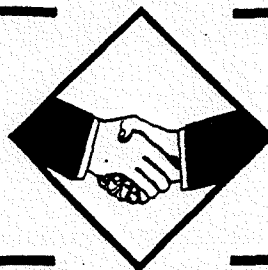


COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANELS WITHIN THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY: ANTECEDENTS AND ISSUES



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Community Advisory Panels (CAPs) are currently being sponsored by the American chemical industry as a way to repair lost trust. Over 200 CAPs are currently in operation. Their goals, composition and impact vary. Like governmental advisory committees they run the risk of being vehicles of persuasion as opposed to bodies which bring about organisational or health and safety changes. This article reviews the evidence we have to date about CAP operations and sets an agenda for future research.

INTRODUCTION

The American chemical industry has recently adopted one of the most frequently found and one of the longest-used public participation techniques in the United States—the citizen advisory committee. The industry's public image, tarnished by a series of well-publicised leaks, spills, accidents, and underground contamination, had plummeted. It needed ways to repair lost trust. Thus, in the late 1980s as part of its Responsible Care Program, the American Chemical Manufacturers Association (CMA) recommended that member companies establish Community Advisory Panels (CAPs). (Reisch, 1994, p.8)

To date over 200 CAPs are in place, including some panels that pre-date the formal CMA initiative. A panel may work with only a single facility or advise multiple (upwards of 20) chemical companies within a defined geographic region. Some companies have established CAPs at many of their sites. Dow Chemical Company which has CAPs at almost every plant it operates, including overseas, established its CAPs because it increasingly found that its 'ability to operate and ability to go on...(was)... subject to the approval of the community' (Fried, 1992: D1).

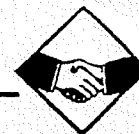
Responsible Care Programmes currently exist in approximately 20 other countries, but broadening the programme to include citizens in a more participatory manner is very North American (see Simmons and Wynne, 1992 for a description of Responsible Care in Great Britain). Indeed, the use of citizen advisory committees (CACs) goes back almost to the United States' founding and is a part of America's lively tradition of local democratic involvement as noted by de Tocqueville. (1960) However, until recently CACs have only advised government. The chief benefits agencies claim for CACs are that they can 1) inform public agencies about community attitudes; 2) educate citizens about issues or proposed institutional actions; 3) involve citizens in providing input to agency decisions; 4) increase ultimate acceptance of those decisions; and 5) allow

government and industry to deal with one relatively small body of citizens rather than the entire community (Howell, Olsen and Olsen 1987; Creighton 1980, Pierce and Doerksen 1976).

The use of CACs in the environmental arena is not new. In the 1960's CACs were used in urban renewal programmes. In the late 1970s and early 1980s increasing conflict over the siting of radioactive, hazardous and solid waste facilities spurred a new wave of efforts to involve the public in forums in addition to obligatory and increasingly contentious public hearings. States, localities and federal agencies convened citizen advisory committees to provide input for siting of waste facilities, development of regulations, and remediation of Superfund sites. A few industries with particularly severe contamination problems established CACs to review facility operations. In Niagara Falls, N.Y., for instance, Cecos International, a hazardous waste firm, established a citizen advisory committee to meet monthly to review facility operations (Smith, Lynn, Andrews, Olin, Mauer 1985).

Notwithstanding the proliferation of citizen advisory committees, their failures and misuse have elicited criticisms that are almost as harsh as those levelled at the 'decide-announce-defend' process often used by government and industry. The composition of the committees has been criticised for failing to reflect the communities' attitudes or socio-economic status. CACs have been faulted for being merely a form of therapy in which the attitudes of the members of the CAC are treated as deviant (Arnstein, 1969). Concerns have also been raised about whether CACs are a means of co-optation of citizens rather than involvement. (Houghton, 1988; Kathlene and Martin, 1991).

