOE) provide all information on radioactive material stockpiled at the former New Jersey Zinc Company's East Plant. The borough received a response in 1993 from the DOE files of the former Atomic Energy Commission. Council learned that for 20 years, from 1954 to 1973, Palmerton was the location of uranium storage. Palmerton officials did not make this public government data on uranium storage at zinc industry property available. Nor did they reveal the fact that some of the material was not removed, but was instead placed in the Superfund cinder bank. Then, in 1995, a DOE official posted a letter to the Palmerton mayor "reaffirming" the facts of the uranium case. It stated that removal of the stockpiles and suspected "hot spots" where radioactive material was stored, allowed the site to meet applicable federal requirements for protection of public health (Collins, 1995b, p. 1). Public attention was drawn to the uranium matter after the PCCE president asked Borough Council, at a public meeting, about the "secret" dealings. Documents obtained by the citizen's group under the federal "Freedom of Information Act" confirmed that radioactive material was mixed in the cinder pile when the uranium was moved to Ohio in 1973.

Pennsylvania Act 1988-108, Section 6020.306 allows for municipalities that host commercial hazardous waste treatment or disposal facilities to collect a fee of at least \$1.00 per ton of waste. The fee can be higher, or provided in a different form than direct cash payment. In 1989, Louise Calvin and others asked Palmerton's Borough Council to collect the \$1.00/ton fee, a request that was ignored. However, after a successful election to Council, on January 2, 1990 she introduced a motion to bill Zinc Corporation of America for the state-sponsored hazardous waste fee. She is reported to have exclaimed, "We've had the nuisance, now we should collect the fee....I think we really owe it to the town to collect the fee" (Fortney, 1990a, p. 2). On June 6, 1996 at a PCCE public meeting, Mr. William Tomayko, a Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) officer told the community that it is due the fee. He said that recycling is a form of treatment, to which Louise Calvin, no longer Borough council person, but PCCE president exclaimed, "I've waited since 1990 to hear that!" (fieldnotes).

Documents provided by the DEP showed that in the first two quarters of 1996, 112,118 tons of electric arc furnace dust (EAF dust or KO61), a hazardous material, were recycled at HRD. At a minimum of \$1.00/ton, this would currently net Borough revenue of about \$225,000 annually. Since in very recent years EAF dust has several alternative dispositions aside from metal recovery at HRD, the 1996 figures reflect a depressed number. Had the borough been amassing fees since 1989 when Calvin first suggested collecting them, they would have a substantial revenue. Shortly after Louise began pushing for the Host Municipality fees, the company announced its Horsehead Community Development Fund, a gifting program which they allege was conceived prior to Calvin initiating the waste fee dialog. The fee was never collected, despite Council's favorable vote, since the PA Department of Environmental Protection never issued the industry a permit for hazardous waste treatment, and Act 108 required the facility to be "permitted" for the regulations to apply. Since 1984, the industry has been operating without a waste treatment permit.

With few exceptions, Palmerton Borough has maintained a comfortable relationship with the zinc industry for its entire existence--some residents say too cozy. Yet, individual Council members have taken stands to challenge some behaviors of the Borough as indecorous. Although Council agreed in 1994 to provide the Palmerton Environmental Task Force with office space, photocopying privileges, and clerical assistance, in October of that year Borough Manager Danielson gave permission for use of the Borough postal meter to stamp letters dispatched to the public from PETF at a cost of \$452. Council member Terry Costenbader challenged the expenditure as inappropriate. Similarly, Charles Snyder quipped, "[Borough's] been spending a lot of money out there with the Task Force....and charged that Danielson was spending too much time on Task Force work" (Collins, 1994n, p. 4). Barry Scherer, Council President, and company employee defended Danielson's work with the company-funded Task Force.

In a very narrow 4 to 3 vote, in May, 1994, council defeated a motion submitted by Mr. Mark Pastir, a council member and party to the Pro-Palmerton Coalition, to join a national anti-USEPA organization called SCAM, the Superfund Coalition Against Mismanagement.

Described as a lobby that was gaining influence with the US Congress, some council members wanted to distance themselves from it. Not inconsequential, Michael Raub, a member of the Palmerton Environmental Task Force, a co-founder of the Pro-Palmerton Coalition, and an industry ally is listed in the papers of incorporation of SCAM in Colorado and Pennsylvania. Palmerton Mayor, Peter J. Delich backed the request for council to confederate with SCAM, saying “It’s about time this council gets off the fence” (Parker, 1994, B6).

