

ESL FOR POLITICAL ACTION: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE  
FARMWORKERS ESL CRUSADE AND ITS FREIRE-INSPIRED PHILOSOPHY

by

DAVID LEE JACKSON

B.A., Harvard University, 1981

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of English Education

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

October 1987

c David Lee Jackson 1987

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of ENGLISH EDUCATION

The University of British Columbia  
1956 Main Mall  
Vancouver, Canada  
V6T 1Y3

Date Oct. 17/87

Abstract

This thesis evaluates the first three years of the Canadian Farmworkers Union ESL Crusade and the Freire-based philosophy which inspired it. Based on the author's three years of participant-observation, it pursues the following question: In the context of the union, is it possible to operate an ESL program which will both teach basic ESL and further the union's goal of organizing Punjabi farmworkers?

The thesis begins by summarizing Freire's educational/political philosophy, and continues by examining the program's context: conditions of farmwork in British Columbia, the role of CFU in improving them, and the dynamics of the Punjabi community which affect this process. This is followed by a detailed description and evaluation of the Crusade: its objectives, recruiting and training of volunteer tutors, teaching methods and materials, curriculum topics, organizing strategies, results in terms of both teaching ESL and organizing, and finally analysis of the program's limitations.

The following section re-evaluates Freire's philosophy in view of three years experience in a North American setting. Key issues include the relationship between students' concerns and the union's agenda, dialogue versus banking, the complex nature of oppression for North American immigrants, the

distinction between a realistic and idealistic frame of reference in operating and evaluating a program, and the importance of organizers reflecting on their own vested interests. All these issues proved salient to the daily operation of the program and have ramifications for other programs.

In the course of three years, the Crusade was able to develop methods and materials which had good potential both for ESL instruction and organizing, and which approached the Freirian ideal. However, a number of limitations prevented the program from fulfilling this potential. Some of these could be overcome with changes in the Crusade's format, such as using full-time Punjabi tutors rather than Anglo volunteers. The study concludes by outlining these changes plus directions for further research.

Table of Contents

Abstract . . . . .	ii
List of Figures. . . . .	vii
Acknowledgement. . . . .	viii

## Chapter I

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
------------------------	---

## Chapter II

THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PAULO FREIRE. . . . .	7
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	7
2. THE BASIS OF FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY . . . . .	9
3. FREIRE'S METHODOLOGY OF LITERACY. . . . .	20
4. FREIRE IN NORTH AMERICA . . . . .	22

## Chapter III

THE CONTEXT OF THE ESL CRUSADE: FARMWORK, THE UNION AND THE SIKH COMMUNITY . . . . .	25
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	25
2. CONDITIONS OF FARMWORK . . . . .	26
3. HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS UNION. . . . .	34
4. HOW DOES CFU ORGANIZE? . . . . .	36
5. THE SIKH COMMUNITY IN VANCOUVER. . . . .	39

## Chapter IV

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: THE CRUSADE IN PROGRESS. . . . .	45
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	45
2. ESL AND THE GOALS OF THE UNION . . . . .	47
3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY AND RESULTS. . . . .	49
4. ORIGINAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CRUSADE . . . . .	52
5. FORMAT OF THE CRUSADE. . . . .	53
6. TUTOR RECRUITING . . . . .	54

7.	TUTOR TRAINING . . . . .	58
8.	TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS . . . . .	61
8.1	Natural Approach. . . . .	65
8.2	Total Physical Response . . . . .	67
8.3	Language Experience . . . . .	71
8.4	Photo-stories . . . . .	72
8.5	Problem-Posing. . . . .	75
9.	CURRICULUM TOPICS. . . . .	85
10.	DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM-POSING. . . . .	88
11.	ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES. . . . .	91
12.	EVALUATION AND RESULTS . . . . .	94
12.1	Tutor Evaluation . . . . .	95
12.2	Student Satisfaction . . . . .	97
12.3	Student Progress in ESL. . . . .	98
12.4	Organizing Results . . . . .	100
12.5	Union Evaluation . . . . .	102
13.	REVISED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE CRUSADE . . . . .	103
14.	THE NATURE OF OUR LIMITATIONS. . . . .	105

## Chapter V

### FROM PRACTICE BACK TO THEORY: REFORMULATING OUR PHILOSOPHY.110

1.	INTRODUCTION . . . . .	110
2.	FORMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS . . . . .	111
3.	OPPRESSION . . . . .	113
4.	DIALOGUE VERSUS PROBLEM-POSING . . . . .	115
5.	BANKING VERSUS DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM-POSING . . . . .	117
6.	THE ROLE OF A POLITICAL AGENDA . . . . .	120
7.	PRAXIS AND PROPAGANDA. . . . .	123
8.	THE ROLE OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS. . . . .	126
9.	CLASS SUICIDE, CLASS INTERESTS, AND THE NEW CLASS. . . . .	129
10.	DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM-POSING BETWEEN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES . . . . .	138
11.	A LITTLE ANTHROPOLOGICAL LEGWORK . . . . .	141

12. FALLING TREES AND ROCKING BOATS. . . . .	.145
Chapter VI	
CONCLUSION . . . . .	.149
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	.159
EDUCATION AND ESL. . . . .	.159
FARMWORK AND CANADIAN THE FARMWORKERS UNION. . . . .	.163
FARMWORKERS ESL CRUSADE. . . . .	.164

List of Figures

1. Poster printed in English and Punjabi by Workers  
Compensation Board, 1982 . . . . . 30



Acknowledgement

A UBC Summer Fellowship made initial work possible from May to August, 1983. For invaluable help with research, writing and production I would like to thank Vanneau Neesham, John B. Laing, Paul Chernoff, Joanne Millard, Sadhu Binning, my parents and my advisory committee: Terry Piper, Bernard Mohan, and Mary Ashworth.

Evaluating a program of course depends on everyone who participates in it. Thus warm thanks go to Canadian Farmworkers Union staff, and the tutors and students in the first three years of the Crusade.

Finally, I would like to thank Paulo Freire and Nina Wallerstein, who offered valuable suggestions concerning both the ESL Crusade and this thesis, and Blanca Facundo, who, through her very lucid work, provided the insights necessary for fitting everything together.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When the Canadian Farmworkers Union (CFU) first envisioned an ESL Crusade in 1981, it had already been working for two years to improve the conditions of farmwork in British Columbia's Fraser Valley. These conditions were the poorest of any industry in the province, and an array of government legislation enabled growers to keep them that way.

The union took on a double task: unionizing farmworkers so they could win protection for themselves through collective agreements, and lobbying the government to provide more protective legislation and enforce what existed already. The union leaders and organizers believed that ESL training was an important aspect of this process, since most farmworkers in the Fraser Valley were Punjabi and Chinese immigrants, who often spoke little English. With even rudimentary English, workers would be able to stand up for the rights they had and fight for new ones through participation in the union.

The practical details of the Crusade fell into place during the initial year of planning. A paid coordinator would recruit volunteer tutors and train them, and tutors would then meet with classes of four workers twice a week during the off-season. Students would mostly be Punjabi women in their 50's and 60's; each class would be in one worker's house, within

walking distance for the rest of the class. This format proved successful and continued unchanged for three years, with the number of classes expanding from six in the first year to sixteen in the third.

The union leaders and organizers believed from the start that no education is politically neutral. The selection of content, the methods of instruction, the nature of interaction between students and teacher; all of these reflect political values and interests which can be identified and analyzed. When a certain kind of education claims to be "neutral", a deeper examination is likely to reveal that it simply supports the status quo in various ways, explicitly and implicitly.

ESL instruction is particularly prone to this myth of "neutrality". Many teachers believe that if they do not think about politics, their teaching will not have any political implications. Yet immigrants, even those who were prosperous in their own countries, very often find themselves at the bottom of the economic ladder, subject to discrimination and exploitation. Farmwork is one of the most extreme examples of this.

An analysis of the British Columbia Employment Standards Act, Labour Code, and related labour legislation suggests that the provincial government is making a systematic effort to

maintain this situation. A ready pool of unemployed workers forces down the wages of the lowest-paid sector of the economy and makes unionization more difficult. Workers in this sector are readily intimidated because they know their employers can easily replace them.

Meanwhile, most ESL programs try to equip students to move up from the bottom rung of the economic ladder. However, teachers and materials implicitly accept the social/economic structure itself, and whatever the future of individual ESL students, the abysmal conditions of those occupations remain unchanged, as does the overall number of workers trapped in them.

The Canadian Farmworkers Union's goal was not simply to help a particular group of farmworkers improve their lives; it was to change the conditions of farmwork itself, so that in the future whoever found themselves in farmwork would have the benefit of improved conditions. The union was attempting to shift the balance of power between farm owners and workers.

The supposedly "neutral" style of education described above may be called "conservative" in that it serves to maintain the structural relations of society, however much it may enable particular individuals to improve their lot. Clearly this is in conflict with the goals of CFU. The kind

of education consistent with CFU's goals may be called "radical" for the same reason that the union is radical: it aims at changing the structure of power relations in society. It is not simply the content of radical education which differs from conservative education; the differences go far deeper. Radical education requires an entirely different philosophy, a different sense of epistemology, and a different relationship between teacher and student.

Many educational theorists and teachers have taken a radical stance; it was Paulo Freire, however, who had developed it most extensively, and most thoroughly put his own ideas into practice. His philosophy and methods, more than any others the CFU organizers knew of, encouraged students to analyze their social/political situation, and, if they saw fit, to attempt to change it. For this reason, having decided a radical approach was necessary, the union decided to use Freire as a point of departure. Three years later, his thinking remained a vital aspect of the ESL Crusade, despite an increasingly critical stance they began to take toward him.

Nonetheless, it was clear even before the first Crusade that Freire's experience came out of a context very different from CFU's: first-language literacy training in Latin America and West Africa. The union could not slavishly re-apply his methods; Crusade staff would have to develop new approaches

and methods from our own experience with farmworkers and with ESL.

The purpose of this study was to determine, in the context of CFU, whether it was possible to operate a program that would both successfully teach ESL and organize farmworkers. The study was based on my observing the Crusade in its first year (spring 1983) and working as its coordinator in the second and third years, December 1983 to May 1985. The coordinators' responsibilities, besides running the program, included evaluation of all aspects of each Crusade; these formal evaluations, plus day-to-day observations and experience, provided the data for this study.

The next chapter introduces and outlines the educational philosophy of Paulo Freire as we initially tried to apply it to the ESL Crusade. This understanding was greatly tempered by three years' experience.

Chapter Three describes the conditions of farmwork in British Columbia, the legislation which perpetuated them, and the role of CFU in trying to change them. This chapter also considers the social dynamics of the Punjabi community, which influenced every aspect of the Crusade.

The fourth chapter examines the Crusade itself, beginning with CFU's initial objectives, the results of the student needs assessment, and how these fit together to form the Crusade's goals. It describes the evolution of our teaching approaches and materials; we started with an audio-lingual approach which had limited potential for language teaching or organizing, and evolved toward approaches with potential for both, approaching the Freirian ideal. To facilitate these approaches we developed a number of specialized materials which I describe in detail. In actual practice, however, a myriad of limitations restricted both language-learning and organizing results. To achieve more results, changes would be necessary in both the Crusade and in CFU's overall strategies.

Finally, in Chapter Five I re-examine Freire's ideas and suggest modifications based on our experience in a North American trade union context. These include the complex nature of "oppression" in North America, the relation between dialogue and problem-posing, the role of organizations with specific political agendas, the class interests of Freire practitioners, and the unique difficulties affecting dialogue between languages and cultures. Some of these should be of use to people operating similar programs in the future.

The thesis concludes with proposed changes to the Crusade in order to overcome some of its limitations followed by suggestions for further research.