In this paper we raise some of the issues that companies and their Community Advisory Panels (CAPs) may have to grapple with if they want to avoid such criticisms: goals, representativeness, internal procedures, access to resources, and impact. Because there have been few studies of industry CAPs, our questions are preliminary, and there is only



anecdotal evidence of the extent to which intentions are reflected in actions. This paper does, however, set the stage for a more extensive two year study of CAPs (including detailed case studies followed by a larger quantitative survey) currently underway by a team of researchers from Rutgers University's Center for Environmental Communication and the University of North Carolina's Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering.

THE GOAL OF CAPs: PERSUASION, EDUCATION, LEGITIMATION, DIALOGUE OR CHANGE?

At issue is whether corporate sponsors of CACs truly want input or whether they want advisory committees to lull communities to sleep. A review of the use of citizen advisory committees in other venues (including urban planning, community development and environmental arenas) reveals a tension between viewing citizen advisory committees as means of 'manipulation, therapy, information and placation' or as a legitimate source of substantive input into a sponsoring agency's operation (Lynn and Kartez, 1992). Twenty-five years ago Arnstein (1969, p.218), writing about early CACS which were developed by local government for community development efforts, made a point similar to that being made by environmentalists today. She observed that "at the meetings of the Citizen Advisory [author's italics]...it was the officials who educated, persuaded, and advised citizens, not the reverse".

The CMA and company leaders in the movement to establish CAPs describe the mission of CAPs as 'two-way dialogue' and 'open and honest exchange of ideas and views' (CMA, 1990; Woodhouse 1992, p.9). Industry writings about CAPs also make it clear that one of the prime motivations for establishing CAPs is to build trust (CMA, 1992, p.10). However, practitioners in the field of public dispute resolution, point out that while a great deal of lip service is paid to 'building trust', relatively little attention is paid to the nature and purpose of trust (Carpenter and Kennedy, 1988, p.205). They suggest that too often trust seems to be confused with 'building lifelong friendships', rather than 'removing unnecessary obstacles to productive discussion' (Carpenter and Kennedy, 1988, p.205).

We suspect that the goals of CAPs vary from company to company, within companies, and overtime. In a review of CAPs conducted by *Chemical and Engineering News* (Reisch, 1994), corporate representatives and facilitators of CAPs indicated a variety of goals: serving as a sounding board for plant managers, disseminating information to the public, building community consensus, and enabling the community to have an impact on the thinking of managers. One CAP member said she was not clear what the company's goals were because the company did not seem to want advice from its advisory committee. Fred Millar, director of the toxics project of the Friends of the Earth, suggested that most CAPs are an attempt to 'preempt an activist government' (Reisch, 1994, p.21).

In fact, Millar's prophecies have been fulfilled in some cases. Electrical utilities have used citizen advisory committees for a number of years. One CAP established by

Jenner Nuclear for the purpose of 'two way communication' received mixed evaluations from the industry-funded Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), (EPRI, 1991, pp.2-17). EPRI observed that while citizens were allowed to voice their opinions and concerns, sometimes it appeared that the company was "more concerned with panel members spreading the 'good word' than with responding to the public's health and environmental apprehensions".

On the other hand, some CAPs have consciously tried to deal with these concerns. Members of the multi-company and multi-county CAP established in 1992, which meets in Wilmington, North Carolina, defined their mission as 'providing a sounding board for both the community and industry... identifying concerns and providing a mechanism for responding to those concerns...(and)... providing input on improvements that have been or could be made by industry (Wilmington/Lower Cape Fear CAP: 12/3/92). Its ground rules state that the CAP will not:

- be a public relations group for the chemical industry
- be regulators for the chemical industry
- be the primary means for the industry to communicate to the public.

Because the CAP is relatively young, it may take some time until it is clear that the CAP has achieved these goals and avoided these pitfalls.

