

Monsanto



FROM : MAX W. MCCOMBS W. G. KRUMMRICH PLANT EXT 2322
(NAME-LOCATION-PHONE)

DATE : October 5, 1989
SUBJECT : EAST ST LOUIS REPORT
REFERENCE :
TO : Diane Bartolanzo
John Boehm
Bill Boyle
Garth Fort
John Mason
Andi Smith
Frank Stokes

Attached is a report commissioned by Gov. Thompson's office on the state of East St. Louis. The author, James D. Nowlan, has done an excellent job of summarizing the city's plight.

Note that Percy McKinney is a WGK employee and the mention of a promising new civic group, the Metro East Church-based Citizens Organization (MECCO). They may deserve Monsanto Fund Consideration.

Max

Max W. McCombs

MWM/sdg
Attachment

June 30, 1989

To: Thomas Berkshire, Office of the Governor
Mary Ann Louderback, Office of the Governor

From: James D. Nowlan, Senior Fellow to the Office of the Governor and
Professor of Public Policy at Knox College

Re: Report on the Potential for Civic Reform in East St. Louis, Illinois

This report supplements an oral report presented to Thomas Berkshire on June 30, 1989. The original work plan for this project is found at page 37 and the work performed is explained at page 30. The open-ended questionnaire instrument that served as a framework for most of my 40 interviews is at page 39. My curriculum vitae is at end of this report.

Purposes of project and outline of report. I consider that my primary objectives were: 1) to complement your already substantial understanding of East St. Louis, and 2) to provide you observations and recommendations related to prospects for civic reform in East St. Louis. The report is organized as follows:

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Approach and limitations. I spent most of the month of June in the East St. Louis (ESL) area. I interviewed 35 persons, several twice (see page 32 for names of those interviewed). I attended meetings of the ESL city council and the ESL School Board 189; Alderman Percy McKinney, a native of ESL, gave me a detailed tour of ESL, as did a veteran journalist who has covered the Metro-East region for years.

My approach has been to question, listen, and probe; to test one person's observation against those of others in knowledgeable positions on the same question, and to observe elected officials and activists at work in their arenas of public life.

This approach and the short time available imposed limitations. I could not talk with everyone who might have been helpful. And I worry that, like the blind men trying to describe the elephant, I may not have touched all pertinent elements of the ESL community and its power structure, and thus may not have drawn a complete picture of ESL and its potential for civic reform.

I assure you, nevertheless, that my observations are based on assessments by several well-placed and knowledgeable persons, often corroborated by direct observations. Rather than draw on reports and newspaper reportage that you have undoubtedly read already, the report that follows is based heavily, but not exclusively, on the interviews and my direct observations.

The present situation in ESL.

The American Bottoms is the floodplain along the east side of the Mississippi River across from St. Louis. It is the tenth largest floodplain in the world, according to urban planner Gerwin Rohrbach. The Bottoms stretch

about 25 miles from north to south, from Roxanna (IL, near Alton) on the north to Dupou at the south end. The Illinois Bluffs form a crescent around the Bottoms, the points of which just about touch the River at each end. These describe the boundaries of the Bottoms.

ESL lies at the heart of the Bottoms, along the River. It is one of many poor communities--both black and white--in the Bottoms. Four of the nation's 15 poorest suburbs are in the Bottoms. ESL is not the poorest of these four; that distinction goes to Alorton (pop. 2,720; originally a company town of the Aluminum Ore Company), with per capita income in 1987 of \$5,795. ESL showed per capita income of \$5,973.

If you live in the Bottoms, you are generally struggling, regardless of race. In June 1989, I stayed at Parks College in the white, working-class town of Cahokia (pop. 21,000), which is separated from ESL by Sauget (pop. 200 or so). Originally Monsanto Town, another company municipality, Sauget is the home of a major Monsanto Chemical Co. plant and additional chemical plants. No matter what face you might try to put on it, you don't live in a valley next to several big chemical manufacturing plants if you can help it.

But if you live up on the Bluffs--white or black--such is at least a sign that you have made it somehow. The nicest middle class neighborhood of ESL--and there are a few small ones--is located up on the Bluffs. It is called Loisel Hills; blacks and whites live in the approximately 200 handsome, geenerally brick ranch homes. The boundaries of ESL extend out to Loisel Hills in a snake-like band that just barely reaches up the Bluffs to encompass Loisel Hills.

The two tiers--Bluffs and Bottoms--have long represented two different worlds, and I sense that the physical separation helps rationalize

the psychological and cultural distance that those on the Bluffs have clearly tried to maintain.

Demographic and economic change came to ESL rapidly.

	<u>ESL</u> <u>pop.</u>	<u>% black</u>	<u># retail</u> <u>establishments</u>	<u>municipal</u> <u>workforce</u>
1950	85,000	30%	1200	NA
1970	80,000	70%	500	1400
present	44,000	98%	200	300

(Source: Belleville News-Democrat files.)

Several urban experts with whom I talked declared that ESL was almost programmed to fail. They ticked off the factors. The property tax base was circumscribed by the granting of separate municipal charters to company towns that hemmed in ESL, so they could avoid paying taxes to ESL--Sauget (Monsanto), Alorton (Aluminum Ore Co.), and National City (the stockyards. When industries began to close soon after WW II, whites began to move out; by this time the housing stock and infrastructure were already old and in need of major capital improvements.

People on the Bluffs did not--and do not--pay into the metropolitan water control district that tries to deal with floodplain problems, even though these problems are generated in large part by the water that drains from the Bluffs onto the valley floor.