## II. THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF PAULO FREIRE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since Paulo Freire was a major influence in the ESL Crusade, it is important, in summarizing his philosophy and work, to clarify the Crusade staff's relationship to him. One of his most consistent arguments is the importance of one's educational theory informing one's practice, and of practical experience continually reshaping theory. He states that his theory grew out of his own experiences teaching literacy in Brazil; however, in his writing he presents many ideas as philosophical assertions rather than conclusions drawn out of observation or experience. Furthermore his style is to state them in such universal terms that one wonders what kind of observations could reasonably support them. Finally his assertions, though stated objectively, often contain a hidden idealism: a concern with the way things should be rather than the way they are. For all these reasons it is useful to see his ideas as ideology rather than theory.

It is nonetheless a very useful and compelling ideology for educators working toward social change, and the way it is presented invites educators to accept it as an entire system. Inspired by Freire's practical work, the Crusade staff proceeded to do just that, adopting his terminology, and

interpreting all our experience in light of his system, which provided a theoretical frame of reference as well as being a guide to practical aspects of the program.

The impact of Paulo Freire's adult literacy work has resounded through Latin America and Africa for twenty-five years, and since the publication of Pedagogy of the Oppressed in English in 1970, his theory and practice have received widespread attention in North America. These writings on education range from philosophical assertions of what it means to be human, and to "know", to carefully detailed accounts of specific techniques he has used in teaching literacy. Likewise, his work has shaped both the nation-wide literacy campaigns of revolutionary states and modest programs within single classrooms.

Born in Recife, Brazil in 1921, Freire's family's middle class existence crumbled in the Depression and he discovered first-hand the horrors of poverty. After training in philosophy, law, and theology after the Depression, he concentrated his energies in literacy work with the urban and rural poor in Northeastern Brazil. It was through this work that he developed his philosophy and methods of education, which he laid out in a PhD dissertation at the University of Recife prior to taking a professorship in History and Philosophy of Education in 1960. He spent the next few years

concurrently directing a National Literacy Program for the Brazilian Ministry of Education; its success was partly responsible for the upper class fearing lower class unrest and instigating a military coup in 1964. Freire was jailed for three months and then exiled to Chile, where he spent five years doing similar work, and writing Education for Critical Consciousness in 1965 and Pedagogy of the Oppressed in 1968.

After a year at Harvard in 1970 where he wrote "Cultural Action for Freedom" and "Cultural Action and Conscientization", he became a consultant for the world Council of Churches in Geneva, whose Institute for Cultural Action was assisting literacy programs, particularly in revolutionary African nations. The best-known result of Freire's work in Geneva is his Pedagogy in Process which describes his work with the government of West African Guinea-Bissau. He has since been allowed to return to Brazil, where he holds teaching positions and continues to write.

## 2. THE BASIS OF FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY

Freire's first assertion is that there are two, and only two, ways of "being in the world". One is to be an "object of" the world, that is, to adapt to the forces of one's environment without any sense of being able to affect them. Freire calls this "semi-transitive consciousness - a near

disengagement between men and their existence" (1981 a:17). People in this state fail to make a fundamental distinction between nature and culture. They do not realize that some of the forces affecting them, such as oppression, are man-made and thus changeable. For them, poverty and disease resulting from oppression are as much a result of nature as rain and gravity.

The alternative to this is "critical consciousness", where people make a clear-cut distinction between nature and culture, and recognize the human origins of many aspects of their existence. They are able to "objectify" the world, that is, to see themselves as separate from it in order to understand it. In so doing, they examine the links of cause and effect between different parts of their lives, and expose the inherent contradictions which lie under the surface. Since these links and contradictions are usually buried under several layers of mythicized explanation, it is necessary to expose the myths and peel away the layers.

According to Freire, it is man's "vocation" to move from being an object in the world to being a "subject of" the world, capable of understanding it and changing it to suit his own ends. In other words, man's job is to "become as fully human as possible" (1981 a:28). The principal impediment to this is "oppression", that is, when one group uses its power

to exploit or subjugate another. The oppressed are dehumanized in that they are forced into the role of objects. The threat of various kinds of violence prevents them from acting in the world to suit their own ends; instead they must serve the ends of their oppressors.

Much more insidious, Freire states, is the fact that the oppressed usually come to see themselves as objects, thus acting as their own prison-guards. They may internalize the oppressor's view of them, denigrating themselves and espousing the myths of the oppressor (1981 a:147).

In saying that man's "vocation" is to humanize himself, to be a subject in the world, Freire is asserting that this is a moral right or imperative. It is the basis of existence, and thus of education.

In terms of the Brazilian peasants that Freire worked with, "critical consciousness" consisted of their exposing the connections between their own situation and that of their oppressors. They identified the links between their labour, their working conditions, their income, the profit their employers made from them, the living conditions of their employers, and the opportunities available for landlords' children as compared with their own. They saw that these connections, formerly mythicized by such maxims as "the poor

are lazy and inferior and deserve their lot", were part of culture, and so, with courage and risk, could be changed.

In order to fully make sense of these distinctions, though, one must examine Freire's epistemology, that is, his theory of knowledge: of how people "know" and of what it means to "know" something. This is essential to his pedagogy.

First, he is a dialectician. His writing abounds with dialectically opposed concepts which he attempts to synthesize or resolve. In many cases it is the resolution which serves as the definition of an important concept.

He defines knowledge itself this way. On the one hand, every individual has a purely subjective experience of the world. On the other, the world is a concrete reality existing outside of any individual. But neither factor by itself constitutes knowledge; instead, they exist in dialectical relation. Only when they are brought together does each individual have knowledge.

Thus knowledge is not something static, but rather a process in perpetual dynamic tension. This is exemplified in Freire's avoidance of the term, since to him "knowledge" implies a commodity. Instead, he speaks of "reflection", which more clearly suggests a motion or a process. Reflection

can only occur through dialogue, a specific kind of interaction which I shall elaborate below. In other words, we can only know things through communication with others, even if the other is the author of a book. "Knowledge" gained by oneself Freire defines separately as "enlightenment", a phenomenon he is not concerned with (Matthews 1981:86).

What is this communication or dialogue? It requires "unbreakable reciprocity" between two people, as they mutually attempt to reflect on some object, such as a situation that affects them both. Specifically, they attempt to "problematize" the situation, that is, put into question everything which they believe they "know" about it. They must continually ask such questions as "How do I know that? What is the connection between that and something else? What is the underlying conviction which informs what I just said?

The result of this process is an understanding of the causes and effects of a situation. To get to these, participants may have to peel away surface layers of mythicized reality, that is, popular explanations propounded by those in power. For example, peasants analyzing the causes of their poverty may dig below mythicized explanations about laziness or fate to identify a fundamental situation of oppression. Freire believes that the forces at this deeper level are generally sets of dialectical oppositions.

As students go farther and farther below the surface, there is a necessary movement from the concrete to the abstract. However the abstractions only exist in relation to the realities they refer to; otherwise they are meaningless.

This crucial ability to problematize reality Freire terms "logos". He contrasts it to "doxa", which is the magical thinking of people who are unable to enter the world in order to see it objectively (1981a:102). Because they cannot recognize cause and effect properly, they assign causality to "magical" sources. This is the thinking of oppressed people who lack critical consciousness, and it could also describe the thinking of oppressors who have good reasons to avoid cultivating their own critical consciousness. As a result, both oppressors and oppressed are dehumanized. In either case, Freire writes that "merely to perceive reality partially, deprives them of the possibility of a genuine action on reality" (1981a:108).

The relation between reflection and action, again dialectical, is also fundamental to Freire. Reflection is only distinct from empty verbalism when it comes out of real experience and when it leads to more action. Likewise, action is distinct from mindless activism only when it is informed by



reflection. The two are inseparable, and their synthesis is "praxis", which is the basis of all humanizing social change.

There is an implicit assumption in all of this that "to know", in Freire's thinking, requires not only knowing that one knows, but also knowing how one knows. In order to have critical consciousness one must be aware of all the issues raised above, albeit in less explicit or abstract form. In other words, a sense of epistemology is vital for political analysis of one's situation.

We now turn to the question of education itself. Freire's underlying premise is that all education, in whatever form it takes, is political; that is, it is shaped by the vested interests of those who control it. "It is impossible", says Freire, "for me to ask you to think about neutral education, neutral methodology, neutral science, or even a neutral God. I always say that every neutrality contains a hidden choice" (1973:78). Elsewhere he adds that "those who talk of neutrality are precisely those who are afraid of losing their right to use neutrality to their own advantage" (1981a:149).

In North America in particular, the myth of education being neutral is pervasive, and is frequently invoked as a means of maintaining the status quo. Freire argues that "the

political nature of all education demands a growing clarity regarding their own political stance, and the coherence of their practice within that stance" (1978:74). Educators who believe their work is neutral should examine the status quo carefully in order to find out exactly what the consequences are of their neutrality.

If all education serves political interests, however mythicized they may be, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of political thought and action. Freire makes a distinction between sectarians and radicals. Sectarians all consider themselves the "proprietors of history" (1981a:11). Rightist sectarians, or reactionaries, wish to stop history, while leftist sectarians wish to predict the future mechanistically. Both deny man the right or ability to act as a subject in changing his world.

Radicalization, by contrast, involves "increased commitment to the position one has chosen" (1981a:10) and a sense of ability to participate in change. It does not imply a particular position on the left-right spectrum, although it is entirely incompatible with sectarianism anywhere on the spectrum. Since those who support the status quo by definition oppose change, one is most likely to find radicalism at points on the spectrum other than where the status quo is.

According to Freire, these two political tendencies correspond to two different types of education. The first, associated with sectarianism, is "banking". It assumes that knowledge is a fixed, static commodity, which the teacher, who possesses it, can transfer to the student, who is an empty vessel passively waiting to be filled. The method of transfer is narrative; since the teacher does not view the knowledge as problematic, there is no need to examine the assumptions or motives which lie beneath it.

One can see that banking fits none of Freire's epistemological criteria of what it means to "know" something. It denies reflection, dialogue, and action. Thus, the result of banking is not knowledge of or with but merely an awareness of certain unproblematic information.

What are the consequences of this? Freire writes of teachers that "If their action is merely that of extending elaborated 'knowledge' to those who do not possess it, they kill in them the critical capacity for possessing it (1981a:101). Banking education denies students the ability to develop critical consciousness and to be subjects capable of changing the world. In treating them as objects to be filled with information, it objectifies them in relation to the world as a whole, and as such, it is oppressive.

Banking is particularly characterized by its lack of meta-knowledge. Freire writes that "the thought language, absurdly separated from objectivity, and the mechanisms used to interject the dominant ideology, are never discussed. They learn that knowledge is something to be consumed and not to be made and remade" (1978:23).

It is not surprising, then, that banking education finds favour with sectarians who have a vested interest in preserving the status quo. It can directly serve the interests of oppression when used both with the oppressed and with oppressors. In North America, Jonathan Kozol argues that the education of urban black children has often served to socialize them to poverty from an early age; likewise, the "banking" texts from which upper middle class children learn about poverty carefully destroy any sense of connection between this oppression and the children's own lives (1980:27).

It is for this reason that Freire has no use for literacy programs which rely on banking methods, for he sees them as simply another instrument of oppression.

Finally, Freire is critical of radical leaders who unwittingly rely on banking methods. Without critical consciousness, people are still objectified even if a

revolution occurs and their living conditions improve materially.

The opposite to banking is "dialogical education", or radical education, which fosters the reflection that is inherent in Freire's epistemology. Since radical education requires an entirely different kind of thinking, it requires entirely different methods as well. Banking can never lead to critical consciousness. Rather, the basis of radical education is dialogue; teacher and students problematize the world together in order to expose its most fundamental causes and contradictions. Neither alone "possesses knowledge"; rather, "the more sophisticated knowledge of the leaders is remade in the empirical knowledge of the people" (1981b:183). The result, ideally, is critical consciousness, "an ongoing analysis of causality" (1918b:68).

The process implies a subject-subject relationship between teacher and students, characterized by trust and mutual respect. Since reflection has value only when accompanied by action, for Freire it is essential that teachers and students engage in the resulting praxis together. This requires cooperation, unity, and organization.

