

# At Work

## STORIES OF TOMORROW'S WORKPLACE

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## Government from the Bottom Up

John Burbidge

*A two-pronged approach is needed to reinvent government today. The first is the recovery of civic responsibility. The second is that a new role is required that makes [government workers] resource linkage brokers who serve the citizens.*

*This replaces their worn-out role of professional problem solvers.*

—James P. Troxel, *Government Works: Profiles of People Making a Difference*

When Ted Gaebler and David Osborne's book *Reinventing Government* was published in 1992, the idea that you could actually change the way governments operate in this country was relatively new. Now, just over two years later, stories of how people have changed and are changing the way governments work are trickling into the media, conferences, and ordinary conversation. Here are three examples, drawn from the forthcoming book *Government Works: Profiles of People Making a Difference* (Miles River Press, 1995).

### Mental Health Recipient Empowerment Project

Until a few years ago, most people in the mental health field would have considered the term "recipient empowerment" an oxymoron. There is a widespread belief, among professionals and the public alike, that those diagnosed with a mental illness have impaired judgment and cannot be expected to understand their own needs and wants, let alone do anything about them. In New York State, a group of mental health recipients have turned that notion on its head. The Mental Health Recipient Empowerment Project (MHREP) has created over 300 local core groups and 15 incorporated, recipient-run, not-for-profit organizations, and has involved hundreds of recipients in housing projects, peer support counseling, case management, advocacy, and drop-in centers.

How the MHREP arrived at this point is a classic story of changing images through citizen initiatives. A key figure in the story is Edward Knight, project coordinator since its inception, and himself a recipient of mental health services. A strong advocate of self-help, Knight was convinced that nothing short of an empowered, trained, statewide movement of recipients of services could have any impact on the mental health system.

*Public institutions at the local and state level are changing the role of government—and government workers—from problem solver and enforcer to broker and facilitator. New York's Mental Health Recipient Project, the Chicago Public Library, and the City of Escondido have applied the concepts of empowerment and partnership within and without their organizations in successful efforts to reshape disempowering, ineffective, and unwieldy governmental entities.*

## Government *continued from page 1*

When MHREP began in 1988, the state mental health care system was a large, bureaucratic operation of 31,500 staff and 20,500 in-patients. It was geared to hospital care and maintenance rather than community care and recovery. With help from a supportive new commissioner, Knight embarked on an ambitious, long-term program of self-help efforts.

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### *A common agenda for action included a Bill of Rights for mental health patients.*

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The first of these involved 30 town meetings across the state in which recipients were asked: What problems do you face before, during, and after hospitalization? and What can you do about these problems? To the first question came a flood of responses. The second question helped create a common agenda for action. It included a Bill of Rights for mental health patients, improved communication between staff and patients, and a range of recipient-run programs.

Participants in the town meetings felt they were being taken seriously for the first time since they were diagnosed mentally ill. Many underwent advocacy training, and others became involved in self-help groups. After the discovery that they could do something about their situation, confidence began to rise. The following year, over 130 recipients came together at a statewide conference to report what they were doing. The next year's conference was totally run by recipients.

This was just the beginning. People continued to be frustrated by the professional attitudes they encountered. To address this concern, Knight and his colleagues organized "Dialogues for Empowerment" in which professionals and recipients listened to each other as equal partners. These dialogues confirmed the earlier consensus of recipients that the mental health system itself was the most disempowering element.

In addition to the dialogues, other workshops and seminars were offered to recipients on such subjects as self-directed rehabilitation, group facilitation, advocacy, project organization, and employment skills. A three-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health expanded this training to rural areas and minority groups.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of this citizen-initiated movement was in 1991, when four recipients were hired to work as assistants to Intensive Case Managers in the Bronx. Now, each of the five regions of New York has a recipient hired as a Regional Recipient Affairs Specialist, and others are being hired throughout the system.

#### **Chicago Public Library**

Further west across the country, another organization has been

discovering the values and benefits of participation and empowerment. In 1992, the City of Chicago, known for its "machine" politics and patronage-style work force, decided to improve its public services through an employee participation program called Model of Excellence (MOE).