When community college districts were being formed in the 1960s, community leaders on the Bluffs drew their lines right up to ESL and the five other black communities on the Bottoms floor, leaving the ESL area without adequate population or tax base to develop its own college.

As a result, ESL has been drained rather rapidly of the levels of human and economic resources that would be considered requisite to

maintenance of a functioning city. In addition, ESL and other communities in the Bottoms must contend with the challenges of operating and living on a vast floodplain.

Although I have not seen it, Gerwin Rohrbach told me he has a confidential copy, never released, of a 1985 report on the American Bottoms by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that concluded there is no economic justification for doing anything in the Bottoms because costs would be greater than economic return.

Pat Gauen has covered the Metro-East area for two decades, for the St. Louis Globe-Democrat and now for the Post-Dispatch. During a day-long tour and discussion of ESL, he summed the situation up by saying, "ESL is about as close to anarchy as you can get." In the next pages, I will illustrate briefly my observations on the present state of affairs, which tend to confirm Gauen's observation.

The environment and sewage treatment. I always figured that the biggest water challenge in the Bottoms was to prevent Mississippi floodwater from breaching the levees, yet Pat Gauen says the greater challenge is to get water that drains from the watershed onto the Bottoms over the levees and into the River. Rohrbach says that 60% of the Bottoms has groundwater just about at surface level, and that sewer, water, and gas utility lines are basically floating in water.

I was told by journalists and urban planners, admittedly not scientists, that the groundwater is full of copper, lead, mercury, and other toxins that have been draining into the good earth for decades. The chemical plants in the Bottoms represent the same types of plants that produced Times Beach, said one of the nonexperts.

Pat Gauen tells of reporting on Dead Creek where it runs through Cahokia. A resident whose backyard ran along the creek called the EPA. "I think you'd be interested in coming out here to see a creek that smokes during the day and glows at night!" Which it did, according to Gauen, because of heavy amounts of phosphorous and other chemicals in the water.

He goes on to tell of water seepage into basements in Hartford, near the oil refineries in Alton, that you can literally run your car on, and he swears he's not kidding.

But this is all anecdotal. I haven't been able to obtain yet a copy of An Historical Assessment of Hazardous Waste in Madison and St. Clair Counties, by Craig Cotten of the Illinois State Museum (1988). I am told it paints a grim picture of the situation.

You can observe the sewage problems directly. This year Sister Julia Huiskamp of Catholic Urban Programs of East St. Louis sued the City of ESL to repair sewer pumps that had allowed a large pond of raw sewage to develop immediately adjacent to the Villa Griffin public housing project. "Lake Villa Griffin" was drained by some emergency repairs but the problem has returned, says Sister Julia. Jacquie Settles has been after the City since 1979 to repair sewer pumps next to her Loisel Hills home, where she has had a similar though smaller problem for a decade.

The City has had money in the budget for emergency sewer repairs since 1984 but had not done anything about the problems until Sister Julia forced the issue.

Again, my panel of nonexperts told me there are so many breaks in the ESL sewer system that most sewage simply does not make it all the way to the metropolitan treatment plant at Sauget; it simply seeps out onto the floodplain before it reaches the plant.

City services. Public health, safety, and welfare services seem to have collapsed. ESL police have been known to: buy their own two-way radios for their police cars, which is better than using pay telephone booths; steal highway signs, bend them up and put them over holes in their police car floorboards to keep from getting splashed. Even when their police radios work, they lack the frequency common to other municipal police systems, so neither can communicate with the other.

Reporters told me there were several excellent policemen on the ESL staff, but that they have basically given up on serious investigative work. The department is apparently topheavy with "inspectors" and other administrators, yet there are no young staff coming into the department, so several 45-year-old, 20-year veterans are on street duty.

The threading of fire hydrants in ESL is non-standard, so other fire departments can't plug in to help. Sixty homes were damaged by the flood of 1986, but nothing has been done about City promises to help make repairs, even though there has been up to \$5 million sitting in the CDBG account since 1985.

In one recent year there were 60 inquiries made to the ESL Office of Community Development about small business loans. Only four of the 60 inquiries resulted in applications, and only one was ultimately funded. According to John Racine, reporter for the Belleville News-Democrat, there is simply no assistance available to help people prepare their applications; there have been eight to 10--people have lost count--community development directors in the past decade, most with little or no preparation for the post.

City employees lack health and liability insurance coverage. Payments have not been made into the state municipal retirement fund for years, so

retirees are now being paid benefits strictly from their own contributions, which will run out in a couple of years or so, when there will then be another crisis facing ESL.

Reporter Gauen attributes the following line to Ardis Talley of Target 2000, a development group: "Look at the bright side--at least ESL doesn't run the telephones, provide water, or treat the sewage." Things just don't run right. The Board of Education didn't know from minute to minute when or whether it would hold a board meeting; the phones went unanswered at the president's office at State Community College the several times I tried to reach that office. Why don't things run right?

Two factors that struck me at meetings of the City Council and one of its committees--a glaring absence of systematic thinking and lack of understanding of such basic budgeting concepts as fund accounting. A reporter told me that councilmen will often try to make direct grants of money to friends out of funds which simply cannot be obligated in such a way. Much of the time at a council meeting I observed was devoted to arguing over which unpaid vendors ought to be paid before others, a kind of negative spoils, that is, "my unpaid friends will be paid sooner than my unpaid enemies."

City finance. The assessed valuation of ESL is less than that of the shopping mall in Fairview Heights, up on the Bluffs. As a result, the City and the courts have imposed a total tax rate of about \$20 per \$100 of assessed value. Even that doesn't generate much money. But as Berkshire has pointed out, property tax revenues make up a modest part of total revenues. Berkshire found that in 1985, relative to other cities of comparable size, ESL revenues and expenditures have been within low and high ranges, respectively, on a per capita basis.