Freire, until the mid-1960's, considered praxis as radical reform leading to a "militant democracy": a system

where pluralism is truly possible and oppression minimized. By the time he wrote Pedagogy of the Oppressed, however, he had grown much more dubious of the value of reform in Latin America, and assumed a revolutionary stance influenced partly by Marx and partly by radical Catholic theology.

It is important to examine the role of teachers and revolutionary leaders in this light. In Freire's view, the two are essentially the same, just as true education and praxis are the same. Both teachers and leaders are members of the oppressor class who commit "class suicide", that is, they abandon their oppressor-interests, in order to stand at the side of the oppressed (1981b:127).

### 3. FREIRE'S METHODOLOGY OF LITERACY

Within the theoretical outlines discussed, Freire is quick to emphasize that specific educational techniques can only be generated out of the context in which they are to be used. In northeastern Brazil, he sent researchers out into the communities in which literacy training would take place. They immersed themselves and spent several weeks learning as much as possible about all aspects of the lives and concerns of the people. From this, they prepared slides of drawings based on "codifications" of the people's lives. These

drawings presented situations of significance to the people, likely to provoke discussion and thus "decoding".

The initial pre-literacy phase consisted of drawings designed to provoke awareness of the distinction between nature and culture. Here the students often first became aware of themselves as subjects capable of changing their situation. Freire was evidently very moved by this "awakening" which he writes he witnessed many times (1981a:62).

This was followed by a presentation of roughly twenty drawings, each of which embodied a single "generative word". The researchers had selected these words on the basis of their significance to the community: in Brazil, examples are slum, work, well, rain, salary and government (1981a:82). In discussing these words in the context of the codified "generative drawings", the students exposed the deep-rooted cause-and-effect links shaping their lives, and began considering ways to change them. Also, in the process of examining these generative words, students learned to read them and, more importantly, to recognize their syllables and recombine them to make new words. This was possible because Portuguese is a syllabic language, and the twenty selected words contained all the necessary syllables to form most words in the language.

Freire considered the ability to read and write not just a by-product of developing critical consciousness, but an essential aspect of it. Being able to write is an important way for people to experience their influence on the world. Freire describes peasants writing with sticks in the dirt while walking to work, for the sheer exhilaration of it. When the purpose of writing is to "name the world" and analyze it critically, it is a powerful tool indeed. Likewise, reading assumes a new significance when it becomes a source of information for analysis rather than absorption.

Freire's workers followed up the literacy programs described above with post-literacy programs. Here the basis of discussion was again codified situations, but now teachers presented them in more diverse ways, including tapes, dramas, and photographs. The object was again critical analysis, but the emphasis on single words was replaced by a focus on "generative themes", which are more complex and, when broken down, lead to a deeper, more rigorous and sophisticated understanding. One such theme is "propaganda". As with previous stages, the material for post-literacy programs came entirely out of the students' lives (1981b:108).



#### 4. FREIRE IN NORTH AMERICA

A brief summary of North American reactions to Freire as of 1980 is provided by Robert Mackie (1981) and is further developed in a paper by Blanca Facundo (1984). Among North Americans who actually tried to put Freirian philosophy into practice, the concerns and difficulties were very similar to ours, generally relating to the inevitable differences between North American society and Freire's Brazil. Significant differences include North America's more ambiguous class structure, its different mythologies with emphasis on upward mobility, its technologically advanced economy, and the fact that many of the "oppressed" are from cultures which are different from white North American culture, and may be recent immigrants. To the extent that these differences affect the CFU program, they appear in Chapters Three and Five.

As for serious criticism of Freire's actual formulations by practitioners themselves, there is very little, the only exception we found being Blanca Facundo (1984). This is a serious problem: given Freire's own belief that practice must re-shape theory, it is ironic that those with the most practical experience are often the least able or willing to do this. Practical experience must be used to test the ideology, not just the methodology.

At the time of this study, some of the best documents and most important adaptations of Freire had occurred within the field of ESL. Again, differences from Freire's Latin American context have been a preoccupation since ESL and first-language literacy have different methodologies and limitations. The CFU program was much influenced by the work of Nina Wallerstein (1983) and her associates in the United States, and by a network of educators based in Toronto under the umbrella of the Participatory Research Group, most notably Deborah Barndt (1981, 1982).

The preceding pages represent the understanding of Freire that Crusade staff brought with us into the CFU program. In Chapter Five I will examine the ways in which our experience reshaped this understanding.

III. THE CONTEXT OF THE ESL CRUSADE: FARMWORK,  
THE UNION, AND THE SIKH COMMUNITY

1. INTRODUCTION

The 20,000 workers that CFU was trying to organize were 80% Punjabi, 15% Chinese and Southeast Asian, and 5% Anglo, and they were working in British Columbia's Fraser Valley which extends 90 miles eastward from Vancouver. They fell into several categories: year-round workers were in greenhouses, nurseries, mushroom farms and canneries, while seasonal pickers moved from crop to crop between May and November, beginning with strawberries, moving through raspberries, blueberries, sometimes cranberries, and later in the fall, broccoli, brussels sprouts, and cauliflower.

Seasonal workers, whose conditions were generally worse, usually were employed for an entire season by labour contractors who drove them back and forth to the farms. Most of the workers were living in urban areas such as Vancouver, Surrey, Richmond and Abbotsford, and commuted to work daily, but some would come down from British Columbia's interior for the entire season. They often lived in cabins supplied by the owners of the farms.

This chapter examines the context in which the ESL Crusade evolved. The first important consideration is the conditions of farmwork, and the legislation that maintained them, both as union organizers and workers viewed them; anger at these provided the main impetus for unionizing and determined strategies and tactics. The results CFU achieved and the specific strategies and tactics used are the subject of the following two sections; finally I will analyze social dynamics within the Punjabi community which shaped the union's work.

## 2. CONDITIONS OF FARMWORK

The abysmal working conditions of farm labour form a well-documented litany which at the time of this study had been recited many times. Tempting as it may be to put the blame entirely on farmers "exploiting" workers, it is important to recognize that British Columbia government legislation, either directly as it reads or as it works in practice, maintained these conditions. One can best examine the conditions in terms of this legislation.

Among the most significant acts were the Employment Standards Act and its predecessors, which until 1981 specifically exempted farmworkers from minimum wage; there was no limit on how many hours they should work, and no provision

for statutory or annual holidays. Growers or labour contractors could legally withhold their pay for the entire season, by which time they had sometimes transferred the money to relatives and declared bankruptcy (Forsythe:56).

After 1981, thanks largely to CFU lobbying, farmworkers gained more protection, but still were not entitled to overtime pay and the length of the workday remained unrestricted according to Employment Standards Act regulations (1981). Twelve-hour workdays remained common, and growers could fire workers who tried to leave early.

In other cases, protections that existed on paper proved not to exist in practice. Workers often complained of not receiving notice before layoffs, not receiving vacation pay, and not receiving statutory holiday pay. These were violations of the Employment Standards Act, but for various reasons, it was difficult for workers to have these protections enforced.

The 1981 amendments did not provide farmworkers with a minimum wage but rather set minimum rates for the piece-rate system already entrenched by the Employment Standards Act. Although farmworkers were guaranteed a minimum piece-rate for each crop, these rates were often lower than minimum wage when calculated in hourly terms. Furthermore, when picking was

scarce at the end of a season, hourly earnings would drop even more. Farmers often did not provide scales, which meant that workers had to rely on the farmer's low estimate of how much they had picked. It is for these reasons that CFU was striving to eliminate the piece-rate system.

The most notorious aspect of seasonal farmwork was the labour contract system, where rather than working directly for farmers, workers were legally the employees of contractors who agreed to provide a certain number of them to farm owners at an agreed-upon rate. Legally, contractors were required to be licensed, yet according to Support B.C. Farmworkers only one-fifth actually were. Unscrupulous activities included skimming off up to thirty percent of workers' wages, failing to pay them, fraudulently pocketing the money that workers believed they were paying into UIC and income tax, and providing transportation in overcrowded, unsafe vehicles (Bains:32).

Because contractors often served as translators between farmers and workers, and because they controlled workers' access to unemployment insurance, they had a great deal of power to intimidate. This power, combined with a lack of information available to workers, made it difficult for them to complain about employment standards infractions.

CFU played an important role in making sure that individuals' complaints were acted upon, whereas individuals would be afraid to raise a fuss for fear of being exposed and losing their jobs.

Other conditions of farmwork were related to the Workers Compensation Act, which provided health and safety regulations for virtually all workers in British Columbia except farmworkers. They were totally exempted until 1983, when "guidelines" were introduced. These were not regulations enforceable by the Workers Compensation Board, but educational guidelines to be promoted by the B.C. Federation of Agriculture, an organization made up entirely of farmers (Sandborn 1981).

The frequent lack of shade, shelter, bathrooms, and fresh water were complaints resulting from non-existent legislation. More serious, perhaps, was the problem of pesticides, which I will consider in some detail because it provides the raw material for a range of issues which affected the ESL Crusade.

Most pesticide literature is, by nature, extremely technical. An example of popular information more accessible to farmworkers is a poster called Pesticide Safety for Fieldworkers issued in English and Punjabi by the Workers Compensation Board of B.C., and reprinted on the next page.

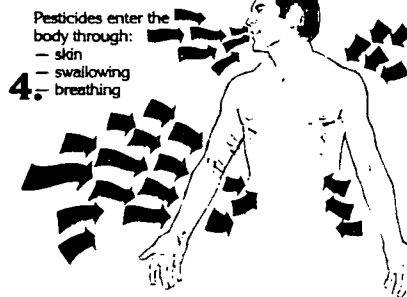
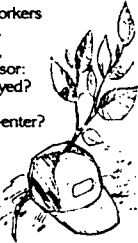


# PESTICIDE SAFETY FOR FIELDWORKERS

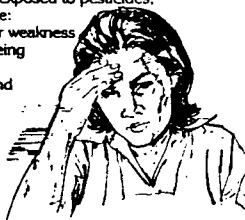
WORKERS COMPENSATION BOARD

## PROTECT YOUR HEALTH BY FOLLOWING THESE BASIC RULES:

1. Only properly trained workers should apply pesticides.
2. Before you enter a field, always ask your supervisor:
  - (a) What has been sprayed?
  - (b) When?
  - (c) When is it safe to re-enter?
3. Pesticides can:
  - Stay on leaves, branches and on the ground.
  - Stay on your clothes.

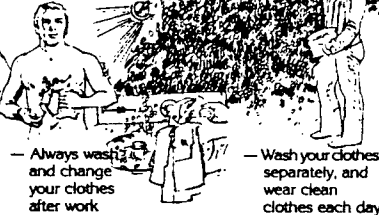


5. If you are overexposed to pesticides, you may notice:
  - Dizziness or weakness
  - Trouble seeing
  - Excessive sweating and saliva
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Skin rash
  - Flu-like symptoms

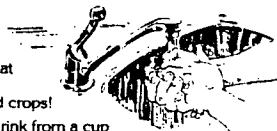


When you see your Doctor, tell him the name of the pesticide you have been exposed to.  
*Note: The effects of various pesticides upon pregnant women are not yet known.*

6. Remember, pesticides can enter your body through your skin:
  - Wear protective clothing when your supervisor says to do this.



7. Wash your hands, forearms and face
  - After handling a pesticide or sprayed crop.
  - Before eating, drinking, smoking or using the toilet.



8. Don't eat freshly sprayed crops!

9. Don't drink from a cup or container unless you're sure it's safe. Empty containers may have held pesticides.

10. Stay away from unmarked containers which may contain pesticides.

11. If you swallow a pesticide call the doctor immediately. Have the label or name of the pesticide with you. Ask the doctor about first aid treatment.

If you go to the doctor take the pesticide name or label with you.  
 If you spill a pesticide on yourself, wash with soap and water and change your clothing immediately. If necessary, flush your eyes with water for 15 minutes.  
 Make sure the accident is reported to your supervisor.

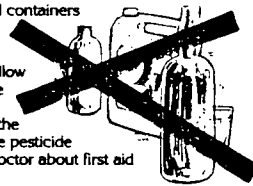


Figure 1 - Poster printed in English and Punjabi by Workers Compensation Board, 1982

In itself it appears very thorough, listing eleven precautions for safety when working with pesticides, and putting the responsibility firmly on the workers' shoulders. However, a more careful analysis reveals that many of its eleven precautions were impossible for workers to follow. For example:

Only properly trained workers should apply pesticides.