Corporate self-interest may limit the number of companies which explicitly exclude such public relations functions. For example, although Sybron Chemicals Inc., a company whose outstanding community relations efforts was studied in depth, has developed many innovative ways to involve neighbours in tracking plant operations, it has more modest aspirations for its CAP. Company officials of this small specialty chemical manufacturer headquartered in semi-rural Birmingham, N.J., suggested that their Neighbourhood Involvement Committee was a forum to 'show what we have done at the plant that affects our neighbours' and 'achieve better, more effective continuing communications between Sybron and its neighbours' (Chess et al., 1991, p.22).

Even Rohm and Haas, a company whose CAPs have been offered by CMA as a model (CMA, 1990) set relatively limited goals at its Bristol, PA, plant. An in-depth study, of this plant's community relations programme conducted in 1991 found that despite other laudatory efforts, the purpose of the CAP at the time of the study was not to provide opinions on controversial issues. For example, while the company told the CAP about its plans to build an incinerator, it never systematically asked CAP members their opinions as to whether the controversial incinerator should be built. Managers said they did not even know some individuals' opinion. (Chess et al., 1992b).

In short, the goals of a CAP are many and perceived differently by different people. At least in the case of building trust, there is no clear agreement on what steps need to be taken. Whether a CAC is a vehicle of persuasion or a source of meaningful input, may be influenced by whether the company or the CAP sets its goals, the history of the plant-community relations, and other contextual issues



(Chess et al., 1990a). As the CAPs mature, research would be useful to track if their goals change over time and the extent to which they meet their stated objectives.

REPRESENTATIVENESS: WHO SHALL BELONG? WHO SHALL SELECT?

Over the years citizen advisory committees to government agencies have been criticised for being unrepresentative of the community at-large in terms of income, education, and racial composition. Government advisory committees have tended to be made up of 'elites', who have time to devote to such panels and tend to be of a higher socio-economic status than is typical in the communities they represent (Kathlene and Martin 1991). Thus, government advisory committees have included environmentalists who are on staff of organisations, rather than representatives of the 'grassroots'.

The key issue seems to be how much criticism does a company want? A facilitator hired to help start several CAPs in Texas, suggests that including activists can be useful but including 'assertive activists' is unwise because they will block consensus (Reisch, 1994, p.10).

The CMA (1992, p.6) recommends to companies that CAP participants represent a 'cross section of your community in terms of age, gender, race, occupation, education and attitude toward your facility and the chemical industry. It is important to include supporters and critics so that you will receive broad input'. The CMA (1991a, p.4) also suggests that before beginning panels facility managers should learn as much as possible about their community and the concerns their neighbours have about living near a chemical plant through public opinion surveys, in-depth interviews, or focus groups. The CMA does not support any one mechanism to select members but does offer options ranging from company selection to small group meetings designed to 'identify interested persons in the community'.

A 1992 CMA survey of CAP members found that 16% of those surveyed represented civic groups, 12% were political leaders, 9% came from the medical professions, 9% were merchants, 8% homeowners and 4% religious leaders or clergy. Twenty-seven per cent were in an 'other' category (CMA, 1992, Appendix B:6). The CMA survey provides no sense of whether the opinions, incomes, or racial composition of the CAPs reflect the communities in which the CAPs are based.

The opinions of CAP members towards industry may also be a criteria for selection. Diane Sheridan (1992, p.2), recommends selecting members 'reflective of the whole spectrum of community opinions about the industry, leaning toward those who give the chemical industry its low rating'. Her assumption is that 'diversity in members will promote diversity in viewpoint, ensuring that a variety of community concerns will be brought to the table'. She prefers using a steering committee of opinion leaders who then recommend the panel members and sees it as essential to have an environmentalist or community activists on that committee. The worst selection method according to Sheridan (1992, p.2) is to have the plant manager and public relations person make the choice since they will 'tend to pick elected

officials and pro-business company leaders and leave out industry sceptics, critics including environmentalists, citizen activists, fence line neighbours and young people'.