Since then, ESL has lost federal revenue sharing monies. The biggest blows to the budget will come after the 1990 census, however. Estimates are that population will fall from about 55,000 in 1980 to between 40-45,000 in 1990. This will trigger significant reductions in formula-driven outside funding. Cities with fewer than 50,000 lose automatic Community Development Block Grant funding, so ESL will go from \$2.1 million a year in CDBG to as low as \$800,000, depending on ESL applications to St. Clair County, the clearing house for CDBG grants. Delores Turnbough, an activist who works with the ESL Treasurer's Office, doubts ESL will lose automatic CDBG funding, citing something called a "central cities proviso," with which I am unfamiliar.

Other reductions will come in state income tax sharing and motor fuel tax allocations. The school system continues to lose enrollment, having dropped from 22,000 to about 16,000 in the past few years. Further reductions will continue to affect enrollment-driven funding of schools.

Francis Touchette, chair of the St. Clair County Board and longtime Democratic political leader, declares, "There is no inducement to manage in ESL, for even if ESL were managed well, there is not enough money to do the job."

Summertime volatility. Each time I drove around ESL I was struck by the large numbers of adult men and women simply hanging around in front of taverns and on street corners. I mused that I was looking at a city with nothing to do; I thought also of the tremendous amount of undirected energy I could almost feel coming from these men and women.

I mention it because it was reported to me that the head of a major engineering company, located in the Bottoms on the edge of ESL, has developed an evacuation plan because of the volatility this man sees in ESL

this summer. The engineering chief has apparently worked in the ESL area for many years. He told my contact that there is a special mix of factors at work this summer that could ignite.

In addition to summertime heat and joblessness, there is the distressing and visible problem of sewage overflow. The drug crack has become a factor in the Valley in the past couple of years; recently two reporters for the Christian Science Monitor were surrounded in their car by crack dealers at one of the housing projects, who forced the reporters to give up their billfolds when they refused to buy crack. The Vice Lords and Disciples gangs are more active than ever, and there is a new anti-white community organizer in town who could stir things up.

I have no background with which to evaluate this possibility. I simply identify it as a concern that you might want to have others assess.

Leadership--an assessment.

As will be noted in a later section, influential people living in the Bi-State Area told me repeatedly they did not have confidence they knew whom to contact inside ESL in order to try to make positive things happen. In this section I will assay leadership by: categories, organizations, and individuals.

As for categories, churches and the black middle class are generally rated as having the greatest potential for influence. Political groups, meaning the Democratic Party within ESL, social service organizations, and business were generally accorded much less potential for influence.

I emphasized "potential" above because I heard often that the churches have not played the strong role they could. One longtime activist said, "It amazes me the churches do so little. They rarely flex their muscle."

She thought part of the problem is based on her understanding that many ministers, including those of some big churches, live outside ESL.

Percy McKinney, a recently-elected alderman, explained it this way: "The Catholic Church is based in Belleville, not here. The many Baptist churches here serve more residents than any other denomination, but the Baptist Church organization, in contrast to the Catholic hierarchy, is one of autonomous congregations. Thus they are not well coordinated and fail to combine their power."

According to Sister Julia Huiskamp, there is a larger middle class of old ESL families than the outsider might imagine, but they have been staying out of politics. I met with several middle-class business people and professionals, and got the sense that politics had been so dirty for so long that they simply avoided public involvement.

This doesn't mean they aren't interested in the future of ESL. Joe Lewis, Jr. works with his mother in running a 50-year-old family printing company that employs about 40 people (estimated from walking through plant). Joe, about 28, was admitted to Brown and Harvard, but went to Kansas where he played football. He is sharp, but he is very busy with the business; he and about eight other of his ESL high school classmates get together regularly to talk about their futures and that of ESL. "At some time I'll play a leadership role," Joe says, "but I'm not ready yet."

Jacquie Settles, about 45, has a master's degree in education. She is an executive with the ESL Housing Authority. She is articulate, pleasant, self-confident, and very proud of her daughter, and ESL High grad, who was just graduated from West Point. Jacquie has become more vocal in recent years, because of sewage problems in her yard and because her husband is a 45-

year-old policeman who is pounding the mean streets of ESL, "at an age where he can no longer physically deal with the young men," she says.

During my visits to ESL I identified about half a dozen of these bright young middle-class types who have returned home to ESL. They say there are many others. I can't quantify this, unfortunately.

The Democratic political organization is a pale shadow of its former influence. "Years ago," says Percy McKinney, "you could look down a residential street and tell where the precinct committeeman lived, because he had a nicer house than others on the street. Today I know committeemen who aren't working (he says it as if it's hard to believe)."

While there are 8-9,000 nearly-all-Democratic votes in ESL in a major general election, this represents a much smaller fraction of the county vote than in earlier decades, and is of scant importance in a statewide election. There is less patronage to dole out as well.

Everyone commended the social service agencies, such as Lessie Bates Davis and Catholic Urban Programs, but these same people said the agency executives were so busy with their overwhelming social challenges that they had neither the time nor the energy to take on major leadership roles. Each agency is "hanging on by its fingernails," said Sister Julia. "They're spread too thin to do much else."