The web of relationships within the industrial orb include some members of the Borough Council and Borough administration, PETF, the zinc company, the Palmerton Chamber of Commerce, and the Pro-Palmerton Coalition. There is extensive “cross membership” by persons within each of these stakeholder and special interest groups. Another period of community discord erupted when the public learned that the industry sent three Borough Officials, including Rodger Danielson and council president (as well as company employee) Barry Scherer, together with a PETF member and an industry servant, to what was characterized as an anti-USEPA conference in Aspen, Colorado in late October 1992 (Fortney, 1992d). The company defended the action on “educational” grounds. That the trip was undisclosed to the public became hotly debated. Vince Dopko of the Pennsylvania state Ethics Commission commented that any gifts, including trips, that could cause conflicts of interest for public officials if the officials are ever in a position to evaluate the gift-givers are unethical. Others, like Professor Christine Kellett of Dickinson Law School were more direct, stating that if Borough representatives wanted to go, the officials were ethically bound to discuss the trip prior to departure. David Morgan, media law council for the Pennsylvania Newspaper Publishers Association declared that they violated the state’s Sunshine law that required public notification (McKee, 1992i). At the Aspen Conference, Drs. Robert Bornschein, and Rufus Chaney were central figures. As we have seen, they later played a similarly significant role in the PETF sponsored Scientific Symposium at Palmerton.

The industry positioned the Conference as USEPA’s own, and not an anti-EPA gathering at all, charging the press with irresponsible and sensational reporting. However, no industry communication mentioned that, in fact, concurrent to the conference, anti-USEPA

activists from throughout the country gathered, including some whose trips had been paid for by the industry. It is believed by some community members that Michael Raub was a key player in the anti-USEPA parley, and that the group SCAM began as a result of this gathering.

Despite the entanglement of multiple community players who direct the discourse, some PCCE members expressed disbelief that the dominant group was in fact still master of the discourse. Sandy Peters argues, “even though, for example the Borough Council situation with a ZCA employee being the president...past employees of industry being in charge of the hospital and things like that, I still think--my personal opinion--is that the tide has turned and the majority of people in Palmerton want to address this environmental situation and they want it to get over with. And they don’t think that denying the fact that there’s an environmental problem here is gonna get them anywhere” (7/22/96, lines 643-657).

Modest Triumphs from Growing Grassroots

In her written testimony before the state’s Citizen Advisory Counsel, PCCE President Louise Calvin discussed the role of the collective as a new civil authority. She wrote, “For many years, many of us believed that surely D.E.P. would ‘do something,’ surely U.S. EPA would ‘do something,’ surely our elected officials would ‘do something’ --and when no one acted, PCCE was formed and we ‘did something’”

The triumphs of PCCE, as the community’s new civil authority, have been modest but many. They included a direct impact on public awareness of the environmental situation, reshaping perceptions of what is possible, conferring a clear political impact, and altering the

rules of everyday life which previously accepted in an uncritically way the industrial script. The ultimate test of their success will come when USEPA announces its final clean up standards for the Superfund site, projected to occur sometime in 1997. The years 1995-1996 were boom times for PCCE in regards to public recognition of their achievements. In addition to the 1996 Pennsylvania Resource Council's distinguished award given to President Louise Calvin, previously mentioned, the Prudential Insurance honored her as an employee with the Company's Community Champion, Community Award in both 1995 and 1996. To commemorate the occasions, PCCE was given a \$500 grant to help ensure the continuation of the services for which PCCE is known. Louise stated that the group mobilized as a result of "[learning] about the extent of pollution...and the cold fact that everyone from local, state, and federal politicians, DER, USEPA, to the potentially responsible industries were not making any genuine efforts at resolving those pollution problems" (Collins, 1995a). She cited the changes that have occurred since PCCE emerged as a cultural player on the political terrain. They included, a new access road for hauling hazardous materials that bypassed the community; the fact that trucks delivering hazardous compounds were now covered and washed; the industry has spent "millions of dollars" upgrading the facility to control fugitive emissions (two years after the formation of PCCE); a federal health comparison study; the banning of IRM as an anti-skid material; the National Enforcement and Investigation Center's study that identified industrial sources, both historic and on-going, as the primary cause of contamination; free blood screening for children; improvements in air quality; and more communications in the community as a result of education about USEPA's interim action program.