Rohm and Haas' corporate director of public affairs notes the wisdom of including at least one member who has been critical of the company and suggests that the company and the community do not benefit from 'cheerleaders' (Reisch, 1994, p.21).

There seems to be a spectrum of approaches for dealing with activists. The multi-company Wilmington, North Carolina CAP selected its members by means of a seven person steering committee composed of environmentalists, community activists and government leaders, who in turn recommended people to serve on the CAP. Members were selected to 'represent diversity in the community as to age, race and pro-or anti-industry sentiment'. Some CAP members represent organisations, including government agencies, the medical community, environmental organisations, service agencies, educational groups, plant neighbours, area citizenry, emergency responders, clergy, public service groups and the area's business community. Members are replaced by their organisations and the CAP replaces those who do not represent organisations. Close to one-third of the members of the current Wilmington CAP represent citizen or environmental groups.

One of the most thorough selection processes was used by Dow Chemical Company at its Midland, Michigan plant. It hired a demographer to ensure representativeness, an act that convinced a prominent local environmentalist and long-time critic of Dow that the CAP might be worth attending (Fried, 1992, D5).

Sybron Chemicals danced around the question of how to deal with activists by defining its constituency geographically. Neighbours within 1.5 miles of the plant were sent invitations to join their neighbourhood involvement committee. Despite receiving invitations, none of the plant's most vocal opponents were among the 11 neighbours who volunteered as initial members. No environmentalists live within the geographic parameters, and the plant avoids dealing with environmentalists (Chess, et al., 1991).

Regardless of whether the members were initially representative of community values, they may consciously or unconsciously become less outspoken as time goes on. For example, many of the members of Rohm and Haas' Bristol CAP have served on it since its inception. The current plant manager is proud of the 'very good relationship' that has developed over the years between the company and its CAP. He feels that it is a result of the company being consistently forthright. Ironically, he also indicates that this has led to the committee being less assertive, and wishes members would say 'prove it to me' more often (Chess, et al., 1992b, p.18).

In fairness, the question of who speaks for the people is a difficult one that United States democracy has struggled with for years. It will not be surprising if even well-intentioned companies stumble in attempting to develop representative CAPs.

Despite these different approaches, some environmentalists call CAP members, by definition, pawns



(Ember, 1992). Given such a definition, representation may not be the issue - power is.

INTERNAL EFFECTIVENESS

Prior research on corporate community relations programmes suggests that how a company handles its community relations internally may affect the programme's effectiveness. Who develops goals, sets a meeting's agenda, runs the meeting, records the minutes, develops guidelines and represents the company may be factors that influence not only how a CAP functions but also what it does (Chess, et al., 1992a).

We hypothesise that corporate goals may influence CAPs' internal processes, and that processes may also affect goals. For example, how (or if) a CAP makes decisions may also affect its external impact as well as its internal process. Those CAPs that are most concerned with building relationships between plants and communities may develop different processes from those which are concerned about affecting plant operations.

The CMA (1991, 7a) recommends using neutral facilitators. Companies such as Dow Chemical Company, use facilitators to ensure that Dow employees do not 'dominate the panel' and to provide a 'process for resolving possible disagreements (Woodhouse, 1992, p.8)'. In the CMA survey of CAP members 67% of the respondents reported meetings were run by a facilitator; 40% of the meetings which were not chaired by a facilitator were run by the plant manager (CMA, 1992, Appendix B, pp.16-17).

Paradoxically, too much attention to internal structural arrangements can also be a problem. Studies by Creighton and Delli Priscoli suggest that the more formal a CAC becomes, (establishing a 'multiplicity of committees, subcommittees, leaders and substitute leaders and devoting tremendous amounts of energy to decisions on attendance, voting alternatives, etc.), the more likely it is that the range and quality of alternatives considered will decrease (Creighton and Delli Priscoli, 1983). Increasingly CACs in the public arena are receiving training in group process and conflict resolution skills in order to rely less on formal voting and more on consensus and collaborative decision-making techniques which are designed to ensure that all interests, needs, concerns and solutions are aired.