Organizations. What little group power exists in ESL is fragmented among many small, generally weak groups. I identified the following, which I'm sure is far from a complete listing:

Ambassadors (women)

Center for Economic Self Reliance (see discussion below)

Firefighters Action Committee (led successful effort to reduce size of Council)

Gadfly Committee (women, primarily for municipal reform)
Metro East Church-based Citizens Organization (MECCO; see below)
Ministerial Association
New Wave Christian Action Group
Residents Inspired to Save ESL
Target 2000 (organized primarily by outside corporate sponsors)
Women Organized for Community Survival

From what I could discern--and I'm far from confident in these observations--no one of these groups is either strong nor does it have outstanding, compelling leadership. Several comprise just a handful of members. Target 2000 was mentioned several times as a visible economic development group, but apparently it is not viewed as having much potential for political leadership within ESL, as it is viewed as led by outsider corporate sponsors, e.g. Illinois Bell, Union Electric, and Monsanto.

The group that appears to have the most potential is called MECCO (see name in above list). This is a church-based community action organization that seeks to represent all the communities in the Bottoms. It was started about a year ago by Sister Cecelia Hellman, a teacher in ESL for about 15 years who lives just outside ESL, up on the Bluffs. The so-called interim leader is Rev. Rodney McLean of Wesley Bethel Baptist Church. McLean is soft-spoken and clearly intelligent, but he has been in ESL for only two years; thus he is free of local factionalism but is undoubtedly seen as an outsider.

MECCO has two important prongs of credibility--the strong backing of the Catholic Church and Sisters Cecelia and Julia, and the active involvement of most of the leading black churches. Rev. Rouse and his Mt. Zion Baptist

Church have now joined formally, yet I imagine Rev. Rouse sees MECCO as a competitor with him for community leadership.

At its first major public meeting, MECCO attracted 450 persons. This was considered very impressive by ESL observers. MECCO has a tiny amount of foundation aid, to support consultation by the Gamaliel Foundation of Chicago, which provides community action training. MECCO's goal is to provide some level of training to 1,000 citizens by September 1990 and in the same month to have 2-3,000 persons attend a rally and day of workshops.

I met with Sister Cecelia, Rev. McLean, and two organizers from Gamaliel. They appear to be committed; they appear to have a sense of organization and purpose. They lack funding, and they are probably viewed as outsiders. The first meeting did impress people. Jacquie Settles, the middle class administrator mentioned above, said she went to the meeting reluctantly but came away with a sense of hope and a belief in the group's potential.

But when you impress, you generate concern among others who fear they might lose some power or scarce resources to the new group. I'm told that as a result of MECCO's first success at drawing people, several persons started a competitor group, the Center for Economic Self Reliance. My point here is that in a culture of economic scarcity, I think new groups must overcome deep resistance from other groups that fear stature and precious scarce resources will be diverted from their organizations.

I think MECCO is worth supporting, yet it will be a couple of years or more before it has significant credibility and before any true leaders might have emerged.

Individuals. Clearly the death of Clyde Jordan (township supervisor, newspaper editor, and school board president) left a political vacuum that has not been filled. People I interviewed from ESL have been bitterly disappointed in Carl Officer's unfulfilled leadership promise. They say Carl's credibility within ESL has been diminished greatly and that there is no way he could win another election.

While I didn't ask everyone to identify those with real leadership potential in ESL, there was little overlap in names brought forward from those I did ask. Those mentioned more than once were: Rev. Rouse; Percy McKinney and Roosevelt Malone (new aldermen); Will McGoughy, the ESL Township Supervisor; Judge Clyde Wharton; Rev. McLean, and Dr. Lillian Parks, an administrator for the school district. Several people said that in the future Joe Lewis, Jr. is the type who will provide leadership.

I sensed that the person in ESL with the most stature at the moment is not even from ESL nor does he live there at present. He is Ron Thompson, president of General Railroad Co. of Alorton, who lives in St. Louis. You know Ron so I won't belabor the obvious here, other than to say that several young college graduates in ESL mentioned Ron as a role model, and others inside and outside ESL identified Ron as an impressive leader figure. I interviewed Ron and was struck with his self-confidence, systematic understanding of matters, and sincere commitment to the whole region.

Community fabric and followership. This is a topic I did not have time to develop, yet I think it must be identified. Even if there are leaders, is there a fabric of community and citizenry that is ready and able to respond to leadership? I heard time and again that "there are a lot of good people in ESL," and "many young people are coming back home to help rebuild ESL,

because their roots here are deep." I heard often that the voters can figure out what they want to do and then do it.

Delores Turnbough of the City Treasurer's Office points out that the voters selected five new "independent" aldermen from a field of 38; she adds that the Financial Advisory Board would never have been approved if it hadn't been for the changes wrought by the election and by the change in the structure of the council, which itself was generated by a couple of community groups.

Yet there seems to be precious little community fabric within which the citizens can work, other than the churches and social organizations. There is no daily newspaper anymore, for example, and citizen activists told me it is difficult for volunteers to follow civic affairs without a daily journal. The Urban League, Red Cross, YMCA, and United Way have all departed ESL. State Community College is not effective and SIU-E isn't really plugged in well to ESL, at least according to several observers.

I spent much of one day with different people at the small business incubator, which is clearly struggling. One of the board members, who has an MBA, told me that the old leaders of ESL are survivors, and survivors become defensive. "Think about people who have been hurt a long time-- these people tend to become defensive, so as to avoid being hurt anymore." He went on to say that new, more positive leaders were developing, primarily in the business community (referring to those active in the incubator).

He and the others tried to put on confident faces, but even they were discouraged; they declared "they would make things work (such as the incubator), but if they didn't, yes, they would move on." One of the gentlemen was clearly there to lobby me for a position in Springfield. I

wanted so much to believe them, yet my impression is that they are a small band, overwhelmed by the immensity of their problems and by the power of a personal, anti-civic political culture.