The B.C. Pesticide Control Branch published a handbook for all farmers wishing to become certified as pesticide applicators. However, this guide was written in complex technical language, while a 1983 Workers Compensation Board report indicated that the average male farmer in B.C. had 9 1/2 years of formal education (Eaton:32). Furthermore, because of various exemptions to the certification rule, only three percent of B.C. farmers were certified to apply pesticides. The predictable resulting ignorance of farmers is exemplified by comments such as "You can take a bath in the stuff", and other equally irresponsible attitudes cited by the authors of Farmworkers and Pesticides (1982).

Before you enter a field, always ask your supervisor:

(a) what has been sprayed? (b) when? (c) when is it safe to re-enter?

This was difficult for farmworkers, because according to Farmworkers and Pesticides farmers had no legal obligation to

tell anyone what pesticides they were using or when and how they were using them (6). This lack of regulation made it difficult for the union to research the question of safety precautions and exposure effects, except in broad terms, because researchers had no way of knowing exactly what farmworkers were being exposed to. The Ministry of Agriculture's 1983 Mushroom Production Guide lists many possible chemicals, but farmers would actually select a small number of these, which they did not have to identify (Eaton:22).

The most serious problem was re-entry: when was it safe to re-enter a sprayed area? Farmers could legally make workers enter a sprayed field anytime; the right to refuse unsafe work, entrenched in WCB Health and Safety Regulations for all other industries, did not apply to farmworkers (Farmworkers and Pesticides:7). Pesticides and Health Survey Results in 1982 revealed that eighty percent had, at some point, had to work in fields immediately after spraying (3). Again, even trained researchers would have had a hard time finding information; specific re-entry instructions were available in the 1983 Mushroom Production Guide for only two types of hundreds of pesticides used in agriculture (13).

If you are exposed to pesticides, you may notice:  
dizziness or weakness, trouble seeing, excessive sweating and

saliva, nausea or vomiting, skin rash, flu-like symptoms.  
When you see your doctor, tell him the name of the pesticide  
you have been exposed to.

Farmers were not obliged to have any first-aid equipment or facilities, nor, according to Farmworkers and Pesticides, were they required to have anyone available with any knowledge of first-aid or pesticide-poisoning symptoms (8). Furthermore, for reasons explained, farmworkers were unlikely to know what type and quantity of pesticide they had been exposed to.

The actual effects of pesticides on workers are under-researched. The only health survey done in B.C., summarized in Agricultural Pesticides and Health Survey Results, found "an extremely high correlation between long-term exposure to pesticides and the number of chronic symptoms that farmworkers had experienced" (4). Equally disturbing studies from other areas of North America are summarized in Farmworkers and Pesticides (13-17).

The problem of pesticide safety is closely linked to other aspects of field work conditions. For example, the WCB poster urged workers to wash their hands, faces and arms before eating, drinking, smoking, or using the toilet. Yet in mushroom farms washing facilities were often unavailable, and

in the fields they were almost never available. Farmworkers usually had nowhere to eat except in fields or mushroom barns. Seasonal workers who were living on farms often had nowhere to take recommended daily showers or regularly wash their clothes - none of the facilities mentioned were required by law. Educating people about safety precautions was a travesty when they had no way of following them.

### 3. HISTORY OF THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS UNION

CFU arose as a response to these conditions. It began in 1979 as the Farm Workers Organizing Committee (FWOC), founded by a group of East Indian activists and intellectuals who quickly tapped a groundswell of support among both farmworkers and the educated Anglo left. Within a few months, by organizing a rally of 200 workers, FWOC successfully retrieved \$80,000 in unpaid backwages at a farm in Clearbrook and began actively lobbying the government for legislative changes. Thus two major types of tactics were already in process: direct action and legislative lobbying.

When FWOC became a trade union (Canadian Farmworkers Union) in spring 1980, it seemed like an obvious step but in retrospect was one that significantly altered the organization's strategies and shifted its base of support away from popular community groups and toward the labour movement.

The strategy of organizing and negotiating contracts became a complement to lobbying for changes in the Employment Standards Act and Workers Compensation Act because it could improve the same conditions.

Organizing bargaining units had the advantage that a union contract could provide much better working conditions than the minimum ones stipulated by legislation. At the same time, the process of organizing and maintaining units was heavily regulated by the B.C. Labour Code, which in 1983 was amended to reflect an ideology favouring strengthened management and weakened unions. Thus CFU began lobbying on this issue as well.

The union's history between 1980 and 1985 reflects a steady series of victories in lobbying for legislative changes and an uneven record of organizing and negotiating contracts. Legislative victories included improvements in the Employment Standards Act, the Workers Compensation Act, the Industrial Camp Act, and the federal Unemployment Insurance Act. Importantly, the union influenced the implementation of these acts as well as how they appeared on paper. By providing free legal services it helped hundreds of individual members recover thousands of dollars each of unpaid wages and disputed unemployment insurance.

Between its first certification in August 1980 and 1984, CFU gained certifications at seven farms and successfully negotiated contracts at four of them. Union certification was granted by the Labour Relations Board when an acceptable percentage of workers at a farm had signed a petition for it. This did not in itself change the workers' conditions, but it obliged the growers and the workers to negotiate contracts. However, in practice negotiations sometimes dragged out for years and growers had many tactics for preventing certification and stalling negotiations.

By 1985 the union had lost its contracts and certifications at all but one farm. This can be attributed, directly and indirectly, to employers' "union-busting" tactics, which were easier to carry out in B.C.'s post-1983 political climate and the resulting state of the Labour Code and the Labour Relations Board. Despite this, the number of pro-union workers who supported decertification was surprisingly small; most of the anti-union workers in decertified farms were those hired by the growers after certification. This point will be significant in the next section.

4. HOW DOES CFU ORGANIZE?

All of the strategies and tactics mentioned above required support from farmworkers themselves, although the nature of the risk and commitment varied in each case. In order to consider how the ESL Crusade could function in organizing workers, it is important to see it in the context of the union's organizing activities. In this section I mean "organizing" in the broader sense of mobilizing people for all its political activities rather than the narrower sense of forming bargaining units. All these activities were shaped by the broader dynamics of the Punjabi community, which is the subject of the following section.

Organizers began with the assumption that farmworkers were frustrated with their work, but it is important to realize that organizers (as well as Anglo supporters) may have had a different perception of the problems than did workers themselves. For example, many union farmworkers preferred the piece-rate payment system because it offered individuals the possibility of making more than minimum wage, and rewarded them for harder work; yet the union, focussing on the fact that the average wage was less than the legal minimum, plus other ideological issues, was consistently lobbying against it. Likewise, pesticides were more a concern of leaders and supporters than of workers themselves, and however crowded a



contractor's van may have been by Canadian standards, it was as comfortable and safe as the average public bus in Punjab, which workers had grown up accepting.

Furthermore, it may have been politically expedient to temporarily focus on certain issues even when they were not of paramount concern to workers. In all these cases, it is vital to recognize that the overlap between union strategies and worker concerns was not and could not be 100%.

After identifying, and trying to add to, the concerns of the workers, organizers would argue that "If you want to improve conditions, join the union, and when enough people join, after enough struggle, conditions will improve." This message was implicit in every CFU leaflet. But workers always realized that "enough" might not join (this was the "why me first?" syndrome that frustrated organizers so much), and that for the individual, the cost of struggle might outweigh the long term benefits which may or may not appear.

This is especially the case when the short, turbulent history of CFU, like many unions in their early days, had more costs than benefits for those who had tried to organize farms, if these are measured by income lost due to strikes and activists being fired. On the other hand, lobbying and direct-action activities had succeeded at a much lower cost to

farmworkers, and probably had more widespread support from them. Likewise, legal assistance clearly provided overall gain at very little risk to many individuals, although this did not create more support for the organization as a whole.

In any case, farming bargaining units, the highest-cost, most difficult, and least successful aspect of CFU's work, was in ideological and practical terms the heart of the union's activity. In the most pragmatic terms, it was necessary for the survival of CFU as a union, because it guaranteed continued financial support from the labour movement, and, following the establishment of an organized base, income from membership dues.

As a result, because the union's most necessary activity was seemingly the least attractive to potential members, organizers had to appeal to motivations beyond immediate material gain, and these could be found in most leaflets as well. Pamphlets presented fighting for one's rights as an end in itself and invoked the idea of sacrifice: risking losses now for promised or possible future gain, even if the future meant the next generation. Both these appeals had parallels in Sikh tradition as well as being deeply rooted in the labour movement. A related appeal, equally well-rooted, was the idea of the union as a "big family" or a "community" or a "social movement". But all of these approaches, however valid and

tactically necessary they may have been, risked whitewashing over the fact that for individuals to participate in existing organizing strategies may not have been in their short-term financial interest.

The view existed within CFU, although it was not the prevailing one, that FWOC had made a tactical mistake in becoming a trade union too quickly, without a large enough base of popular support within the community or enough agitational successes. There were many other factors, however, such as the recent swing further to the right in B.C. politics, the depressed state of the economy, and unique forces within the Punjabi community, which made this a difficult time to organize any workers.

##### 5. THE SIKH COMMUNITY IN VANCOUVER

Although it was tactically necessary for CFU to say that it represented all farmworkers, in practice its membership unit in 1985 was almost entirely Sikh. The elected executive members were all Sikh farmworkers, and the majority of staff and organizers came from Sikh families. The union was both strengthened and limited by forces in the Sikh community, and understanding these forces was necessary for the ESL Crusade as well as the union to operate.

The Sikh community in Greater Vancouver was highly politicized at this time, mirroring divisions in Punjab but also evolving steadily on its own in a new and less constrained setting. Although various organizations may have appeared to represent isolated concerns, in the eyes of the community they were often grouped together in political slates. Thus CFU was seen as connected with an anti-racist organization, an organization promoting communal (religious) harmony and opposing the concept of Khalistan, a group concerned with revolutionary politics in India, and a theatre/literacy group producing work concerned with all of these issues.

The Sikh temples or gurdwaras were slates in themselves although like any institutions they were vulnerable to political takeovers. They were powerful means of social control because they were virtually the exclusive social centre for most farmworkers, and they controlled much of the information which workers got about Punjab and about the Sikh community in Vancouver. For various reasons, temple executives were generally dominated by sectors of the community which opposed organizing farmworkers, such as farmers, labour contractors, and other business people, and for this reason CFU had very limited access to the temples, and received very little support, although most union members were members of temples. The implicit atheism of the union's

"young intellectuals", combined with their own ideological hostility to Sikhism, possibly made the situation worse.

The issue of Khalistan, (Punjab as a fundamentalist Sikh theocracy independent from India), rocked the Sikh community in Vancouver between 1983 and 1985, largely under the influence of Jarnail Singh Bindranwale in Amritsar, and particularly since the Indian government invaded Amritsar's Golden Temple in June 1984, killing Bindranwale in the process. The result was an upsurge of religious fundamentalism, which business and landowning Sikhs were quick to turn to their advantage, and which, at the time, was very hostile to CFU.

It is likely that the upsurge of fundamentalism in Vancouver had as much to do with the local situation as it did with Punjab, where there was probably less popular support for Khalistan. It may have reflected a young community seeking its identity, or fearing losing it. The upwelling of pride, cultural self-respect, and militancy in the community during 1984 and 1985 was tremendous; it simply went in such a direction that CFU was unable to tap it.

If one views the history of Punjab's Khalistan movement, which has roots early in the twentieth century, partly as a response to the perpetual threat of Sikhism being reabsorbed

into mainstream Hinduism, is assumes an ironic twist, because for Sikhs here, the much greater likelihood was absorption into Canadian culture, particularly for younger generations. Occasionally teenage Khalistanis in saffron turbans would passionately discuss the problems of Punjab without ever having set foot in India.