In the words of MOE's creator, Joyce Hollingsworth, "Models of Excellence offers government workers a set of tools that lets them examine their own work and change it for the better." Within 18 months of beginning in 1992 with multi-rank teams of managers and line workers in 6 city agencies, MOE had teams solving real problems in 10 city and county agencies. One of these was the Chicago Public Library.

The library had asked outside consultants how to improve its system, but to no avail. This time, the people who knew the system best were asked.

It didn't take a graduate in library science to state the problems faced by this crusty, old bureaucracy; anyone working there could tell you. It took an average of six days for a book to be delivered from one library to another. All interlibrary exchanges had to go through a central point for resorting. The library had had four different directors in two years. The list went on.

To address the delivery issue, the MOE team analyzed the routes of the delivery trucks, their condition, the cost of repairs, and operating expenses. When they presented their data to the library executive, the latter decided they would be better off leasing trucks, instead of maintaining their own fleet. The team also studied other libraries in the country, and discovered that many with fewer branches often devoted more personnel and vehicles to delivery.

Combining this research with their own first-hand knowledge of the library, team members designed a new process for moving books and mail. They invented color-coded envelopes so drivers could deliver material directly to each site instead of having it go through a central clearing house.

They then tested out their model in one district. They spent a week teaching staff members at the pilot sites how to use the new process. At first, many were cynical but once they saw how the new system worked, they were enthused. Some even came up with their own improvements.

Results were noteworthy: delivery time was reduced 92 percent, and the number of steps for intra-district book delivery was down from 34 to 10. The time required for materials delivery was a maximum of 24 hours, and even took as little as a half hour. The process is now being implemented across the city, one district at a time.

#### **City of Escondido**

While government departments and agencies themselves are undergoing transformation, so too is the way government works with other organizations, especially the not-for-profit sector. Acknowledging that those closest to the problem are usually in the best position to respond to it, many government instrumentalities have chosen to work with and through commu-

nity-based organizations, rather than add yet another arm to the bureaucratic octopus. A case in point is the City of Escondido in southern California.

Escondido is a city proud of its 100-year history. Home to some of California's Hispanic founding families, it has a reputation for being a progressive and cohesive community. One of the reasons for this reputation is what City Manager Douglas Clark calls its "brokering method of problem solving." Instead of providing a number of services itself, the city acts more like a broker and plays an intermediary role in the transaction. It helps groups identify issues, brings the community together to discuss solutions, provides meeting space, and assists people in finding the resources to deliver the services.

A key element of this approach has been collaboration between city government and community agencies. One arena in which this has happened is rental housing. Frustration among Escondido apartment owners, managers, and tenants over rising crime and violence peaked in the summer of 1992 when a local newspaper headline reported: FIG STREET—STREET OF SCREAMS. One apartment owner on this street, Gene Polley, had four of his tenants leave.

In collaboration with Jerry Van Leeuwen of the Escondido Community Services Department, Polley organized a meeting of owners and managers to address the situation. There was a lot of anger and finger pointing, especially at the police and the city. Van Leeuwen, who moderated the meeting, sat and listened politely. Then he spoke. He put the ball right back in their court. If they wouldn't rent to people who are likely to cause trouble, he said, they wouldn't have such a problem.

Out of this gathering, several grassroots organizations of apartment owners and managers emerged. After just one year of operating, the Neighborhood Empowerment Association (NEO) has a number of accomplishments, including its work with the Police Department and a local nonprofit organization to devise a three-step process for apartment complexes to identify themselves as "drug free zones."

NEO also created RHITE, the Rental Housing Improvement Team of Escondido, a group of community volunteers trained by the city to inspect properties for code violations visible from outside. By the end of six months, a team of 31 RHITE volunteers had inspected more than 3,200 units. They encountered 187 code violations, 90 percent of which people corrected voluntarily. Nearly four-fifths of the violations occurred in single family units and resulted from people's ignorance of city codes.