Political culture and the culture of scarcity. One reporter suggested that the politician/elected official has been seen as the provider in ESL since the days Alvin Fields was running city hall and through the War on Poverty, when much governmental largesse was funneled through government and apparently dispensed largely on a patronage basis. Another reporter observed that "almost everyone in town has bought into this political culture of getting all you can, any way you can."

I observed a school board meeting. There were 200 people in attendance. When a clerk came out with a stack of agendas for the meeting there was a mad scramble, literally, to get one of the copies (there weren't enough to go around). The folks beside me pored over the lists of names of people who were being recommended for summer jobs with the school district. The school board president chastised the superintendent for proposing certain people for jobs without having reviewed the names with the board members. These items were taken off the agenda so the board could go over them privately and come back with recommendations.

I was told by somebody who ought to know that while enrollment has decreased from 22,000 to 16,000 in recent years, there are more employees of the school district now than then, and that the district is topheavy with administrators. I know what patronage is all about, but I have never seen it dominate operations so profoundly as I sense it does in the ESL schools.

Two other observations. Information is in short supply in the political system of ESL and this is a conscious political tactic of certain public officials, a tactic we can well understand. But I felt that in this culture of scarcity as

I call it, information becomes an even more important resource and tool than in a better-endowed social system. "Black people don't share information," a tenant at the incubator told me, after he had been excluded from a meeting between other incubator officers and myself. For the life of me, I couldn't imagine why they excluded him. Later he suggested that those folks thought I might pass on some information of value, and they didn't want to share it.

Second, I sense that no matter how grim things get in ESL, the public officials are always thinking, according to one observer, "that the cavalry (i.e. big government) is always just beyond the horizon, and that it will come riding to their financial rescue at some point." Thus they plod along day to day, without a plan, overwhelmed, knowing the sun will go down and come up the following day, until some help arrives.

Increased outside interest and concern about ESL.

ESL and the Bottoms are separated from the rest of the region psychologically as well as physically. The major street map of "Metropolitan St. Louis" stops at the Mississippi River, as if Illinois didn't exist. The Heritage phone directory for the Metro East region does not include ESL; I tried for the longest time to find a number for State Community College before it dawned on me that ESL, located at the heart of the region, was totally absent from the directory!

And people on the Bluffs--and the whites in the Bottoms--overwhelmingly want this separation to continue. For an interview, I took a middle-class black lady from Loisel Hills to a nice restaurant in nearby Belleville, about a mile or two from her handsome home. Walking to our booth I could feel the eyes watching us; I heard a person at one booth telling

his fellow diners to hush, as if to avoid saying anything inappropriate; things became quieter.

I don't mean to dramatize this little incident, and maybe I was imagining it; I don't think so, however, for the city of Belleville, which touches ESL at the Bluffs, is uptight. I stayed in Belleville one of my weeks in the region. One veteran public official in St. Clair County estimated that as many as half of Belleville's 40,000 residents are whites who were forced out of ESL in the past 30 years.

In bars and coffeeshops, I heard several comments that the blacks are moving in, panic selling has begun, and "my friends are picking up again, this time for Millstadt or O'Fallon." The several interstate highways have apparently eased this movement, for the people will still be able to get into the center of the region to work, even over to the west side of St. Louis.

The media have increased interest in ESL. Even with this strong interest in maintaining the separation between blacks and whites--or maybe because of it--I perceive also a significant increase in interest outside ESL about doing something to shape up ESL. I think the primary factor at work here has been the upsurge in media coverage of ESL during the past year or so.

Pat Gauen of the Post-Dispatch: "Two or three years ago you could hardly get an ESL story in our paper. Now ESL is front page almost every day, and we have begun covering everything that Carl Officer says. Until recently reporters would not have reported the 'monkey blood' comment. Our paper decided that since Carl is news, we have a responsibility to report all that he says."

In addition, and maybe more important to area leaders, the national and international media are giving major play to ESL. It's an easy story to

do. Fly into Lambert, stay at nice hotels near the Arch just a couple of minutes from ESL, get your story and get out. 60 Minutes has begun preparations for a piece; Nightline had a piece "in the can," but it was preempted by turmoil in China; the national newspapers have discovered ESL. Carl provides them all with good copy, and there are great visuals to be taped.

ESL is also easy coverage for the St. Louis television stations. At city council meetings the network affiliates often have crews there to cover the regular meetings. "Carl Officer is better known in Missouri than Jim Thompson is," said one St. Clair public official. This same person was infuriated that Missouri read and saw much about Carl's actions "yet they know nothing of capable mayors like Brauer here in Belleville and other mayors in Metro East."

The media attention has made the area economic development folks very sensitive. It absolutely infuriates Madison and St. Clair leaders that people living as close as downtown St. Louis think ESL is the whole of the Metro East region. "ESL is a boil on our nose" is representative of similies I heard several times in characterizing the worsening image problem that many think ESL is creating for the region.

Another factor in the increased concern about ESL may come from former residents of ESL, both black and white, who have some good memories of their hometown. They are hurt when they see and hear ESL made a laughingstock or worse, on the news or at cocktail parties. There is no way to quantify this, yet Francis Touchette was one of several who mentioned it, and Francis is a pretty savvy student of the area.

The view from Missouri. The journalists, urban experts, and politicians I talked with declared Missourians interest in ESL to be either contemptuous or

nonexistent. "The River is a hundred miles wide," said one. Gerwin Rohrbach said the enmity between the two sides of the River is rooted in the Civil War; another said that since tax issues and voting don't cross the River, there is little to connect the two sides politically.