During a meeting with Mr. Edward Schoener and students in a college environmental policy course, the former state Regional Director for the environment and past USEPA employee working on the Palmerton issue, reported that the company put pressure on the government to not advocate public involvement, but instead to remain neutral (notes November 16, 1996, p. 4). Schoener emphasized that "there was a stark contrast before vs after the existence of PCCE on how [the] government made decisions" (p. 4). This finding was

corroborated by Amy Barnett who also reported that the industry attempted to minimize USEPA's public participation strategy (notes, February 27, 1997).

PCCE: Visions of a New Scion for Environmental Activism

Several members of PCCE expressed the belief that they were a new shoot on the evolutionary tree of environmental activism in the United States. Sandy Peters reported believing that "PCCE might be an example of evolution of the environmental movement in this country. Asking for a clean environment for your children and for future generations is not radical, it's a very calm, cool, collected, reasonable thing to do" (7/22/96, lines 2402-2411). She argued that to pursue the "in your face" antics of activists of the past was no longer an option, at least not in Palmerton. Others, especially Louise Calvin, also espoused this position, but on occasions reported finding herself engaged in it.

In point of fact, several observers of the United States' environmental movement have been similarly articulating the idea that there is a new environmentalism growing in America today. The past has been defined in three "waves," with a fourth wave now emerging. The first wave consisted of committed citizen-volunteers who were often conservationists. Their interest was in access to decision-making. The second wave was engaging at a very sophisticated level of technical and legal expertise, mastering the language of the elite who had granted the first wave a seat at the table. The second wave produced a "success" that also burdened the movement. Environmentalists, enamored by their own sophistication, engaged government in the public spaces defined by the privileged and on the terms set by the environmental upper echelon. The third wave was seen as taking the environmental fight back to the level of the local community, but still deploying legal, technical, and scientific expertise in the fray (see Profile, 1996). Participants in the second and third waves have been criticized for allowing "corporate America to capture the nation's environmental imagination" (Dowie, 1995, p. 206).

Mark Dowie, in *Losing Ground* (1995), argues that a fourth wave is budding on the environmental scene. This wave is composed of persons who have a new environmental passion. It is democratic in origin, populist in style, based on strong positions of principles, unencumbered by bureaucracy, uncompromising on certain issues, and inspired by a host of new ideologies (p. 206-207). It is marked by anger and energy forming a new “nonviolent militancy” for justice. It is bolder, more diverse, more irreverent of the powerful, less compromising and less gentlemanly than previous movements. Many of the characteristics, but not all, fit the PCCE collective.

Highlander Research and Education Center has also theorized about the emergence of a new environmental movement. Their characterizations of the next wave also reflect PCCE’s values. Highlander reports that this young movement of which they are a part “has not yet begun to walk...[And does] not have a structure. We are comprised of thousands of independent community organizations and individuals....We have the enthusiasm, vigor and confidence of youth. We are not afraid to challenge old ideas and to try new ones. Each problem appears as an opportunity to learn and to test our wings....We shall overcome” (Highlander Research and Education Center, Community Environmental Health Program, n.d.). Like the new environmentalists, the women of Palmerton’s grassroots movement refused to play by the older rules. PCCE’s willingness to challenge was reflected in a letter to Dolores Ziegenfus of the PETF from Louise Calvin. The Task Force had been advocating that the USEPA apply in Palmerton a process utilized in the western US for decontamination. Calvin stated that was unacceptable since the western process minimized clean up. She wrote--and publicly announced--“On this issue, there will be no compromise by PCCE” (March 15, 1996, p. 1).

If PCCE is part of a larger new wave of environmentalism, it shares only some of the emerging movements characteristics as described by Dowie and Highlander. Dowie’s “nonviolent militancy” is virtually absent from PCCE. During the course of this study, as during the six preceding years of PCCE’s existence, there were no public direct actions, or overt displays of militant resistance behavior, nothing confrontational or disruptive, no impolite public

protests, and only one letter of “demands” sent to political leaders. Only at one meeting in two years did I hear members talk about appropriating space in Borough Park. They “processed outloud” what an action might look like. It was suggested that perhaps members should stand silently in the park, over spots that tested “hot” (contaminated) for heavy metals, holding signs on which were printed the contamination levels. These “borrowed spaces” would disrupt, temporarily, the power relations in the community, transforming everyday, bucolic images of the park, into messages of alarm and urgency. That action was discussed, once, and never mentioned again to my knowledge. Despite the absence of radical activism, PCCE, is however, enthusiastic hope-filled and oriented toward gentle political action