Concurrent with RHITE's activity, NO MAS, another apartment owner/manager association led by Ray and Carmen Paez, has made a significant contribution to fighting crime also by developing a Community Response Team of 20-30 men and women who respond within five minutes to a call from the community for assistance.

*John Burbidge has been associated with the Institute of Cultural Affairs, a global social change organization, since 1971. He is presently publications director for ICA West, Seattle, 206-323-2100.*

*Government Works: Profiles of Public Service will be published in early 1995 by Miles River Press, Alexandria, VA, 800-767-1501.*

Another example of Escondido's city-community collaborations is the Health Care and Community Services Project, a joint effort of the police, local hospital emergency department, and the publicly funded community health clinic. This project is designed to reduce harm from substance abuse and increase public access to health care services. Instead of regarding drunk-

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enness as a criminal offense, as is currently the case in California, the project treats it as a health issue.

While collaboration was a natural outgrowth of the need for agencies affected by public drunkenness to work together, it also occurred in relation to funding. Three local funding partners—the City of Escondido, the San Diego County Alcohol and Drug Services, and the Palomar and Pomerado Health Foundation—came up with more than \$600,000. This was matched by a \$400,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a combined amount of \$1.1 million.

According to Project Director, Dennis Kelso, this project has saved the city the time and cost of two and a half police officers on the street over the course of a year. Instead of paying to book inebriates into jail, Escondido has been able to leverage that money by expanding and integrating its health care services to assist people with drug and alcohol problems. Those picked up by the police are given immediate assistance and directed to other services they need, with transportation provided. Health care patients are also screened for alcohol- and drug-related problems as part of an early intervention program to deal with concerns before they become more acute and more expensive.

The brokering role the city has played in working with community agencies to deliver services is the backbone of Escondido's participatory style of government. In acknowledgment of its pioneering efforts, Escondido was selected as 1 of 14 Californian cities to participate in the World Health Organization's Healthy Cities program. As City of Escondido Community Service Director Jerry Van Leeuwen put it, "For us, Healthy Cities is a euphemism for participatory governance—community participation in problem solving. We are trying to elevate this approach in the city's priorities."

## Participation: Beyond Corporate Buzzword

John Burbidge

**F**uturologist Daniel Bell once asserted that a dominating idea or axial principle drives every major period of history. In the 18th century, it was equality. In the 19th, with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, it was rationality. For the post-industrial, information age in which we live, he named it science or knowledge. However, as Belgian management specialist Roger Talpaert has pointed out, the axial principle of our time is not knowledge, but participation. "It is unthinkable today," said Talpaert, "for people to contribute to any form of collective action without being able to influence goals and choices."<sup>\*</sup>

Like any historical phenomenon, though, participation needs its champions. It has found those in many places but nowhere so prominently as in the international business community. Led by men and women who have seen the end of the old order when authority, control, and power were wielded from above, this movement for change has rapidly gained momentum in recent years.

Here are three examples, drawn from *Participation Works: Business Cases From Around the World* (Miles River Press, 1993).

### Primorski Sugar Factory

The Primorski Sugar Factory in Ussusrisk, near Vladivostok in Eastern Russia, has 1,500 employees and annually produces 170,000 tons of refined white sugar and related products from imported raw sugar. David Dunn, a Denver-based consultant, observed how this company recovered a historic culture of participation. Dunn's ally in this venture was a small Moscow consulting firm, Kompanya Protsess Konsalting (PCC).

When Alexander Khomenko was elected Director-General of the Primorski Sugar Factory by employees in 1988, he inherited a discouraging legacy of unsolved problems, including an antiquated plant, low worker initiative and achievement, and sporadic, unproductive management meetings. He challenged the old-guard managers to either change or leave. Most left.

Khomenko then handpicked the most highly qualified team of young professionals he could find. When PCC began consulting with the company in February 1993, the management team had just become its owners. They were a group of strong-minded, independent individuals. Khomenko knew he had to find a way of welding them together as a working team before they could deal effectively with the challenges facing the company.