Ron Thompson had a more analytical view, however. "There is a struggle going on between St. Louis and St. Louis County over where the 'metro-pole,' that is, the center of economic and political gravity, for the region should be. This affects the attitudes of Missouri-side leaders toward ESL.

"If you want the pole to be in the west, out in the County, you tend to find the continuing problems of ESL as a supporting factor in making your case. On the other hand, if you want the center of gravity Downtown, then you have a stronger interest in seeing something positive done in ESL, especially with the increased media attention (and all the photos of ESL destitution framed by the Arch in the background, JN).

"As a result, some Downtown leaders are becoming publicly supportive of 'joint-use' of Scott Air Force Base, and others are remaining quiet, whereas in years past they might have been vocally opposed."

Apparently the City of St. Louis is not doing well, its handsome refurbished Downtown notwithstanding. Rohrbach tells me there is a glut of vacant office space and that apartment developments on the edge of the Downtown are going belly up. Francis Touchette mentioned the problems of St. Louis as well, saying some fear St. Louis may go the way of ESL.

But, as Ron Thompson observed, all this increased attention and interest probably reflect an outside world that is responding to the visibility given the problems, rather than to the problems themselves. "The problems

in Alorton and Venice are just as bad as those in ESL, but since those towns are not visible to te world, they don't get any attention."

General observations.

"There's nobody you can deal with in ESL." With tones of great frustration, leaders outside ESL voiced this complaint often. Said one leader: "I'd get involved down there if there were a legitimate process and structure; but there isn't. I've been involved three times in the past and each effort was a waste of time."

As Pat Gauen put it, "There is a real quandary for these people, especially the outside politicians. You want to help a hurt dog lying in the road, but you don't want to get so close it will bite you. And some have been bitten already."

Thus development of a strong, respected financial manager for ESL is important not only for internal affairs, but also to increase credibility that there is someone in ESL to deal with, absent any other strong credible leaders at the moment.

The outside world is taking over ESL piecemeal. The takeover by HUD of the ESL Housing Authority was the first such action. The presence of the State Troopers is another. Others include interest in stronger outside control of State Community College; a financial oversight committee for School District 189, and the Financial Advisory Board and manager for the City. St. Clair County will probably have increased influence if ESL must submit CDBG grant applications to the County in the future.

What fascinates me about this is that while the politicians express some resentment at the idea of outsiders coming in to run things, there has apparently been nothing but a sense of public relief and appreciation with the management of the Housing Authority by Quadel, a private contract agency. In addition, I felt that the five new members of the City Council are willing to give strong powers to a financial manager, if they feel they have

played a part in shaping the manager's role. I think they understand the depths of their plight as a city, yet want to save some pride by participating in the process.

Can ESL make it? The consensus seems to be, no, ESL cannot make it-- by itself. Even with a good manager, ESL can't make it alone, said Dennis Judd of the University of Missouri-St. Louis, who has written a book on urban planning in ESL. "Starting with Alvin Fields, the City has been systematically stripped of its resources; the sewers are probably irreparable; the reclaimable housing stock is probably very small. . . .we shouldn't expect that every city can always make it, yet the state and its sub-units have the responsibility to provide the people there with basic health, welfare, and safety services."

Several people, admittedly not experts on environmental matters, questioned whether major infusions of money and effort ought to be expended if the floodplain is found to be so contaminated with toxins as to be uninhabitable.

Gerwin Rohrbach believes the first step in determining if ESL can participate in solving its basic problems is to develop broad-based citizen involvement. Yet he admits this is difficult even in communities with strong civic cultures. Can such be developed here? How many years will it take? Is there a place to start, such as MECCO, discussed above? I don't know; I have my doubts, and yet I think some foundation seed money for efforts to build such an organization(s) would be worth the investment.

Whither the big economic development projects? Most people inside and outside ESL have become disenchanted with the big economic development projects. They don't see them ever being built, and they are angry and embarrassed by the money they think is being siphoned off by

outsiders who themselves know the projects will never be developed. This attitude is especially strong as relates to the Riverfront Development Project and the \$450 million in bond money.

I received strong accusations that the Target 2000 staff brought in several archaeologists to their proposed housing development project, until they got one to say there were important artifacts on the site. This was supposedly to provide cover for their lack of progress. While this accusation came from a respected source, I note it only to illustrate the cynicism that I found to exist rather broadly toward major development projects.

"Joint-use" (air force and commercial passenger) of Scott Air Force Base and the "light rail" system are the two projects in which there are greatest expectations. Even with these there are doubters. Ron Thompson notes that local dollars must subsidize the light rail system. It will be difficult to come up with continuing subsidies for a line that, according to him, does not have much potential for developing into a metropolitan-wide network. He foresees only the Lambert-ESL link, and is doubtful the connection to Belleville will ever be built. On the other hand, Francis Touchette hails the projects together as economic saviours that will result in a solid city from Belleville to St. Louis.

Five regional challenges. Urban planner Gerwin Rohrbach identifies five overarching challenges that he believes must be addressed on a region-wide basis. In addition, he contends that until the region understands and addresses these problems there will never be comprehensive development of the region. The problem areas are:

1. The image of the Bottoms, especially of the black communities.
2. The American Bottoms floodplain and its whole watershed area.
3. Environmental concerns in the Bottoms.

4. Fragmentation in the metropolitan area--governmental, political, leadership, and psychological.
5. The leadership void in the Bi-State Area, in Metro-East, and inside ESL.

Recommendations.

1. Work with ESL through the new financial manager to stabilize delivery of basic health, welfare, and safety services. This is what ESL citizens want, deserve, need. Keep expectations focused and modest. I sense that even small but firm steps toward stabilization of basic services would generate appreciation inside and outside ESL and would begin to rebuild credibility for the city.