Most young people, however, like other immigrant groups, found themselves straddled between Punjabi and Canadian aspirations and expectations. This affected CFU's work because even though young people often did farmwork, they tended to move on to other jobs and so had little interest in taking immediate risks for long-term gain. Furthermore, first generation immigrant youth sometimes go through long phases of trying to dissociate themselves from the "rustic" traditions of their parents, and farmworkers were often the most "rustic" of all.

Sikhs have a tradition of militancy dating from 1699 when the tenth and last guru, Gobind Singh, organized them to fight the Mughal emperors based in Delhi. Sikh history, in its popular mythologized form, focuses on the exploits of military heroes and particularly of martyrs, emphasizing their piety along with their bravery. Women heroes also appear in Sikh history, as it is created and transmitted by men: they embody the same qualities of leadership and bravery but always

dutifully fulfill their domestic responsibilities as well.

Obviously it was very useful for union organizers to make use of these traditions, and sometimes invoke them outright. Unfortunately, other tendencies often outweighed them, such as the very high value placed on owning property. Because an extended family often lived in one house, even people who individually would be in poverty could afford mortgages. This made financial security of prime importance, and discouraged people from the short-term risks of union activity.

Within the family, seeming contradictions again appeared. Since 60% of farmworkers were women, their position critically affected the union's ability to organize them. Scripturally, Sikh women have complete equality with men, but culturally they are often confined to a subordinate domestic role. For several years it was impossible for CFU organizers to even talk to many women workers, because their husbands would automatically assume the right to speak for them.

On the other hand, the same women were capable of militant actions; the most important example is the twelve women at Hoss Mushroom Farm who organized themselves under great duress in June 1984 and became heroes throughout B.C.'s labour movement. But in general, as one organizer said about tapping this militant potential and organizing women workers, "We have to educate their families, even if they are not

working on farms, because they have the decision-making power"  
(Jackson 1985a:12).



#### IV. FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: THE CRUSADE IN PROGRESS

##### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the twin objectives of the ESL Crusade were to teach ESL to farmworkers and organize them, our central concern was to find methods that could do both, using Freire's pedagogy as a starting point. In this chapter I analyze the evolution of our methodology from an initial audio-lingual paradigm with limited potential for ESL teaching and organizing to a group of approaches with much potential for both.

These approaches combined acquisition-based ESL techniques with the essential aspects of Freire's methodology: identification of students' concerns, dovetailing these with organizational concerns, analyzing the underlying causes of problems in view of students' vested interests, and acting on these analyses.

I will also analyze the "backup" activities that made this core process possible. Most important among these were student needs assessments, tutor training, materials development, and evaluation procedures.

For evaluating all aspects of the program, Blanca Facundo makes an excellent distinction between idealistic and realistic frames of reference: evaluating a program as one wants it to be, and as it is. Idealism of course plays a vital role in the development of a program, and an important part of any evaluation is the comparison between a realistic assessment and one's ideals.

However, most descriptions of Freire-inspired programs are written in such idealistic terms that the alternative of a realistic assessment is never hinted at, and may not even occur to many readers. Such reports may be useful for gaining public support, but they are of little use to other practitioners. Freire's own accounts of his work are no exception. I must emphasize the difficulty of making a consistent distinction in evaluating one's own work; the tendency to lapse into idealism is everpresent, and realism can easily deteriorate into equally uncritical cynicism. Neither will produce a useful analysis leading to a more effective program.

In evaluating the program, there are two separate considerations. One is whether we were able to engage in the processes of our approaches, and the other is whether we obtained results in terms of language teaching and organizing. One must consider the answers to both questions in view of a

number of limitations which I consider in detail because they affect the outcome of future Crusades as well as other programs.

## 2. ESL AND THE GOALS OF THE UNION

CFU staff always wanted the Crusade to be a vital aspect of union organizing, totally embedded in the objectives of the union as a whole. These objectives were as follows:

- 1) To end all exploitation of farmworkers.
- 2) To eliminate the labour contracting system.
- 3) To ensure that farmworkers were treated as skilled workers.
- 4) To pressure government ministries to change legislation that discriminated against farmworkers.
- 5) To unionize farmworkers across Canada.

When the ESL Crusade was first conceived, its projected results fell into three categories. The first was what Freire had called "conscientization": farmworkers had to understand the causes of their work conditions in order to stand up for themselves and change them. This would lead some people to involve themselves more fully in the union, and would operate on several levels: the majority of farmworkers would be willing to make at least the minimum commitments necessary to organize and maintain bargaining units. Equally importantly,

though, a few individuals would emerge as leaders and organizers.

The second aspect was training. Students would develop English language skills which would help them assert their rights as workers. This would be crucial both for general membership and for emerging leaders. Specifically, they would be able to speak to their employers without relying on bilingual labour contractors, they would be better equipped to handle confrontations, they could deal with government officials in making sure their rights were enforced, and they could speak with workers of different language groups and join forces with them. Furthermore, they would acquire the knowledge that would enable them to assert their rights: an understanding of relevant legislation and how it worked in practice, and of unions and how they could effectively operate in agriculture.

The third aspect was public relations. The program would be good publicity for CFU both within the farmworking community and beyond it. It might be a selling point for people who would otherwise be leery of the union.

All three of these aspects would ultimately lead to more effective action by the union, enabling it to better achieve its goals.

### 3. NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY AND RESULTS

The preceding section focusses on the union's own "needs" in creating an ESL program for its members. The next step was to determine the needs perceived by potential students themselves. In June 1982 the union developed an interview questionnaire which a bilingual staff member used with 62 farmworkers in South Vancouver, 45 of whom were already CFU members.

The study provided the following profile of potential students:

- 1) All were from the state of Punjab in India and most had been owners of small family-operated farms. The average age was early 50's, the level of English proficiency was uniformly basic, and over half the workers had no formal education and were illiterate in Punjabi. About 80% of the prospective students were women.
- 2) Many had children in elementary or high school who spoke English with near-native proficiency.
- 3) Surveyed workers had generally had limited success with other ESL programs in Vancouver. Problems included lack of family support, interference of work or family responsibilities such as babysitting,

unrealistic or uninteresting teaching materials, and difficulty getting to classes.

- 4) Workers saw ESL as a way of being less dependent on other family members, and as a useful tool both socially and economically. Many saw it as a way of reducing dependence on labour contractors (Steeves and Boal:8-9).

Based on these and other results of the survey, the report made the following recommendations for the first year of the Crusade:

- 1) The program should focus on basic survival English, for which there was the greatest need.
- 2) An important goal of the program should be to provide students with a sense of confidence in using English.
- 3) The initially-proposed tutor-student ratio of 1:2 would make the relationship too intense. A ratio of 1:3 or 1:4 would result in better group dynamics.
- 4) Special teaching approaches and materials would be essential in light of students' illiteracy in their first language.
- 5) The program must be as relevant as possible to their personal and work needs, since otherwise they would be likely to drop out.

- 6) Students were very enthusiastic about having classes in their houses, and having each class within walking distance of all students.
- 7) Groups should be as homogeneous as possible in terms of age, literacy level, general proficiency, and sex (Steeves and Boal:10-12).

The most striking feature of the needs assessment, as discussed up to now, is the gulf between the students' and union's expectations. Although in the long term the two sets of objectives might have converged, in the short term they were distinct.

The distinction between the organization's political "agenda" and the students' "felt needs" was clearer and more explicit in the case of CFU because the union wanted to change the consciousness of the students rather than simply catering, or appearing to cater, to their expressed needs, as a more "liberal" kind of program would be likely to do.

This contradiction was not something that could be resolved except possibly through the actual teaching process, because it was only through discussion (or "dialogue") that students could critically analyze their own needs versus the union's needs. The results of this analysis proved more

complex than we first expected; they are discussed at length in Chapter Five.

Another striking feature was how naively union staff took these results at face value, particularly in terms of motivation, commitment, and student expectations. At the time, expectations of both organizers and potential students were unrealistically high concerning the amount of English students could learn in a short time, and that created an illusion of enthusiasm and commitment which was soon tempered. It is also possible that our teaching methods failed to maximize students' motivation, an issue which became increasingly important over the three years of the program.

#### 4. ORIGINAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CRUSADE

Before the Crusade began, union staff combined the union's goals with the students' expressed needs into the following official statement of objectives to prevent the exploitation of farmworkers by developing their command of English, specifically:

- 1) Eliminate their dependency on labour contractors, whom they rely on as interpreters,
- 2) Enable them to understand health and safety regulations, warnings, and symbols,



- 3) Enable them to understand and assert their rights as laid out in the B.C. Employment Standards Act, Labour Code, and other relevant legislation,
- 4) Enable them to participate in the entire spectrum of Canadian life.

These were of course the original "ideals" of the Crusade, and it is noteworthy that they slur the distinction made above between student and organizational needs. The Crusade later moved away from them: first because it had not achieved them, and more importantly because they proved untenable even as ideals. The restating of these objectives near the end of this chapter provides an important illustration of the relationship between objectives and results.

## 5. FORMAT OF THE CRUSADE

The class format suggested in the original needs assessment proved to be very effective and continued for three years with little change. There were two closely related difficulties worthy of note, though. One is that efforts to group students by age, sex, or ability nearly always met great resistance: the overwhelmingly important criterion for class organization was household or family, and a student would generally be very reluctant to attend a class outside her own

house if there were one in her house, even if it were well above or below her own ability.

The result was a number a classes with wide ranges of proficiency, usually resulting in less progress for any of the students, especially those at the two ends of the continuum. Tutors of these classes consistently felt that, despite certain advantages of mixed-ability classes, they were handicapped by effectively having to teach two or more classes at the same time. This inertia proved very difficult to overcome, and later, rather than fight it, Crusade staff simply sought more effective ways to teach multi-level classes.

#### 6. TUTOR RECRUITING

From the beginning the union decided it would have to use volunteer tutors in order to survive financially. We developed a distinction between "liberal" and "radical" motives for tutoring, and although it oversimplifies peoples' real motives, it does provide a useful explanation of what the union was looking for.

Pure "liberal" motives constitute a genuine desire to "help" individuals who are "less fortunate", who one "feels sorry for". "Liberal" volunteers see themselves as coming

down from a position of privilege to give help as a kind of gift, generally with little view of changing the conditions that created the privilege.

The result is often a dependency which may make a genuine, equal relationship impossible, and may create resentment on both sides, possibly even resulting in the volunteer becoming more rather than less racist.

"Radically" motivated volunteers are ultimately more concerned with changing the social conditions that result in inequality of privilege. They see themselves not as "helping" students in a condescending way, but as siding with them, as engaging in a common struggle in whose outcome both parties have a vested interest. Ideally, because direct dependency between volunteer and student is minimized, they are free to develop a more equal relationship.

Thus one criterion for tutor recruiting was evident or latent "radical" motives. In Chapter Five I will rephrase these motives in terms of the class interests which they represent, specifically Gouldner's concept of the "New Class". Beyond the question of motives, there are specific personality traits which make tutors effective: warmth, friendliness, empathy and ability to communicate well non-verbally with gesture, body position, and tone of voice.

Still further, we specified four areas of skills and knowledge which would make tutors more potentially effective: trade union or other political organizing experience, ESL or other teaching experience, familiarity with the Punjabi community, and familiarity with Freirian or "dialogical" philosophies of education. Few tutors were initially well-qualified in all four areas; our recruiting strategy was to look for potential, and to seek a wide range of experience so that everyone could learn as much as possible from each other.

Observers occasionally criticized the program for its de-emphasis on tutors being qualified ESL teachers, complaining that this fed into a general conception that since the students were "only" middle-aged women they did not "need" qualified teachers. Indeed this attitude was reflected in the hierarchy of ESL classes available in Vancouver, where the neighborhood classes, primarily for middle-aged women, tended to have the lowest-paid, least qualified teachers, as well as the most "informal" curriculums.

CFU's view initially was that although professionals would likely teach with more initial confidence, in the long run, given our own tutor training and the goals and methods of the program, the other areas of experience that tutors bring would prove equally useful and important.