<sup>\*</sup> Roger Talpaert, "Looking into the Future: Management in the Twenty First Century." *Management Review* (March 1981): 25.

His first step was to conduct a workshop on Team Roles and Relationships, in a retreat setting. Together, Khomenko and his managers brainstormed the functions and responsibilities of each managerial position. A lot of discussion ensued before they finally reached a consensus on what each of their jobs entailed. The results of their deliberations are now enshrined in a large wall poster which highlights the interdependence of the team.

Following this workshop, the managers threw themselves into an intensive three-day strategic planning session. Working 12-hour days, they came up with their own vision for transforming the company into a world-class sugar refinery, along with a set of action plans to make that vision a reality.

The Deputy Director of Marketing captured the mood of the group at this point when he said, "This was the first time in my life I was fully motivated and interested for three days. I didn't want to sleep. It felt like I was watching a movie in which I wanted to see the next reel immediately. Unfortunately, I had to wait until the next day."

The managers returned to face the reality of life on the job. They continued meeting for several hours each week to check progress on their action plans. Khomenko has reveled in playing the role of coach spurring on his team, and the company is fast gaining a reputation in Russia as a high-energy enterprise with great potential.

### Great Eastern Life Assurance Company

Thousands of miles away, in Malaysia and Singapore, employees of the Great Eastern Life Assurance Company have also been discovering a lot about participative management. It is not by chance or whim that Great Eastern won the prestigious National Productivity Award in 1992.

Much of the impetus for GE Life's success derives from the visionary leadership of the company's director and CEO, Allen Pathmarajah. One of Pathmarajah's first acts in joining the company was to formulate three basic values: Respect for the Individual, Best in Customer Service, Excellence in Everything We Do. While many companies today espouse these principles, Pathmarajah made a point of embodying them in everything he did. He spent many non-office hours meeting with agents throughout the country. He encouraged staff to speak out about the company, in a culture where speaking out is not a normal practice. And when GE Life won the National Productivity Award, he personally signed a card of congratulations which he sent out to more than 3,000 agents.

*The recent histories of companies as diverse as a sugar refinery in Russia, life insurance company with offices in Singapore and Malaysia, and acrylic fiber manufacturer in India demonstrate that the axial principle of our time is not knowledge, but participation.*

But gestures such as this, important as they are, are not enough to sustain agents over the long haul. With only 53 percent of Singaporeans and 14 percent of Malaysians owning life insurance, the market is wide open but the competition is tough. Generally, agents are left to their own devices, apart from some technical and sales training. They either make it or fail. Rarely do they see themselves as participants in the broader company strategy, and, as a result, there is a high turnover rate in the industry.

To address this problem at GE Life, Pathmarajah invited consultants Ann and John Epps from LENS International to work with them. Following a successful strategic planning session the Epps held with senior managers, they then trained an in-house team in participatory facilitation methods, so this team could continue to work with staff throughout the company.

The in-house team took up their new-found skills with vigor. Traveling to small towns across the country on weekends, they helped agents develop their own personal strategies for success. In a culture where weekends are rarely used for office work, this made quite an impact. Soon, the results began to reflect it—GE Life's growth rate far exceeded the industry average.

Reaching financial goals is not the whole story. Employee participation in identifying and solving problems has been a key aspect of the larger transformation at GE Life. Working in teams that involve everyone from CEO to clerical staff, the company has introduced many innovations in its day-to-day operations. In its Singapore offices, for example, it provided uniforms for front-line staff, initiated a rotational system to stay open during lunch hours, redesigned the reception area, and greatly improved the telephone service—all a result of employee suggestions.

### JK Fiber

The JK Fiber company in Rajasthan, India, discovered, however, that participatory methods and a forward-looking culture may not be the entire answer to a company's ills.