Be cautious about involvement in glitzy, grandiose development schemes of the sort that have thus far generated disillusionment rather than development.

Most people I talked with--inside and outside ESL--believe the financial manager concept has potential; they applaud it, yet point out the shoals you will have to navigate in implementing a manager plan that accords clear authority and control to an outsider. I sense you must work closely with the Council and even the Mayor in this regard. I think the community of ESL is willing overall to go along with a strong manager, so long as they feel it has not been forced down their throats.

2. Encourage foundation and other nongovernmental financial support to the Metro East Church-based Community Organization (MECCO) as it attempts to develop a broad-based citizen and community action plan for ESL. There may be other comparable worthy groups, but this is one that

impresses me as having a foundation of strong credibility, a plan of action, and capable leaders.

3. Assist in the development of increased public awareness and understanding of the five regional challenges that Rohrbach identified (see above). Instead of the standard "study," I think it might be fruitful to seek foundation support for the St. Louis public television station and for Illinois Issues in the development of series devoted to the five topic areas.

We must help transform the pictures in our heads from those solely of the problems of ESL and of Carl Officer to understanding of the interrelatedness and interdependence of the fragmented elements that make up the Bi-State Area.

Record of work done on East St. Louis consulting project

Days of activity, 1988-89

1988

Aug. 10 Springfield meet with Berkshire to discuss project

Sept. 8 Galesburg work plan written and submitted

27 Springfield review ESL files in Governor's Office

1989

May 19 Springfield research legislation re ESL

26 Galesburg organization of ESL fieldwork

30 Springfield confer in Springfield with Tom Berkshire,
Office of the Governor

June 1 Galesburg preparation for East St. Louis (ESL)
interviews

5

6 ESL

7

8

interviews; city council meeting; guided
tours (walking and in auto); observation

9

Galesburg

transcribe notes; reading

10

12

13 ESL

interviews; observation

14

15

18

19 ESL

interviews; school board meeting;
observation; review notes

20

21

24

25 ESL

transcribe notes; reading; review; report
preparation

28

29

DSW 135529

STLCOPCB4035508

30 Springfield

deliver written and oral reports to Tom
Berkshire, Office of the Governor

DSW 135530

Interviews:

Berkshire, Thomas. Special assistant to the Governor of Illinois; liaison to ESL.

Coleman, Paul. President of the ESL Small Business Incubator.

Galluzzo, Gregory. Community organizer with the Gamaliel Foundation of Chicago; consultant to Metro East Churches Coordinating Organization (MECCO).

Gauen, Patrick. Reporter for the St. Louis Post Dispatch who has covered ESL and southwestern Illinois for many years. Former managing editor of the St. Louis Globe Democrat.

Hellman, Sister Cecelia. Teacher and activist in ESL; an organizer of Metro East Churches Coordinating Organization (MECCO).

Huiskamp, Sister Julia. Social worker with Catholic Urban Programs of ESL.

Jefferson, Charles. President of the Tenants' Association, ESL Small Business Incubator. Interviewed twice.

Joshway, Eddie. ESL realtor.

Joyner, Darrel. Director of "Make ESL Beautiful" program. Young college graduate who came back home.

Judd, Dennis. Professor of Urban Politics, University of Missouri at St. Louis.

Junker, Martin. Real estate executive and associate of Gerwin Rohrbach. Interviewed twice.

Kane, Mary. Executive Director of the Southwest Illinois Development

Lewis, Joe, Jr. Vice president of Crusader Printing. Young businessman who

McKinney, Percy. Recently elected alderman of ESL.

McLean, Rev. Rodney. Pastor of Wesley Bethel Methodist Church of ESL and interim chair of the Metro East Churches Coordinating Organization (MECCO).

O'Dell, Kathy. Director of public information at Belleville Area College. For many years O'Dell covered southwest Illinois for the now-defunct Metro-East Journal and the St. Louis Globe Democrat.

Racine, John. ESL beat reporter for Belleville News-Democrat. Interviewed twice.

Robert Mendelson. Professor of Urban Politics, SIU-E (brief phone interview).

Rohrbach, Gerwin. Urban planner based in St. Louis who has become student of the American Bottoms, in which ESL is located. Interviewed three times.

Saksa, Robert. Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, ESL office.

Settles, Jacqueline. Executive with ESL Housing Authority and lifelong resident of ESL.

Shumer, Marge. Community organizer with the Gamaliel Foundation of Chicago; consultant to Metro East Churches Coordinating Organization (MECCO).

Skinner, Thomas. Assistant to the Governor of Illinois, Chicago office.

Smith, Eddie. Manager of the ESL Small Business Incubator.

Thompson, Ronald. President of General Railroad Co. of St. Louis. Member of the Governor's Taskforce on ESL.

Touchette, Francis. Chairman of the County Board of St. Clair County and longtime Democratic leader in the county. Also is township supervisor of Centreville Township, which borders ESL.

Turnbough, Delores. Community activist in ESL and employe in City Treasurer's office.

Whelan, Paul. Vice president and chief operating officer of Parks College of St. Louis University, located in Cahokia, next to ESL. Whelan is on several ESL-related boards.

Note: Four persons I interviewed asked that their names not appear. These included a journalist, a knowledgeable bartender from Belleville whose parents grew up in ESL and "were forced out and feel they are being forced out again, this time to O'Fallon (IL)," and two ESL residents.

DSW 135533

STLCOPCB4035512

Selected bibliography of books and reports read:

Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations. City Financial Emergencies. Washington, D.C., 1973. Also, Bankruptcies, Defaults, and Other Government Financial Emergencies. Washington, D.C., 1985.