Internal dynamics of CAPs may not always be clear. For example, at Sybron Chemical Company the Rutgers research team noted that while 'members frequently raise topics not on the agenda', in other respects the agenda seemed to be set by the company (1991, pp.23-24).

The role of industry representatives on a CAP may also be an issue. Experience with governmental CACs emphasises the importance of the presence of responsible line managers so that members of the advisory committee are heard first-hand by managers with genuine authority. The CMA (1991a, p.4) recommends that the plant manager attend CAP meetings routinely, and that personnel who deal directly with CACs issues under discussion also attend.

DOW's CAP meetings are attended by the general manager, the public relations director, the health and safety manager and others as needed. None of the Dow representatives are, however, official members of the CAP

(Woodhouse, 1992, D5). At both Sybron and Rohm and Haas' Bristol plant, senior managers made CAP meetings a priority on their calendars and very rarely missed meetings. At Sybron three senior managers (including two vice presidents and the plant manager) attend NIC meetings, which also makes it easier if one manager has an unavoidable conflict (Chess, et al., 1992a).

During the formation of the Wilmington, NC, CAP there was a lively discussion of whether industry should be actual members of the CAP. One environmental representative asked how there could be a two-way dialogue without an industry representative on the panel? Industry representatives responded that they felt that they should not join the panel because of the danger that they would dominate the process, thus suggesting the CAP was just a PR ploy, at a time when surveys were still showing great distrust of industry. The panel unanimously decided not to have industry representatives as members. What seems to happen in many CAPs is that industrial representatives are at the table, serving as liaisons but without control over CAP decisions—able to be excluded if the CAP so chooses.

Once again, these questions strike us as ones that raise the issue of control of CAPs and whether they function as independent bodies or merely extend the boundaries of the organisation to a group of people who buffer the company from citizen hostility (Chess, et al., 1990a).

ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

In some situations, particularly controversial ones, access to independent technical assistance may be viewed as critical by community members who lack expertise (Chess et al., 1990b). Moreover, research on citizen advisory committees to government suggests that the autonomy and effectiveness of a CAC are closely associated with its having sources of information separate from the information obtained from the institution being advised (Houghton, 1988). Increasingly public agencies are providing funds so that citizen advisory committees can hire their own technical consultants (Lynn, 198; Cohen, 1991). Under the Superfund Act, for instance, \$50,000 grants are available to neighbourhood groups to evaluate agencies' technical information.

While there is no mention in the CMA manual of funding for independent experts other than a professional facilitator, at least one chemical company, Vulcan in Wichita, provided money so that CAP members could hire their own consultant to conduct a risk assessment on one occasion of a proposed incinerator and on another occasion of the company's underground injection wells (Skokan, 1993, p.56). Another CAP formed a joint group of company representatives, environmentalists, citizens and academics to collectively develop a list of the ten priority chemicals for emissions reductions and to develop a method to track and report reductions (Holtzman, 1992, p.7).

Nonetheless as Cohen points out (1991), experience in government suggests that there may also be a downside to a CAC which relies too heavily on outside technical experts. The presence of an expert 'may focus the discussion on narrowly restricted technical concerns instead of issues such as equity, long-range planning objectives and political values



which may be more important to citizens. It may also increase the dominance of more technically trained CAC members who speak the consultant's language' (Cohen, 1991, p.6).

The issue is not an easy one. Several Sybron managers noted that members of their Neighbourhood Involvement Committee have failed to ask hardball questions, even about plant emissions which are an on-going concern. The plant manager suspects that members of the NIC lack sufficient knowledge to probe the issue more deeply.