JK Fiber is an acrylic fiber manufacturing unit of the JK Synthetics Group. Mr Ramapathi Singhania, the Whole Time Director of the group, set up the unit with a vision few Indian industrialists have dared to imagine, let alone implement. Drawing on state-of-the-art business practices, he proposed minimum layers of hierarchy, flexible operating systems, team-based task units, verbal communication rather than memos, a common canteen, open office space, and more.

In spite of these innovative practices, JK Fiber did not become a productive unit able to meet customers' requirements. Production limped along at a meager 30 tons a day against an installed capacity of 62 tons, quality was substandard, and morale was low. By April 1992, the company stopped production completely.

At this point, the company invited the consulting firm of LENS Services to work with them on a solution. The initial

response of the consultants, Cyprian and Mary d'Souza, was clear: It's time to look at every part of the operation. No half-measures will work. It is either "pull out all stops" or "no go."

To initiate such a Whole Systems Transformation (WST), as the d'Souzas called it, they insisted on three things:

- Change any system, structure, or procedure. • Suspend any financial measures of success or failure for one year. Develop alternative measures.
- Create a team, preferably the senior managers, to embody the vision, values, and patterns desired for the company. Nothing happens unless a group of people decides to make it happen.

JK Fiber agreed. They committed to a three-to-five year process of total transformation, which was launched in April 1992 with a five-day program for 25 senior managers. The program focused on team development, organizational planning, and individual growth through a host of mind/body/spirit exercises.

One of greatest outcomes of the program was the managers' resolve to turn around the company's financial fortunes in the shortest possible time. The first challenge they faced was to obtain working capital. (The parent company was in no position to provide any more finance, and the banks had already cut off credit lines.) The managers decided to go to their customers and suppliers and enlist their support. Members of the management team visited each customer, told the story of the company's new vision and their strategies to realize it, and took the unprecedented step of asking for an advance against future deliveries. While some listeners were sympathetic, not all were convinced. But persistence paid off. The suppliers agreed to provide raw materials and spare parts to start the plant. By the second week of May, production began again.

Simultaneously, the company launched a series of cross-functional teams to address systems and quality concerns. To ensure broad participation, the management conducted open forums in which all employees helped create the company's long-term vision and strategies. More than 90 people were trained in team building, facilitation skills, and problem solving.

Within a few weeks of the launch of the WST program, JK Fiber became an hub of activity. During May, the company produced an average of 30 tons of fiber a day. In June, July and August, daily production climbed to 50 tons. In October production peaked at 60 tons. To celebrate this momentous achievement, the management brought in an ice-cream truck, laden to the brim. The truck stayed at the plant for 24 hours, giving people the chance to eat as much ice-cream as they could.

Total fiber production for the year was 9,700 tons, most produced since May, compared to 6,000 tons for all the previous year. This was achieved with no additional people, money, or hard technology.

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*Participation Works: Business Cases from Around the World, James P. Troxel, ed., is available for \$24.95 from Miles River Press, 1009 Duke St., Alexandria, VA 22314, 800-767-1501.*

We the people: reinventing government from the bottom up...

# Three tales of participation at work in government

John Burbidge — Institute of Cultural Affairs

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*Until a few years ago, most mental health practitioners would've defined 'recipient empowerment' as an oxymoron. The widespread belief is that the mentally ill can't be expected to fathom their own needs/wants, let alone do anything about them.*

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**H**owever, in New York a group of mental health recipients have turned that notion on its head. The *Mental Health Recipient Empowerment Project* has created over 300 local core groups, 15 incorporated, recipient run, not-for-profit organizations, and involved hundreds of recipients in housing projects, peer support counseling, case management, advocacy and drop-in centers.

## **Beginning at the beginning: self-help**

How the *Empowerment Project* arrived at this point is a classic story of changing images through citizen initiatives. A key figure in the story is Edward Knight, project coordinator since its inception in 1988 and himself a recipient of mental health services. A strong advocate of self-help, Knight was convinced that nothing short of an empowered, trained, state-wide movement of recipients of services could have any impact on the mental health system.