PCCE’s Legacy To Environmental Reform And Environmental Democracy

Grass roots efforts make America great and bring about change”

(see Szasz, EcoPopulism, 1994, p. 153)

The declining faith in the fairness and equity of social institutions and the lack of trust in decisions made by keepers of the social sphere were driving forces for the PCCE’s reinvention of participatory democracy. Environmental democracy for members of PCCE meant involving

more people and more relevant--albeit scientific--information in the environmental decision making process with the hope that decisions would be based on a broader knowledge foundation. Members held that participation in decision making was rooted in fundamental principles of democracy. Their definition was consonant with classical democratic theory that holds the basic aim of democracy is to ensure that decisions are made by all who are affected by them, from freely accessible information (Pateman, 1970). Members' answers to the question, "Is the decision making process open and free?" was an unequivocal "No!" This was largely due to the normalization of certain (privileged) industrial practices and prohibitions in the culture.

Although USEPA articulated valuing local input, the industrial discourse precluded fully informed contributions from many quarters of the public. Environmental democracy for the grassroots meant freedom of choice from a impressive panoply of options, based on the ability of folks to make decisions about the events that impacted their daily lives. PCCE members were aware that education for freedom was only valuable when it accompanied action for freedom. PCCE members rallied around a belief that paralleled Freire (1982). Freire asserted that in a democracy it is unethical to permit people to remain in a state of ignorance. He did not restrict ignorance to illiteracy, but included lack of experience at participating and intervening in historical process. Too, for the grassroots folks, it was imperative that community members had diverse sets of information and encouragement to chose to act. They engaged in critical eco-literacy. Asking questions about the marginalized status of environmental information and the privileged location of the industrial discourse.

The MIT/Harvard University Public Disputes Program has set forth a "democracy checklist" for groups engaged in public decision-making. Using their criteria, PCCE would earn a high score based on: acknowledgment of pluralism; equal treatment of beliefs and interests; open and public discussions; commitment to processes of deliberation; examination of the assumptions behind (hidden) technical and scientific data; openness to alternatives and ways of seeing otherwise, and candor toward questions (see Corburn, 1996). During the course of the study, the same could not normally be said for those who had taken up the discourse of

industrialism. They most often promote “unity” at the expense of pluralism; treated the multiple stakeholders differently; sponsored closed or “semi-public” (for instance, closed to media) meetings; at least publicly avoided examining the assumptions and beliefs that informed technical and scientific data; and worked actively to not see otherwise in the deliberate refusal to know otherwise.

Democratic processes in PCCE are a microcosm of the larger public sphere where there exists a fundamental gap between constitutional, legal, and regulatory commitments to a clean environment and the harsh realities of people’s lives. Although Pennsylvanians enjoy the right to clean air, fresh water and unspoiled surroundings through Article 1, Section 27 of the Commonwealth’s Constitution, a brief tour through Palmerton reveals that this right is not extended to all residents in Pennsylvania.

The value of interrogating the dominant social discourse has implications for what counts as environmental reform. PCCE members--as cultural producers--were seeking environmental reform in the face of policies, discourses, and practices that, in the main, worked to reproduce and only occasionally challenge social categories. In Palmerton, what counted as environmental reform was a changing tableau that impacted both lives and livelihoods of the residents, written in the industrial culture. Environmental reform for PCCE was about rewriting the boundaries of environmental discourse from the vision of an industrial ethic to that of a human-centered one; from one premised on singular and narrowly prescribed notions, to one based on a diversity of information; from a static one rooted in education that reinforced the *status quo*, to one that flowed from the perception that there are ways of seeing otherwise; and from the constricted borders of science, to one that integrated science with ethics and social behavior infused with hope in a just future. PCCE’s vision of environmental reform was centered on both being and becoming.

PCCE members articulated that without eco-literacy no one was free to live in a healthy world. They attempted to grow more than grass roots; members endeavored to usher democracy into an undemocratic space, since many of the behaviors of the amalgam uprooted democratic vitality. PCCE repeatedly made public overtures for a broad-based environmental

education agenda. In a letter to Dolores Ziegenfus (February 7, 1995), PCCE President Louise Calvin once again stated this position unambiguously, “[diverging] views must be respected and honestly presented. In this way, the people of Palmerton will be able to make clear choices about the Superfund clean-up of the valley and residential soils, without fear or intimidation” (p. 1). As an adult educator, Louise--like Lindeman (1944) before her--did not shun the tension that resulted from social struggles. Lindeman’s proposition, “to evade social tension is to invite trouble” (p. 101) was well understood by Calvin and PCCE’s leadership.