In fact, experience showed that the training offered within the program was often not sufficient for tutors with no previous experience. That is, tutors with only this training were unable to offer the quality of teaching that good professionally trained teachers could offer. This was of course a severe limitation on the program's effectiveness, and needed to be dealt with seriously.

The procedure for recruitment was to initially screen calls; the coordinators visited all suitable potential tutors. 90% of the people who they visited became tutors. Home visits, which lasted one to two hours, were a valuable way of building coordinator-tutor rapport, and ensured that tutors arrived at the first orientation not only with some familiarity but with a positive initial experience under their belts. We received very positive feedback about this system, and so it continued unchanged. It also provided a basis for planning the workshops according to the tutors' backgrounds and concerns.

We consistently tried to recruit Punjabi tutors and it consistently proved difficult. There were none the first year, two the second year, and two the third year. Some aspects of the program which attracted Anglo tutors did not apply to Punjabis, such as the chance to work in an unfamiliar community, and to bridge barriers of communication and racism.

Punjabi young people may feel uncomfortable teaching their elders since it turns the traditional relationship of respect upside down; or, if they are feeling conflict between Indian and Canadian culture they may want to distance themselves from "rustic" old people as much as possible. Older potential tutors who have recently emigrated from India often lack confidence in their English, and adults who speak English and Punjabi fluently usually prefer to get involved in other aspects of the union which appear to relate more directly to organizing. These are important problems because there were many benefits to using Punjabi tutors.

#### 7. TUTOR TRAINING

Despite being exciting, training was frustrating because the number of hours for training was simply not enough, even though it expanded from eight to sixteen hours after the first year. This was comparable to other "volunteer" programs, except that the Crusade's training had to incorporate a wider range of issues; it was a far cry from the 90 hours of training a university would provide for the most basic ESL teaching certification.

This fundamental problem resulted in a vicious circle: since tutors were not trained adequately to begin with, they were unable to properly put the teaching methods we developed

into practice, and we were unable to evaluate the effectiveness of those methods. It was a very severe limiting factor. However until 1985 the Crusade operated entirely within these limitations; we never tried to change the basic framework of training and using volunteers, although it would ultimately prove necessary to find ways to break free from it.

Tutor training always consisted of the following components:

- 1) Information about the conditions of farmwork, the history, strategies, tactics and accomplishments of CFU.
- 2) Information about the Sikh community in Vancouver: its culture and religion.
- 3) Approaches to "radical" education, at a philosophical and a methodological level.
- 4) Developing a theory of language acquisition/learning and teaching, particularly as relevant to our students.
- 5) Teaching approaches, designs and procedures.
- 6) Topic and content: what we have found relevant, how tutors can identify salient topics with their own students.
- 7) Materials which encompass 4, 5 and 6.

- 8) Union organizing: what tutors can do, how organizing relates to the above teaching approaches.

The emphasis placed on each component varied, but the most important development was our bringing each area steadily into focus with the Crusade itself. For example, dissatisfied with presenting Sikhism as a litany of rituals and gurus from the 16th century, we began discussing how its traditions affected farmworkers now, how it shapes the Punjabi community and particularly how it affects CFU. Likewise we increasingly downplayed Freire's abstract philosophy and work in Brazil, and focussed much more on our own understanding of dialogue and problem-posing in the context of the Crusade. A third example is that in discussing the conditions of farmwork we began using the same materials and procedures that tutors were asked to use with their students.

Following the orientations, the format of monthly tutor workshops also continued unchanged for three years. They were a chance for tutors to exchange experiences and ideas, and an important means of forging a common bond and sense of community among them. Here the possibilities for discussion were excellent. The workshops were also an opportunity to make short presentations on specific topics of interest to tutors, such as teaching techniques, legal information, or events affecting the union.



A final ongoing means of tutor training which also remained unchanged was individual contact between the tutors and the coordinator. Tutors generally phoned every seven to ten days and described their results, successes and frustrations. For the coordinators, this was meant to be an important means of evaluating materials and techniques in detail.

In practice, however, the brief tutor training proved insufficient for tutors to master the terminology, let alone the methods, and so they often fell back on previous experience or else sought other approaches on their own. This means the coordinator has to decide: "Do I tell them how to improve the method they are using, or do I suggest a new and better method and risk discouraging them?" This relates to the more general problem of using non-professional volunteers.

Further description and analysis of tutor training is included in the following three sections.

## 8. TEACHING METHODS AND MATERIALS

In tutor training, particularly since time was very limited, Crusade staff had to decide whether to train tutors thoroughly in one or two pre-determined methods, or to "expose" them more superficially to a wide range of methods

and let them choose. The danger of the first choice was that they would be restricted with methods which were inappropriate or simply not effective, even when applied properly; the opposing danger was of tutors being ill-equipped to apply any method effectively. This decision extended to the selection and production of materials, and was complicated by the fact that some methods required very specialized materials, while others were quite flexible in their requirements.

In a highly homogeneous and specialized program such as the Crusade, there were many considerations in deciding which methods to promote. These included student motivation and confidence, students' educational background, students' level of English, tutors' ability to master and implement particular methods, and the materials which the program would require.

Before the first year of the Crusade, CFU hired a curriculum developer to write a curriculum aimed at illiterate beginners, to be used by tutors with no previous teaching experience. Titled A Time to Learn, its eighteen units were scripted out in some detail for tutors who had never taught before. Although the format was situational, the implicit assumptions about language learning were behaviorist and audio-lingual. Many of the exercises suggested in the curriculum were tightly controlled drills in which students

practiced repeating sentences in turn, often in question and answer format, first with the tutor and then with each other.

The expectation was that students would master each sentence before moving on to the next. These exercises were often followed by activities which were more communicative in that they involved the exchange of real, new information about the students' lives.

This curriculum provided a useful starting point for the Crusade and was still being used in the third year; however, both pedagogically and politically it presented a number of problems. Tutors found the scripted-out lessons useful for their first few sessions of teaching, but complained that they did not offer a wide enough variety of teaching approaches and techniques, and that students became bored with the repetitious exercises.

Furthermore, by maintaining that teacher input and student output should be identical (that is, that students should master every sentence they heard) the curriculum failed to take advantage of students' ability to understand more than they could produce at any given time. In terms of Krashen's language acquisition theories, its procedures probably forced unnecessary production at the same time as severely limiting the supply of comprehensible input which is held to be a major

source of acquired language (1982:20). Many tutors found the repetitive drills likely to lose students' interest and attention, thus in Krashen's terms "raising their affective filters" (1982:30). By the end of the second year tutors were providing consistent feedback about the curriculum and methods described above. Students were often bored and discouraged by drill-based methods. One professionally-trained tutor said "You should avoid techniques which put artificial constraints on students' ability to communicate". Another put the idea more simply: "Things went best when we just concentrated on communicating". Thus, student-initiated conversations generally maintained the highest interest.

Tutors had noticed the following about most students in the program: first, they were able to understand much more than they were able to say, at all levels of proficiency. Second, they could express complicated, sophisticated ideas "incorrectly" but were often unable to say (or even repeat) very simple sentences with correct morphology and syntax. Also, they generally had begun by knowing many nouns and a few verbs, but no words from any other categories. Finally, they began with little patience for language as an abstract system.

At the same time, several tutors began experimenting with approaches which seemed to work well in terms of student interest and the language that students mastered as a result.

One was photo-stories created by tutors out of students' activities (e.g. a class bus trip to the union office, a trip around students' neighborhood), then used for Language Experience activities. Another was to get students "just talking" with the aid of as many props as possible, and a third was problem-posing.

Finding that the above approaches seemed to be more successful, we observed that the common denominators were:

- 1) There were no artificial constraints on students' communicating, yet neither were they pressured to speak.
- 2) The content was of high interest and personal relevance, often student-generated, and the atmosphere was relaxed.
- 3) In general the focus was on the content rather than the form of language, or on the correctness of student utterances.
- 4) There was a large volume of input from the instructor but it was kept at a simple, understandable level at all times.
- 5) More complicated input was made understandable with many gestures and visual aids.

Having these elements in mind provided a basis for expanding our procedures in a systematic way, and led us to the Natural Approach as a new paradigm.

### 8.1 Natural Approach

The Natural Approach, which is outlined most thoroughly by Tracy Terrell (1983) and by Krashen and Terrell (1983) is a direct application of the theory of language learning/acquisition developed and propounded by Stephen Krashen (1982).

This approach includes a number of procedures which are consistent with its theoretical underpinnings, that is, which aim to supply comprehensible input, place comprehension before production, maintain a low affective filter, and emphasize student comprehension of meaning over analysis of structure

We began demonstrating Natural Approach procedures to tutors in the third year as well as using them in classes. The best example of a demonstration to tutors is a fifteen minute Punjabi lesson about making Indian tea, where the instructor provided a very simple and repetitive commentary on the actions and encouraged "students" to respond either in English or in single words of Punjabi, thus demonstrating their comprehension.

At the end, they were able to translate most of the words and expressions they had heard into English (which was the objective of the lesson); in the discussion following, they spontaneously made all the points the lesson was intended to illustrate about basic Natural Approach principles. A later Punjabi lesson, drill-based and requiring immediate, accurate production, unexpectedly evoked a series of criticisms of drills.

When it moves beyond specific procedures which it encompasses such as Language Experience, photo-stories, and TPR, the Natural Approach may seem to be a theoretically rationalized version of "just talking with students", and tutors have sometimes interpreted it this way. This is dangerous, because the Natural Approach is necessarily contrived in its attempt to create "natural" learning conditions. To maintain a supply of comprehensible input without a script or plan is difficult, and to monitor whether it is comprehensible is equally difficult, and certainly not the same as "just talking with the students".

John Oller has privately argued that it is too much to expect teachers to continually create lessons based on Krashen and Terrell's criteria, without the benefit of a more structured format and materials (1985). This is particularly the case with the Crusade's tutors, whose training and

preparation time are limited. It is also worth noting that this paradigm of language acquisition does not address the question of content in any meaningful way, nor does it, in itself, provide a specific procedure for political analysis. It did, however, open the door to a number of more specific procedures with potential for both ESL teaching and organizing.

## 8.2 Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response, or TPR, proved useful as a language teaching approach despite its lack of potential for encouraging political analysis. It consists of supplying comprehensible input in one way, through imperative commands, and adheres to the principle that comprehension should precede production more strictly than any of the other methods we used. When students do begin producing language, they also begin by giving imperative commands to each other.

James Asher, who developed and still actively promotes TPR (1983), has a number of theoretical arguments justifying this. For the Crusade's students, the most compelling is TPR's maintenance of a "low affective filter"; that is, it is relaxing and fun, and highly motivating, tending to bypass or short-circuit anxieties which students - Crusade students in particular - are likely to have about language learning.



It makes no use of students' native language, except for an introductory explanation to students of its rationale, and so was ideal for Anglo tutors. Because it is a very concrete, systematic, step-by-step method, it was ideally suited for tutors who had to be trained in a short time, although it is also a very precise method, and training needed to be thoroughly and carefully done. Lessons are generally scripted, which was comforting to new tutors; at the same time, tutors who had learned the principles of TPR could plug more appropriate language into prepared scripts, or could script their own lessons.

Furthermore, TPR is ideal for absolute beginners, and could prove to be an ideal lead-in to the methods described further on, all of which require some initial comprehension. Until we implemented TPR, that comprehension had generally been achieved through drill activities and Natural Approach activities.

In the third Crusade's tutor training we introduced TPR through a Punjabi lesson, both to teach TPR as a method and to teach Punjabi. Both were astonishingly successful. Not only did the tutors who participated understand and act on every command, but after twenty minutes were venturing to give each other commands as complex as "Paul, pick up two oranges and

three apples. Give one orange to Dick, and two apples to Winona." No one felt anxious, and concentration was intense.

On another occasion I gave an introductory TPR French lesson to a 37 year old Punjabi man and his three year old daughter simultaneously, and they did equally well, which has important implications for Crusade classes where students' academic backgrounds may vary significantly.

In my own classes I used TPR techniques with some success, including for teaching basic literacy, such as commands involving the recognition of sight words and letters.