**From warehouse to our house** — When the *Project* began in 1988, the system was a large, bureaucratic operation of 31,500 staff and 20,500 in-patients. It was geared to hospital care and maintenance of individuals rather than community care and recovery. With help from a supportive new commissioner, Knight embarked on an ambitious, long-term program of self-help efforts.

*What do you think you need?* The first effort involved 30 town meetings across the state in which recipients were asked:

- What problems do you face before, during and after hospitalization?

To the first question came a flood of responses from hospital abuse to unorganized recipient population.

- What can we do about these problems?

The second question helped create a common agenda for action. It included a *Bill of Rights* for mental health patients, improved communication between staff and patients, and a range of recipient-run programs.

*Self-help accelerates...* Participants in the town meetings felt they were being taken seriously for the first time since they were diagnosed mentally ill. Many underwent advocacy training and others became involved in self-help groups. After discovering that they could do something about their situation, confidence began to rise. The following year, over 130 recipients came together in a statewide conference to report what they were doing. The next year's conference was run totally by recipients.

*But professional attitudes were slow to change...* The major challenge recipients still faced was professional attitudes and frustrations. To address this concern, Knight and his colleagues organized *dialogues for empowerment* in

which professionals and recipients listened to each other as equal partners. The dialogues confirmed the recipients' earlier consensus that the mental health system itself was the most disempowering element. In addition to the dialogues, recipients were offered workshops and seminars on a variety of subjects including:

- Self-directed rehabilitation...
- Group facilitation...
- Advocacy...
- Project organization...
- Employment skills.

A three-year grant from the National Institute of Mental Health expanded this training to rural areas and minority groups.

**Working within the system** — Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of this citizen-initiated movement occurred in 1991, when four recipients were hired to work as assistants to *Intensive Case Managers* in the Bronx. Now, each of New York's five regions has a recipient hired as a *Regional Recipient Affairs Specialist* and others are being hired throughout the system.

In spite of these significant achievements, the end is not yet in sight. Indeed, the long-term work of structural change has barely begun. In the words of case author and facilitator, Ike Powell: people's lives have changed. Now those changed people must learn to work together over the long haul. For teamwork is the only way to change a bureaucratic system that is deeply rooted in years of tradition, rules, and regulations.

### In Chicago: ask those who know

On the shores of Lake Michigan, another organization has been discovering the values and benefits of participation and empowerment. In 1992, the City of Chicago, known for its *machine* politics and *patronage*-style workforce, decided to improve its public services through an employee participation program called *Model of Excellence (MOE)*. In the words of MOE's creator, Joyce Hollingsworth, it "offers government workers a set of tools that lets them examine their own work and change it for the better."

**MOE in the library** — Beginning in 1992 with multi-rank teams of managers and line workers in six city agencies, within 18 months MOE had teams solving real problems in ten city and county agencies. One of those, the Chicago

### A word about re-inventing government...

When Ted Gaebler and David Osborne's book, *Reinventing Government*, was published in 1992, the idea that you could actually change the way governments operate in this country was relatively new. Skeptics scoffed at the notion. Conservatives heralded it as just another wave of liberal idealism. Others simply commented: Not before time!

But just over two years later, the truth of the book's message is being revealed. From near and far, stories of how people have changed and are changing the way governments work are trickling into the media, conferences and many an ordinary conversation.

A timely addition to this discussion is an anthology of eighteen stories called *Government Works: Profiles of People Making A Difference*, edited by James Troxel and published by Miles River Press this January. A follow-up to his earlier publication, *Participation Works: Business Cases From Around the World*, this book provides detailed accounts from across the country of successful efforts at transforming a diversity of situations including city governments, state bureaucracies, federal agencies, and a Native American tribe.

A central motif of the book is that government is about public service and that public service is the concern of all citizens. In her introductory chapter, Elizabeth Hollander, Executive Director of the Government Assistance Project affiliated with DePaul University, paints a new vision of public service, a vision that engages an American public which both deeply distrusts government and, at the same time, demands to be engaged in the process of government.