IMPACT OF CACs

Traditionally the power and authority of government citizen advisory committees has been fairly circumscribed, with the mission set by the convening institution, creating an inherent bias for upholding institutional goals. For example, a review of citizen participation programmes in local government, including advisory committees, concluded that the programmes 'have relatively small effect' and are not 'the tails that wag the dog of local power structures' (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1985, p.229). A more recent review of 13 empirical studies concerning local, state, and federal CACs dealing with environmental issues, concluded that although the literature on citizen participation characterises CACs as 'ineffective and open to manipulation', the empirical studies yielded a 'more varied picture of the impacts of CACs on policy outcomes which...was highly contingent on the intentions and expectations of the institutions involved'. (Lynn and Busenberg, 1994).

For example, there are instances when CACs have defined their own goals or changed their original charge. Unlike appointed citizen policy boards such as planning and zoning, CACs do not endow citizens with direct power over final decisions. Nonetheless, in some situations advisory committees are only slightly less effective than boards that have legal sanctions (O'Donnel and Reid, 1971; Yin 1973, Houghton, 1988).

Researchers of citizen participation have defined a successful government CAC as one which affects government policy (Lynn and Busenberg, 1994). Exploring the external impact of CACs has been a priority in much of the research and internal process has been a lesser priority. Conversely, much of the advice developed for practitioners focuses on process, not the impact of CACs. Thus, there seems to be two potential components of CAC success: internal process and external impact.

What defines a successful industry CAP? Diane Sheridan, a facilitator of a number of CAPs, notes that CAP effectiveness is hard to measure. Companies may not tell CAPs of the changes made as the result of input and it is more difficult to gauge important, but subtle changes. (C&E News, 1994, p.9). Sheridan believes that the 'measure of CAP success is whether industry improves plant health and safety performance in response to the explicit and implicit advice CAPs give' (Sheridan, 1994). She suggests that a particular challenge for corporations is to avoid viewing CAPs as part of their public relations, community relations or outreach programmes (1992, p.3). She points out that while community relations programmes benefit the community and increase awareness of company activities,

they are not the same as a two-way dialogues to address health, safety and environmental issues.

A telephone survey of 252 CAP members representing 43 CAPs conducted by the Wirthlin Group for the CMA found that providing 'feedback from the community about plant operation and community concerns' to be the most important objective for a CAP (CMA, 1992: Appendix B: 7). However, 'providing feedback' can be a means of keeping in touch with the pulse of the community merely so that the company can manipulate those concerns or conversely, a two-way dialogue in which both the public and the company alter ideas, attitudes, or behaviours.

According to researchers who have explored corporate communication on a range of issues (including but not solely environmental), asymmetrical communication in which companies seek to change public opinion to avoid making changes in plant operations is more frequent. Such communication is characterised by attempts to persuade 'publics to behave as the organisation wants' without having to compromise (Grunig and White, 1992, p.39).

Although some companies insist that the CAPs function independently of their companies, they have also been clear that the panels are advisory, not decision-making bodies for the local plants. But, company spokespeople insist that CAPs are 'not just a kaffeeklatsch' but a place 'where challenges have been raised and have affected plant policy' (Fried, 1992, D5).

Most CAPs are still in their formative stages so both the definition of success and whether they have achieved it are difficult to ascertain. However, a few have operated for years. One of the oldest was established at Rohm and Haas' Bristol Plant in 1986. The company has consulted with the panel on major issues such as the siting of an incinerator and the routing of truck traffic. Interviews with Bristol plant managers by a team of researchers from Rutgers University's Center for Environmental Communication suggest that the CAPs influence on plant decisions are not always easy to pinpoint. In fact, the Rutgers team was struck by management's reluctance to acknowledge the community's role in fostering shifts in policy including the decision to cancel the plans for the incinerator (Chess, et al. 1992b, pp.16-17, p.74).