At the same time, there were several adaptations necessary for using TPR widely in the Crusade. One was that normally the method encourages a great deal of physical activity such as standing, walking, and even running and jumping, which Crusade students are absolutely unwilling to do. Thus TPR commands had to avoid requiring students to get up from their seats and focussed more on manipulation of objects rather than large body movements. Second, the tutors were careful to avoid any commands which would compromise students' modesty.

Although TPR fits with the criteria of the Natural Approach, (comprehension before production, low affective

filter, and focus on meaning rather than structure), it poses very strong challenges to our goal of making ESL teaching consistent with Freirian philosophy. It is unabashedly directive, student input is very minimal, and most importantly it not only discourages critical thinking, but in promoting automatic, instinctive reactions, it tries to short-circuit any conscious thinking.

Contradictions of this kind force us to re-examine the distinction between banking and dialogue, which I will do in Chapter Five. It is worth noting that Nina Wallerstein, at the forefront of Freire/ESL work, recommends TPR highly (1983:34).

It also forces us to reconsider the idea of "motivation". The other methods to be described all assume that the more teaching methods and content draw from, and are relevant to, students' own lives, the more motivating they will be. TPR, at its best, seems to have an inherent motivating force regardless of the language content. This is evidently what allows TPR practitioners to use standardized scripts and still maintain high motivation.

Although TPR fits with the criteria of the Natural Approach, (comprehension before production, low affective filter, and focus on meaning rather than structure), it poses very strong challenges to our goal of making ESL teaching consistent with Freirian philosophy. It is unabashedly directive, student input is very minimal, and most importantly it not only discourages critical thinking, but in promoting automatic, instinctive reactions, it tries to short-circuit any conscious thinking.

Contradictions of this kind force us to re-examine the distinction between banking and dialogue, which I will do in Chapter Five. It is worth noting that Nina Wallerstein, at the forefront of Freire/ESL work, recommends TPR highly (1983:34).

It also forces us to reconsider the idea of "motivation". The other methods to be described all assume that the more teaching methods and content draw from, and are relevant to, students' own lives, the more motivating they will be. TPR, at its best, seems to have an inherent motivating force regardless of the language content. This is evidently what allows TPR practitioners to use standardized scripts and still maintain high motivation.

Despite its effectiveness for language teaching, TPR still did not provide a means of identifying student concerns or discussing and analyzing problems. For this reason it would have to take a limited role in the program, as we incorporated other approaches which brought us closer to these objectives.

### 8.3 Language Experience

Language Experience, originally developed as a way of teaching first language literacy to children, was consistent with the principles of the Natural Approach and was our most successful method. One tutor, Joanne Millard, took her five beginner students on a field trip to the CFU office, after several weeks of discussion about bus travel, street signs, and directions. On the trip she took a series of photographs which students later described and discussed.

These descriptions Joanne transcribed in the students' exact words, so that the end result was a large-format album of photos, in narrative sequence with accompanying text, all of which the students could understand in spoken form from the outset. This bond provided a starting point for a number of exercises in both spoken English and basic ESL literacy. The concreteness of the photos, and the experience of the field trip, made discussion much easier; in ESL terms, it maximized

the comprehensibility of spoken input, and also ensured that discussions would focus on meaning rather than on structure. Finally, it guaranteed that the content would be relevant to the students, since it was their own experience.

In terms of literacy, the students began to recognize the printed words as sight words, first in the context of the photos, then in isolation. Language Experience procedures dictate that students should first learn words which they are already orally familiar with as sight words; when they know enough words as sight words, then they begin learning individual letters extracted from those words. Only after that do they begin decoding new (but still orally understood) words based on their knowledge of phonetics, and finally they begin reading words whose meaning they may not yet know.

Language Experience, as described here, encouraged identifying and discussing student concerns as well as being an effective language teaching approach. However, it still did not provide a process of political analysis of these concerns, nor did it encourage dovetailing the union's agenda with the immediate interests of the students.

#### 8.4 Photo-stories

I later used the same text-and-photos described above with another class which had not been on the field trip, telling the story in simple clear English with constant reference to the photos, and a number of props such as coins and bus transfers, but without the printed words. Once students were familiar with the basic framework of the story, we together added many embellishments, such as twists in the narrative and foibles of the characters; thus it became more complex and interesting with each re-telling.

Finally it reached its final form, and by then students were able to tell much of it, with prompting, themselves, and we all had a common frame of reference for oral language activities, including role-playing the story as well as the literacy steps described above.

Photo-stories, while very similar to Language Experience, have the advantage that many tutors can use the same materials, as long as they are relevant. They also allow tutors to present the union's agenda to the students, which was a vital ingredient of our Freirian objectives. A flexible format where words can be inserted and removed allows the tutor to use the story cyclically, presenting it first very

simply, then adding complexities of plot, character and language appropriate to the students' level.

Fictionalized stories have the further advantage of opening up more plot and character possibilities; they are less likely to risk offending or making fun of students.

After finishing with the bus trip episode, we took the process a step further by creating another story about one of the main characters, this time coping with her children's nagging for blue jeans and toys, and eventually having to go to the bank for money. (Buses and banks were prime concerns of our students.) Having no photos, we simply invented the story together; I supplied the outline, and the students filled in details such as the children's names, ages, the things they wanted, and the bank's location. Again, once everyone was completely familiar with the story, we proceeded with various oral and literacy activities, ranging from using a taped dialogue version of the story, prepared between classes, to further sight-work and phonetic activities, to filling in bank slips.

Our experience with both Language Experience and photo-stories supported the view of John Oller Jr. that narrative or story telling principles are a vital means of organizing teaching materials and processes. Specifically, he argues



that one should:

(1) use motivated text with significant conflicts in the pursuit of meaningful goals; (2) seek out stageable action; (3) respect the logic of experience; (4) first establish the facts; (5) break the text down into manageable chunks; and (6) make multiple passes through the text, deepening comprehension on each pass (1983:3).

At this point all the essential elements of Freire-based practice were in place, except for the essential process of analyzing underlying causes of problems. This was provided by problem-posing, which could be used in conjunction with nearly all the approaches described and materials reflecting both the union's and students' concerns.

#### 8.5 Problem-Posing

Because of the limitations imposed by language, problem-posing visual materials have proven very important in fostering political analysis. They represent a very specific tradition associated with Freire, Nina Wallerstein in the United States and Deborah Barndt and her associates in Toronto. Freire writes that

These representations function as challenges, as coded situation-problems containing elements to be decoded by the groups with the collaboration of the coordinator. Discussion of these codifications will lead the groups toward a more critical consciousness at the same time that they begin to learn to read and write. The codifications represent familiar

local situations - which, however, open perspectives for the analysis of regional and national problems (1981a:51).

Similarly, Nina Wallerstein writes of "themes", defining them as "a series of related problems", and "codes", which are "concrete physical expressions that combine all the elements of the theme into one representation (1983:19).

Both Barndt and Wallerstein have worked specifically in ESL. Although there are significant differences between them, such as Barndt's emphasis on student production of the materials and a more explicitly Marxist frame of reference, both were an inspiration for our own projects.

It is not always necessary to produce problem-posing materials. Sometimes they can be found, with the added advantage of reflecting real political interests apart from those of the educating organization. One example is the Workers Compensation Board pesticide safety poster discussed in Chapter Three. The contradictions between the safety "rules" suggested by the WCB and the lack of legislation to allow farmworkers to follow them are ideal for problem-posing. This analysis could lead to such questions as "Who controls the WCB? Whose interests does it represent? What can we do?"

## PROBLEM-POSING DRAWINGS:

At the same time, we created several sets of problem-posing materials ourselves. The first is called A Time to Grow: a set of ten problem-posing drawings for the Farmworkers ESL Crusade. For this series, we decided to focus on issues relating to farmwork, while recognizing that this is not the totality or even the main area of farmworkers' concerns.

Each drawing is a scenario likely to be familiar to farmworkers. But each takes familiar elements and attempts to juxtapose them in such a way that viewers will see them as contradictions. Thus the design of the drawings encourages students to analyze the causal connections between contradictory events, relationships, and conditions. We wanted to make each drawing highly resonant, embodying as many contradictions as possible. There is no simple interpretation of any drawing, for each implicitly poses a number of problems.

The drawings are not "stories" in the sense that they contain all the information needed to decode them. Each drawing only becomes meaningful when students bring their own experience to bear on it, their own knowledge of farmwork and of their community and its values. To someone unfamiliar with

farmwork the drawings are likely to appear cryptic, which was entirely intentional. We wanted to make dialogue a requirement, encouraging students to analyze the drawings in light of their own experience. All of this contrasts with Nina Wallerstein's drawings, which tend to be more self-contained.

We consciously decided to make the figures in the drawings impersonal rather than having well-defined individual personalities; we hoped students would project their own ideas more onto the characters (e.g. concerning their personalities and feelings) rather than simply interpreting the intent of the artists. Presumably the feelings the students project onto the drawn figures would reflect their own feelings in similar situations. Also, we wanted to emphasize abstract relations, that is, structural relations, rather than more idiosyncratic personal ones. We wanted to encourage students to make generalizations about the political relationships depicted in the drawings. That is why the figures are generally not well-developed characters.

We later realized there were dangers in doing this. The figures, by being so abstract, may have failed to engage the students' interests and attention in the way that more appealing, more lifelike characters would. As a result, students may not be motivated to project their own feelings at all. The drawings may not engage their emotions and interest

as much as more "personal" drawings would; it may prove that the very specific is the best starting point for eventually understanding the very general.

We must also consider the political messages implicit in the style of the drawings. Some of the characters depicted are, by Punjabi and Canadian standards, quite unattractive, which raises the issue of what kind of image of farmworkers we are trying to promote. We must consider the implications of presenting characters, who we are asking farmworkers to identify with, as either unrealistically attractive or unusually ugly.

The second issue is that the drawings, in presenting people abstractly, dehumanize them and as a result fail to depict people interacting, showing their feelings, or otherwise having some meaning in their lives. Some would argue that since farmwork is dehumanizing, it should be depicted that way, and certainly should not be romanticized. However, the task of organizers and educators is to show that it is the conditions which are oppressive; the work itself can be presented as having dignity.

The third issue, closely related, is that the black-and-white charcoal medium results in images which students may see as depressing and oppressive. The same argument applies: it

is important to focus on the humanity of the workers, on their capacity for joy, for pride, for struggle, despite the conditions.

When we introduced the drawings to the tutors, in black-and-white, 11 by 17 inch glossy reproductions, a number refused to use them for the reasons given above. Some of these tutors did introduce them later and discovered the students seemed to like them. Among the tutors who used them from the start, all reported great interest. A second edition, brightly coloured with pastels and with more expressive, attractive characters, went into production and everyone was much happier.

Although each drawing stands on its own thematically, we felt that sequencing the ten chronologically through a day would provide the ideal context for each. It would also enable students to make connections between as well as within, the drawings. The narrative sequence would open up many more possibilities for how the drawings could be used.

Three months' experience using the drawings, however, showed that this narrative structure is probably too weak. For example, there is no continuity of characters through the "day" that is supposedly depicted: some of the drawings depict blueberry farms while others show strawberry farms.

There are no cause-and-effect links between the drawings, in the sense of good story-telling; there is no plot, suspense, or surprise. This has proven to be a limitation inherent in problem-posing drawings. The only way to avoid it would be to create the drawings out of a story which students were already familiar with.

It is important to consider the relationship of whatever visual images we created to the art forms already popular or familiar among farmworkers. Our assumption was that, once we discovered what a particular form or style meant to its audience, we could capitalize on that familiarity or that way of understanding when creating our own materials. We admittedly did very little in this regard; the drawing style we chose had everything to do with the traditions of the North American labour movement and little to do with forms familiar to farmworkers. After that we tried to make more use of indigenous forms and styles.