A similar sentiment is echoed by former White House staffer, Carolyn Lukensmeyer, who puts the ball for reinventing government squarely in the court of participation.

"Government systems cannot be meaningfully changed from the inside out without some link to citizens. There must be a constant commitment from the public to pay attention to, to be engaged, to care and to voice real concerns... Citizens must assume responsibility for the political electoral process."

To give a flavor of the rich mix of examples in this book, I have chosen three to highlight here — a New York state mental health agency, a Chicago city library and a mid-sized California city.

Public Library, as many organizations have, had asked consultants how to improve its system, but to no avail. This time, the people who know the system best were asked instead — the difference was as great as night and day.

*Bureaucracy at its 'best'...* It didn't take a library science graduate to list the problems faced by this crusty, old bureaucracy; anyone working there could tell you the list went on and on:

- It took an average of six days for a book to be delivered from one library to another...
- All inter-library exchanges had to go through a central point for resorting...
- The library had had four different directors in two years.

**"I'd been living with this problem for years and finally we had the chance to make a difference — to come up with a solution. I felt so good doing it."**



Since 1971, John Burbidge has been associated with the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), a global, social change organization involved in community and organizational development. His work has taken him from Indian villages to Brussels. He is presently publications director for the ICA in the Western United States. Burbidge is the editor of the book *Approaches That Work in Rural Development* and the ICA newsletter *Initiatives*. Australian born, John lives in Seattle.

**Delivering books in reasonable time** — The MOE team working on the delivery issue analyzed the routes of the delivery trucks, their condition, cost of repairs and operating expenses. When they presented their data on maintenance, the library executive decided they would be better off leasing trucks, instead of maintaining their own fleet. The team also discovered, by studying other libraries in the country, that many with fewer branches often devoted more personnel and more vehicles to delivery than in Chicago.

Combining this research with their own first-hand knowledge of the library, team members designed a new process for moving books and mail. They invented color-coded envelopes so drivers could deliver material directly to each site instead of it going through a central clearing house.

They then tested their model in one district. They spent a week teaching staff members at the pilot sites how to use the new process. At first, many were cynical but once they saw how the new system worked, they were enthusiastic. Some even came up with their own improvements.

To underscore the value of the new approach, the team did its math; they had reduced:

- Delivery time by 92 percent...
- The number of steps for intra-district book delivery from 34 to 10...
- The time required for materials delivery from 6 days to 24 hours; sometimes to even as little as a half hour.

The process is now being implemented across the city, one district at a time.

**Benefits to employees...** To many of us outside the Chicago Public Library, the achievements of this MOE team might come as just-another-TQM-success-story. But for those involved, it was an extraordinarily challenging and meaningful experience.

Versie Barnes had been a part of the library for 16 years and like most other employees, she had pretty much resigned herself to things continuing the way they always had been — slow and inefficient. Now, given the opportunity to effect change from within, she decided to give it a try. She would never be the same again. Neither would her co-workers. And, in the process, the customers — the reading public of the Chicago library system — were better served.

According to team leader Barnes, it was stressful, time consuming and exhilarating. Like others, she worked nights and weekends, sticking to the job like a good book you cannot put down. Why such dedication? Barnes had an answer, "I'd been living with this problem for years and finally we had the chance to make a difference — to come up with a solution. I felt so good doing it."

## We, not they in Escondido

While government bureaus and agencies themselves are undergoing transformation, so too is the way government works with other organizations, especially the not-for-profit sector. Acknowledging that those closest to the problem are usually in the best position to respond to it, many governments have chosen to work with and through community-based organizations, rather than add yet another arm to the bureaucratic octopus.

A case in point is the City of Escondido (40 some miles north of San Diego, California) a city with a reputation for being a progressive and cohesive community. One of the reasons for this reputation is what City Manager Douglas Clark calls its "brokering method of problem solving." Instead of providing a number of services itself, the city acts more like a broker and plays an intermediary role in the transaction, in that it:

- Helps groups identify issues...
- Brings the community together to discuss solutions...
- Provides meeting space...
- And assists people in finding the resources to deliver the services.