Sybron Chemicals, Inc. established a Neighbourhood Involvement Council (NIC) in 1989. The NIC's influence on Sybron has also been difficult to gauge. On the one hand, the most visible evidence of the NICs power has been judging of a school earth day contest and making recommendations, (which Sybron has implemented) to restore a historical schoolhouse and ballfield on the property. These are hardly dramatic changes or relevant to health and safety.

On the other hand, NIC members raise topics such as odour releases, which the company has been vigorously addressing with help from its odour identification team, a group of neighbourhood volunteers trained to literally-sniff out problems and report them to Sybron. (Ironically, the NIC was not initially warm to the idea of creating the odour ID team.) The NIC has also enabled residents to call company managers directly with concerns. (Chess et al., 1992a). Significantly, when the Neighbourhood Involvement Council



(NIC) was considering building a natural gas cogeneration facility, the company inserted a clause in the contract with the cogeneration company for the feasibility study which permitted Sybron to not go forward if it became 'a big problem in our community' (Chess et al., 1991, p.26). However, this clause may be evidence of an impact, which Sheridan noted is hard to trace directly to the CAP, but instead may be the result of a variety of experiences that encouraged Sybron to make public opinion a factor in its decision-making.

One way Dow Chemical Company is trying to respond to concerns about responsiveness is to keep a running log for every panel which records what the panel proposes and what the company does (Woodard, D5).

In a May 1992 article in *CMA News*, Ben Woodhouse, corporate director of Global Issues for Dow Chemical Company and an early advocate of CAPs, highlighted the activities of Dow's Plaquemine, Louisiana CAP. Among the issues raised by the Plaquemine CAP was the request that Dow conduct more business with local suppliers. As a result the company initiated a new purchasing policy, identifying 49 new local suppliers and generating a \$15.3 million increase in local purchases, a 30 percent increase over the previous year. Other issues raised by the Plaquemine CAP ranged from Dow's hiring policy to the proposal of a Japanese company to build a plant in the area (the environment was third on a list of top ten issues of concern).

Other CAPs have examined right-to-know information in depth and used it to rank chemicals in terms of adverse health effects and to establish systems to track the reductions or eliminations of chemicals of concern. They have also urged or demanded that companies provide or improve community warning systems and notification of the community about events that seem like emergencies, such as odours or flares (Sheridan, 1993).

During the same time that the CMA has been recommending that its members establish CAPs, national environmental leaders have been urging grassroots groups to negotiate 'Good Neighbour Agreements' directly with companies to avoid the frustration and potential co-optation of working through government. (Cohen and O'Connor, 1990). Leaders in the National Toxics Campaign urged groups to negotiate 'Good Neighbour Agreements' designed to give community representatives the right to negotiate directly with responsible parties over the solution to public health threats. (Cohen and O'Connor, 1990). They have charged that CAPs developed by CMA are meaningless and have urged the development of such agreements because communities can stipulate more clearly industries' obligations and citizens' rights.

To date upwards of a dozen of these agreements have been signed, some with small locally owned facilities, and others with large multi-national corporations. One of the most recent and far reaching agreements was signed was between a Rhône Poulenc chemical plant and citizens representing several neighbourhood associations in Manchester, Texas along the Houston Ship Channel. The CAC was assisted in negotiating the agreement by the statewide advocacy group, Texans United, which had previously negotiated agreements with a number of other firms including,

Merichem, ARCO, and Star Refinery (Abraham, 1993).

Under the agreement, which is part of the company's permit with the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission, formerly the Texas Water Commission, Rhône Poulenc pays for an environmental and safety audit (including hazard assessments and dispersion modelling), by an expert of the community's choice. Rhône Poulenc also agreed to meet monthly with their community and negotiate 'in good faith' the recommendations resulting from the audit. In addition, the company agreed to fund a community-conducted health study, off-site air monitoring, and community participation in water sampling.

Success is contingent on goals. Thus, what one company sees as a success another, with different goals, might see as problematic. Some companies might be disappointed in a CAP which functioned largely to build relationships between plant managers and a small group of people, while dealing with few substantive issues. Others might see the CAP's failure to raise tough issues as a success.