Boggs (1991) reports that “ultimately it is adults who must practice democracy. It is adults who require information about complex local and national issues from air quality to zoning, and who require skills and wisdom to put that information to use” (p. 10). PCCE members acted in the spirit of that philosophy. They attempted to bring new ways of seeing to Palmerton, and fought to carve out a space for voicing alternative meanings. They strove to impart skills such as advocacy, and environmental “watchdogging” to facilitate social change and generate political action. They held out before themselves a model that taught the relationship between citizenship, democracy, and plurality of information.

To illustrate PCCE’s commitment to diverse points of view, I recall the original list of contacts for ethnographic interviewing that Louise Calvin provided to me shortly after our introduction. Her letter stated, “I have no idea if you were going to approach local people at random to talk to, but I took the liberty of compiling a list of some people that may have a diverse point of view. I’ve not identified [the affiliations of] any of them nor tried to give you my assumptions of their positions, but I think there is a wealth of material there. If you were not going to approach anyone this way, just discard the list and no explanation [is] necessary to me” (letter from Louise to me, August 14, 1995, p. 2). Nearly two years later I have come to know the positions of most of the individuals whom she suggested I contact in order to learn more about Palmerton. The list is remarkably balanced: 6 of 22 were members of PCCE, her organization; 7 were members of organizations espousing the industrial narrative, including the chair of PETF, and members of the anti-environmental Chamber of Commerce; others included two pastors; several physicians; the Borough Mayor and the Borough Manager; retirees from

the company; a former post master; council persons; and former company executives. Most held very strong opinions concerning the contested terrain of Palmerton.

As Macedo (1991) says, “human beings don’t grasp information (even if it is wrapped in the mantle of our cultural heritage); they make meaning” (p. xi). Environmental literacy is about the possibility of meaning-making, social intercourse, and the active construction of a relationship to place and space. “Environmental literacy lies at the heart of understanding the places with which we are familiar, and thus is at the heart of the issue of identity” (Hough, 1990, p. 188).

Welton (1993) and Finger (1989) recently spawned the debate on the implications of social movements--including the environmental movement--to adult education, especially as sites of learning. Holford (1995) has argued that movements are a central analytical category for adult education theory. Movements provide a radical look at the relationship between the field of adult education and the arenas of knowledge production. Eyerman & Jamison (1991) have studied extensively social movements as sites of the generation of knowledge (p. 55ff). They argue that the collective articulation of movement identity is equivalent to the process of social learning; movement organizations have multiple functions. They act as structuring forces, fabricate open spaces for creative interaction, and produce new cognitive territory. PCCE functioned in a comparable manner. It created a new place from which alternatives were articulated and individuals engaged in the social practice of learning; it allowed formerly unsayable utterances to have a voice; it gave shape to what could be thought in a milieu that formerly was impregnated with controlling citizens’ consciousness.

The results of my insertion into the contested terrain of Palmerton seem equivocal. On the one hand, when I verbally discussed the possible conclusions of my data analysis, participants would often say that the analysis “was right on,” or “was really accurate.” At one point, Louise Calvin reported that the material I was providing for reflection was “passed along on the chain” and that it provided much new food for thought for her (letter from her to me, October 21, 1995). However, most respondents reported feeling that it was not their responsibility, nor did they credit themselves qualified to suggest to me what the analysis of data

might look like. In line with their strategy to allow others to hold opinions different than theirs, members offered critiques but no forceful argumentation on points where we digressed. In the end PCCE's story was more than a tale of the struggle to grow grass in a polluted town. It was a journey begun by six women in 1990 which led to growing a grassroots movement that significantly change the landscape of Palmerton without the aid of outsiders such as myself.

¹ PCB were banned in 1976 in the US. Exposure is linked to mental disorders and learning impairment including low IQ, memory problems, and a host of physical illnesses including cancer. (see Montague, September 21, 1996). It is interesting to note that when thieves broke into an electrical substation in a county adjacent to Carbon (Palmerton), and stole copper wire contaminated by PCBs, the DEP regional community relations coordinator, Mark Carmen called the PCB-polluted wire "very hazardous material" (Savitsky, 1996, p. B7). However, the same regional office did not publicly note the violations nor the potentially serious situation at Horsehead Industries' Palmerton site.