In Clark's estimation, this is a great example of what Osborne and Gaebler call the *steer but not row* approach to government.

**Collaboration with community groups** — Collaboration between city government and community agencies has been a key element of this approach: rental housing is one arena in which this approach has met with success. Frustration among Escondido apartment owners, managers and tenants over rising crime and violence peaked in the summer of 1992 when a local newspaper headline reported: *FIG STREET — STREET OF SCREAMS*.

*Fig Street's story...* After one apartment owner on this street, Gene Polley, had four of his tenants leave, he decided the time for action had come. Working with Jerry Van Leeuwen of the

Escondido Community Services Department, Polley organized a meeting of apartment owners and managers to address the problem. During the meeting, there was a lot of anger and finger pointing, especially at the police and the city. Van Leeuwen, who moderated the meeting, waited, listened politely, then spoke. He put the ball right back in their court by noting, if they wouldn't rent to people who are likely to cause trouble, they wouldn't have such a problem.

From this first gathering, two grassroots organizations of apartment owners and managers rose — *Neighborhood Empowerment Association (NEO)* and *NO MÁS*. After just one year, NEO had:

- Devised a three-step process for apartment complexes to identify themselves as *drug free zones* (through working with the Escondido Police and a local non-profit organization)...
- Created *RHITE*, the *Rental Housing Improvement Team* of Escondido, a group of community volunteers trained by the city to inspect properties for externally visible building and zoning code violations.

By the end of six months, a team of 31 *RHITE* volunteers had inspected over 3200 units, written up 187 code violations — 90 percent of which people corrected voluntarily (nearly four-fifths of the violations occurred in single family units and resulted from not knowing the city codes).

During the same six months, *NO MÁS*, the other apartment owner/manager association led by Ray and Carmen Paez, also made significant contributions to fighting crime. It developed a *Community Response Team* of 20–30 men and women who respond within five minutes to a community call for assistance. Often, these calls are to search for a lost child but sometimes are more dramatic: such as the day they rescued an unconscious, pregnant woman and her child — they were being kept against their will in their apartment by the woman's husband.

**The Health Care and Community Services Project** — This project, a joint effort of the police, local hospital emergency department, and the publicly funded community health clinic, is designed to reduce harm from drunkenness and increase public access to healthcare services. Instead of regarding drunkenness as a criminal offense, the project treats it as a health issue.

The collaboration by agencies affected by and dealing with public drunkenness was not limited to coordinating and improving services — it included funding. Three local funding partners (City of Escondido, San Diego County Alcohol and Drug Services, and the Palomar and Pomerado Health Foundation together put up over \$600,000. This was matched by a \$400,000 grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for a combined amount of \$1.1 million.

The project's director, Dennis Kelso, says the project has saved Escondido the time and cost of two and a half police officers on the street over the course of a year. Instead of paying to take offenders into jail, police give immediate assistance to those picked up and direct them to services they need, with transportation provided. Healthcare staff screen patients for alcohol and drug related problems as part of an early intervention program to prevent more acute and more expensive problems later on.

*Recognition for its success...* The brokering role is the backbone of the city's participatory style of government. In recognition of pioneering efforts, Escondido was selected as one of 14 California cities to participate in the World Health Organization's *Healthy Cities* program. As City of Escondido Community Service Director, Jerry Van Leeuwen, put it: "For us, *Healthy Cities* is a euphemism for participatory governance, for community participation in problem solving. We are trying to elevate this approach in the City's priorities."

### **Escondido, Chicago and New York: the *We the people* list is long and growing**

Across the country, people, inside and outside of government are responding to the challenge to reinvent *THEIR* government. While there is no magic formula to make this happen, as these illustrations indicate, participation and empowerment are key ingredients. And there are more than just a few valuable experiences to learn from and build upon. The meaning of *public servant* is being radically redefined and the motto, *We, the people* is taking on a greater significance than our forebears may ever have dreamed it would. ♦

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