Similarly, from the evidence so far, the expectations of CAP members may differ. Some CAPs have been torn apart because of members who felt the company was evading dealing with issues important to them (*C&E News*, 1994). Others have been less concerned about dealing with technical issues and have raised local economic conditions. Still others are content to build stronger relationships with their corporate neighbours. We suspect from our preliminary research that individual CAP members may have different goals and that those goals may change over time. The same may also be true of corporations.

DISCUSSION

The information on the impact of chemical industry sponsored community advisory panels is limited and anecdotal, but it does suggest that some of the issues that have dogged governmentally-sponsored CACs may also emerge when industry is the sponsor.

The development of industry CAPs also raises fundamental questions about the relationship between companies and outside publics. The public has clearly been involved in the past in government decisions such as permits, regulations and legislation that impact directly on corporations. While researchers of government CACs emphasise the role of CACs and public participation in a democratic society, the extent of influence communities should have over other corporate decisions has been discussed relatively little by these researchers who tend to believe that 'the essence of the private market is that it is controlled by those that have capital to invest or money to spend; in contrast, democratic government is at least theoretically open to each citizen equally' (Fainstein and Fainstein, p.237).

How much influence should CAPs have over private companies? Many CAPs seem to be feeling their way and addressing this issue situation by situation. Those CAPs that have exploded, with CAP members leaving in anger, have been those with conflicts about how much information companies will provide, what issues they will discuss, and the extent to which corporations respond to these concerns.



On the other end of the spectrum are CAPs whose primary concern is to foster better communication between the company and community and who have been relatively unconcerned about other impacts. In these CAPs, preliminary evidence suggests that process may be as important as substance. In the ambiguous middle ground, companies seem to vacillate between viewing CAPs as extensions of their public/community outreach activities and as a vehicle for a community's involvement in a company's life.

In short, the jury is still out on CAPs. Some environmentalists feel that CAPs 'typically serve as 'focus' groups for the corporations....(And that)..They give the corporation a sense of the community's concerns about the plant, without empowering the committee to participate in relevant decisions (Lewis, 1992, pp.2-50).

On the other hand Diane Sheridan (1993) suggests:

One of biggest changes a CAP makes in a plant is in terms of accountability, but documenting examples is not easy. Having to report releases (planned or accidental), having to respond to concerns and complaints, having to justify not doing something the community expected during an emergency - all of these are done face-to-face, to people the plant manager is going to see again and again.

Sheridan's main point is:

The 'public' gains a face in a CAP, and that makes the plant manager accountable in a different way than ever before. In time, the plant management and workers come to think 'what would the public think while going about their daily activities' thus bringing public concerns into the daily operations in a subtle way.

Our research project, of which this paper is a part, is designed to explore the definition of 'successful' CAPs and those factors that contribute to their usefulness and credibility. While researchers of government CACs usually define success as impact on policy, that definition may not fit for industrial CAPs. Some CAPs may not have any desire to impact policy. Should they then be defined as failures? Similarly, if CAP members wish primarily to build relationships with companies and they do so, are they to be considered a success? Should CAP process define success, or should impact? Or both?

We suspect that as with government CACs, sponsors and citizen members of different CAPs may have different expectations. When those expectations have sufficient common ground, we suspect corporate sponsors and CAP members will agree on the definition of success and probably on the extent to which they have attained it. When the goals diverge, conflict is more likely. We also suspect that in many CAPs the dynamics will be more complex. Members' expectations may differ from each other, over time, and over different issues. The same may be true for companies. At present we do have some examples in which CAPs made an impact in terms of improving health and safety, but also examples where they have been mainly

vehicles of company-provided education. In summary until we have addition data, CAPs are a major corporate experiment for which we do not have adequate results.

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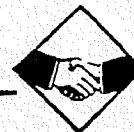
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