Auditor General of Illinois. Financial and compliance audits of State Community College of East St. Louis, 1987 and 1988.

Belleville News-Democrat. East St. Louis (ESL) files for 1988-89.

Judd, Dennis R. and Robert E. Mendelson. The Politics of Urban Planning: The East St. Louis Experience. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Parkinson, Michael, Bernard Foley, and Dennis R. Judd. Regenerating the Cities. Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman and Co., 1989.

Peterson, Paul E. City Limits. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

Peterson, Paul E. The New Urban Reality. Washington: Brookings Institution, 1985.

Rohrbach, Gerwin. Personal files of memoranda on East St. Louis. Generally, 1988 and 1989.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch. ESL files for 1988-89.

Team Four Research. Restructuring Regional Economic Development Outreach in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area (in DRAFT). St. Louis, October 1987.

Assistance provided to Principal Investigator Nowlan:

Kelly Shaw-Barnes, administrative and research assistant to Nowlan, provided extensive research and clerical assistance in transcribing notes, assisting with fieldwork preparation, and preparation of final report.

Statement re expenses incurred during project:

Expenses incurred were the responsibility of Nowlan. He travelled 2550 miles in three trips to East St. Louis, travel around the metro area during those visits, three trips to Springfield to confer with and report to Thomas

Berkshire. Nowlan was in the field eleven days and spent three days in Springfield.

DSW 135535

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Study Participants. Study director is James D. Nowlan, who has familiarity with East St. Louis. In 1977 Nowlan was special assistant to the Governor of Illinois for education and special projects. During that year Nowlan was liaison to the State Community College of East St. Louis. In addition Nowlan has made several visits to East St. Louis in subsequent years. He has written an essay, "Let's Take a Gamble on East St. Louis," that appeared in his 1986 book, Illinois--Problems and Promise. A biographical sketch of Nowlan is attached.

Assisting Nowlan will be his two research assistants, Kelly Shaw-Barnes and Christopher Everson.

Attachment

Interview Schedule for East St. Louis Evaluation Project

Jim Nowlan, Investigator

Purposes. Since my work in the 1970s as a state legislator and assistant for education to two governors, I have had an interest in the problems of East St. Louis. At present I am a professor of public policy at Knox College in Galesburg.

I have received a grant for the summer to: 1) assay the leadership capacities of citizens within East St. Louis, as well as those in the region who live outside the City who have interest in the future of East St. Louis, and 2) evaluate all identifiable options for managing the community of East St. Louis in the coming years.

By "leadership capacities" I mean the potential for achieving positive change in East St. Louis. By "options for managing the community" I mean formal structures for governing East St. Louis, such as the present mayor-council form of government or proposals such as disincorporation of the municipality.

My report and recommendations to the granting agency, which prefers to remain anonymous at this time, would probably be made available to all interested policymakers at the state and local level as well as to the public.

If you wish, your observations will not be attributed to you by name.

The interview.

1. Overall, how would you rate the leadership potential of East St. Louis residents to achieve significant positive change in the coming decade:

- ☐ strong
- ☐ some
- ☐ weak
- ☐ nonexistent

On what basis do you make this assessment?

2. Overall, how would you rate the leadership potential and willingness of persons living outside East St. Louis in the bi-state metropolitan area to achieve significant positive change in East St. Louis in the coming decade:

- ☐ strong
- ☐ some
- ☐ weak
- ☐ nonexistent

On what basis do you make this assessment?

3. Please name the four persons in East St. Louis you feel have the greatest potential for achieving positive change in the coming decade.

4. Please name the four persons in the bi-state metro area you feel have the greatest potential for achieving positive change in East St. Louis in the coming decade.

5. Which institution(s) do you feel has (have) the greatest potential for achieving significant positive change in East St. Louis in the coming decade:

- ☐ black churches
- ☐ nongovernmental "settlement houses" (e.g. Catholic Urban Services)
- ☐ economic development agencies
 - ☐ located within East St. Louis
 - ☐ located outside East St. Louis
- ☐ East St. Louis business
- ☐ colleges and universities
- ☐ the East St. Louis middle class
- ☐ others _____

6. Based on what you know now, what do you project will be the situation in East St. Louis in a decade with regard to the economy and general quality of life:

- ☐ significantly better
- ☐ better
- ☐ about the same
- ☐ worse
- ☐ significantly worse

On what basis do you make this projection?

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7. There have been numerous proposals for major economic development in East St. Louis, ranging from expansion of the Jefferson National Memorial to the East St. Louis riverfront to even more extensive developments that would combine museums, hotels, offices, and upscale housing. What level of confidence do you have that one of these major economic development plans will be completed within the coming decade:

- ☐ high level of confidence
- ☐ some confidence
- ☐ little confidence
- ☐ no confidence whatever

Why do you indicate this level of confidence?

8. In addition to economic development plans, there have been several suggestions regarding change in the formal government structure of East St. Louis. Evaluate each of the following suggestions in terms of whether you think it is (good idea, has some potential, bad idea, terrible idea) and what you think the consequences of the suggestion would be for East St. Louis if implemented:

- ☐ declare East St. Louis bankrupt and have the State of Illinois take over management
- ☐ disincorporate East St. Louis, in effect turning over governmental functions to St. Clair County
- ☐ leave the present mayor-council form of government in place,
 - ☐ with no change in state-local relationships
 - ☐ with increased state financial assistance
 - ☐ with increased state assistance and state-imposed financial controls
- ☐ other suggestions _____

9. Whom do you feel it important I include on my list of people to interview (both inside and outside East St. Louis)?

10. Do you have any final observations and recommendations?