The drawings do not reflect student concerns directly; that is, they are not based on an assessment of what students have said they want to learn or discuss in their ESL classes. They reflect the union's agenda, the issues the union wants to encourage students to discuss. At the same time, they are based as closely as possible on students' experiences and problems: often problems which farmworkers have discussed at

length at union meetings, with union organizers and with legal staff. In that sense they reflect workers' concerns.

The procedure for creating them was as follows: we interviewed a variety of union staff who had regular contact with farmworkers, making the criteria for the drawings explicit. The result was an initial list of images which were dense with problems faced by farmworkers. We found ways of depicting each problem or issue graphically; then, using the chronological framework, grouped the images together into ten scenes or drawings. Each scene was intended to be as dense or resonant as possible, that is, to depict as many contradictions as possible, without being impossibly cluttered.

At this point the drawings were in the form of written descriptions. After circulating these to a number of people who checked them for factual accuracy and relevance, we gave them to an artist, Shirley McGrew, who rendered the drawings after lengthy discussions about appropriate medium and style.

In the second month of the third Crusade we gave a set of ten drawings to each tutor; they are now in use. It will of course be some time before we can assess them, but despite the above criticisms, results so far have been promising, especially with intermediate students.



#### PROBLEM-POSING PHOTO-CODES

Pending the results with the ten drawings, the Crusade's next plan was to produce a story according to the same criteria, to be used in a similar way. Studio produced colour photos are a popular medium with Punjabi farmworkers. A series of episodes would depict all aspects of life other than farmwork, including family life at home, shopping, services (doctor, hospital, unemployment insurance), cultural life (dancing, weddings, festivals), religious life (the Sikh temple), occupations which farmworkers' family members are likely to have (taxi driving, sawmill work, hotel and restaurant work), sports, children and school.

As with the drawings, they would attempt to encode as many contradictions and problems as possible; at the same time, we wanted to use a style that was upbeat and visually appealing, and to include the sources of pleasure, happiness and meaning in workers' lives. These photos would be staged; it would be difficult to obtain adequately dense, resonant photos using standard documentary procedures.

#### PROBLEM-POSING VIDEODRAMA

In 1985 the union completed a 25-minute videodrama, "Farmworkers Zindabad", a story based on the Hoss Mushroom

Farm strike in June, 1984. The artists, who had all participated in the strike from the beginning, tried to draw on the very popular Punjabi and Hindi movie in determining the form and style of the video. The premise was that the closer the video was to a popular Indian form, the more responsive audiences would be. Furthermore, the soap opera style, with its emphasis on endless discussion and tirelessly shifting point of view, is an ideal way to present many aspects of a political issue, and is an ideal starting point for problem-posing. The flashier elements, the song and dance, engage audiences emotionally at the same time as presenting another political viewpoint in their lyrics.

The video concerns four women who are dissatisfied with conditions at their mushroom farm and eventually, after much discussion, join the union. A fifth is in the hospital, injured because of unsafe working conditions. The range of attitudes and concerns among the women and their families provides the basis for the discussion which, punctuated by several very dramatic scenes, forms the backbone of the video.

There are several levels on which we intended ESL classes to examine this video. It is entirely in Punjabi with English subtitles, so initial comprehension is not a problem. First, students could consider the actions of the characters, and the vested interests and decisions which preceded them. Second,

they could consider the events in the story in light of their own interests and experiences: what would they do in a similar situation? What was their own situation? Third, and more removed from the issue of farmwork, they could consider the role of the medium itself: what does this video reveal about the medium it is trying to co-opt, i.e. the Hindi movie? Students might be able to reflect on the role of these forms in their lives in a new light.

As with other problem-posing materials, language acquisition/ learning activities and political discussion become inseparable. A very basic activity would be for students to retell or outline the story of the video in English. Initial factual questions could lead to more analytical ones, in the standard methodology of problem-posing. The narrative structure of the story is ideally suited to Language Experience activities, or for further class role-play, perhaps enacting scenes not presented in the video.

In order to fully exploit any video, it is useful to have a concrete point of reference once students are fully familiar with the video itself. Sybil Faigin, a former Crusade tutor, prepared a book of still photographs taken from the video: essentially a photo-novella of the story without the words. Students could supply words according to their level, based on their familiarity with the video. With the stills, the

instructor could refer to any part of the story with minimal confusion; the stills would facilitate problem-posing activities.

The practice of shooting stills from a video and arranging them in sequence can make any video much more accessible to beginning ESL students, and much easier to discuss. For intermediate students it would be a profitable way of adapting English videos such as "A Time to Rise", an NFB film about the beginnings of CFU, which otherwise might be too complicated.

## 9. CURRICULUM TOPICS

Despite the steady evolution of teaching approaches since the Crusade's beginning, the organization of material very consistently remained topical, even though the topics themselves evolved. That is, lessons predominantly focussed on certain information, such as minimum wage, differences between India and Canada, using the bus system, or on language needed in concrete situations, such as asking for street directions, and making doctor's appointments. Only rarely did lessons deal explicitly with grammatical or functional structures.

The original curriculum, A Time to Learn, had eighteen units based on the earlier student needs assessment results. These were as follows: 1) Introductions, greetings. 2) Phone numbers, counting from one to ten. 3) First and last names, addresses. 4) Counting from 10 to 20, asking directions in supermarkets. 5) Counting from 20 to 100, making and using a shopping list. 6) Dates, present and past continuous verbs. 7) Telling time, simple past tense. 8) Bus routes, calling for information about buses. 9) Street directions. 10) Banking. 11) Hourly rates of pay, minimum wage. 12) Field trip to bank. 13) Clothing and colours. 14) Department store situations. 15) Getting exchanges and refunds. 16) Parts of the body, injuries, doctor's appointments. 17) Danger and

hazard symbols, accidents, emergencies. 18) Work conditions, CFU.

It is noteworthy that there is little content in this list concerning the conditions of farmwork, relevant legislation, the union, or other political issues. There is also little content encouraging students to tell tutors about their own lives: for example, about Sikhism, Indian cooking, domestic life, problems faced by women, children and teenagers, holidays and celebrations, and comparisons of life in Canada and India. Both of these deficiencies are understandable considering how the curriculum was written; that is, it was based almost entirely on an assessment of what students wanted to learn, or perhaps to be given or fed, with minimal provision for dialogue, for encouraging students to talk about their own lives.

In the second year we continued using this curriculum, but encouraged tutors to listen carefully to their students and develop new lessons around whatever topics came up, including topics where the students provided the tutors with information rather than vice versa. We also encouraged tutors to discuss topics to do with farmwork. Unfortunately, at this time there were few materials or laid-out processes to make this possible.

All the same, tutors in the second year were able to expand beyond the original curriculum, encompassing such topics as family relationships and relatives, housework, life and hopes in Canada, children, teenagers, unemployment insurance, form-filling, job-hunting, human rights, racism, and sexual harassment of women. Topics relating to farmwork included wages, weights of flats, record-keeping, the sequence of crops, where crops go between farms and stores, and the labour contracting system.

In the third year tutors were again armed with the original curriculum, plus lists of topics which had proven most popular in the previous year, plus, more strongly than ever, the advice to listen to students' concerns. We also now had more materials relating to farmwork: the set of ten problem-posing drawings and the soap-opera style videodrama.

In all cases, the most recent approach to tutor training encouraged tutors to be flexible in applying the most effective approaches and techniques, which they were in the process of mastering, to the most salient topics, which they were continually in the process of identifying.

## 10. DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM-POSING

This section focusses on problem-posing as a means of political analysis rather than as an approach to language teaching. It is important to note that Freire's process of problem-posing originated in first-language literacy settings, and it depends on spoken fluency in order to be most effective. When used in second language classes, especially at lower levels, its use is severely constrained. Much of our challenge was finding ways of getting around these constraints.

In the first Crusade, problem-posing was not a part of either tutor training or any available materials, and as a result tutors made few attempts to use it. In the second year's orientation, we talked at length about problem-posing, specifically as a political organizing tool, but were still unable to provide any materials. Nonetheless, several tutors experimented with it throughout the Crusade.

At that time we were alternately viewing dialogue/problem-posing as a "technique" which could be a bridge between language learning and political awareness, and as a fundamental philosophical approach to education. Part of this confusion results from Freire's own use of the term "dialogue" to include both aspects. In fact, as I shall argue in Chapter



Five, the two are quite separate. Henceforth "dialogue" refers to an idealized philosophical conception of a kind of relationship, while "problem-posing" refers to a specific set of techniques of political analysis.

"Dialogue" thus implies a dialectical relation between the student's own concerns as a learner and the teacher's "agenda" as a tutor/organizer. It means that the tutor must start with the students' own concerns and experience. Tutors learned this in a very practical way: if they tried to impose political analysis on students, rather than waiting for students to bring up their own concerns, the students would simply change the subject, or be silent. One tutor interpreted this silence as saying, "Who the hell are you to tell us how bad farmwork is? Have you ever done it?" Yet the same tutor later had excellent experiences once the students decided for themselves to talk about the conditions of farmwork, and once they had established mutual trust.

We found that discussions of students' own experience, and establishing relationships with students, were essential prerequisites for dialogue. Anglo tutors had problems getting beyond this into more analytical discussion, though, because of language barriers. Even when they made themselves understood to students, they couldn't tell exactly how students were responding.

The Punjabi-speaking tutors had a major advantage in this respect. With their students they could analyze situations with much greater precision. It was less frustrating for tutors and students alike.

Everyone agreed that dialogue generally started with personal or family concerns and only later shifted to work or political concerns. This often happened unexpectedly, and in the words of one tutor, "the teacher's role was to be flexible enough to respond to the class's initiative and avoid accidentally stifling them, and only then to push the students further in their analysis."

The third year's tutor orientation attempted to develop a much more concrete, down-to-earth understanding of dialogue with the tutors. One tutor from the second year said, "I found the problem-posing business a bit abstract. I tried it, but in the end just got very blunt and said to my students, 'You don't make much money, do you? And your husbands sure don't do much around the house!' That worked fine." In fact, this tutor knew exactly the right moment to ask those questions.

Finally, one of our initial assumptions about the process of problem-posing was that it would ultimately resolve the "contradiction" between the union's needs and goals and those

of the students. In many cases, however, it simply made the differences between them more clear, a situation which I will discuss in Chapter Five.

#### 11. ORGANIZING ACTIVITIES

It was clear that everything in the ESL Crusade could relate directly or indirectly to union organizing; for organizing to be effective, however, and for all the activities which relate to it peripherally to be brought into focus, it was necessary to have specific strategies. In the second year we set up three activities which aimed directly at organizing, and which continued into successive programs.

Several classes made field trips to the union office where they met and talked with union staff, had a tour of the office, saw the film "A Time to Rise", and had a meal. For many it was their first contact with full-time union staff. It was a chance for them to ask detailed questions in Punjabi, and for the staff to identify their concerns and resolve any misunderstandings. It was also a useful exercise in language learning: one tutor made the trip into the elaborate Language Experience project already described.

On another occasion, a union representative took the film "A Time to Rise" to show to a class of two women, and found

that sixteen friends and relatives had arrived at the house to watch. The discussion that followed, in a mixture of English and Punjabi, was lively and enthusiastic and a number of people were prepared to join right there. It was especially good to see the family "organizing" their own friends and relatives: people CFU might otherwise have had no contact with.

The final activity of the second and third Crusades was the Graduation Celebration, attended by all tutors, nearly all students, plus families and friends. We again showed "A Time to Rise"; union staff, executive and students made speeches; tutors awarded certificates to their students; everyone ate and then sang and danced. Everyone's spirits were very high, and a number of people joined the union at this time.

Several points became clear after the first celebration. One was that it had left most students with a sense of being part of a large community project, rather than just being isolated classes receiving English instruction. Ideally this experience of the value and enjoyment of being part of a community would carry over into other of the union's activities.

This is a very important issue. Punjabi farmworkers' activities revolve heavily around their joint families, and on

a larger scale around the Sikh temples. Thus CFU, in trying to organize farmworkers, must plug as much as possible into these existing social networks, or else create compelling alternatives. For any farmworker to join the union, or take ESL, requires the entire family's approval and support, and thus the Crusade's celebration was an effective way of bringing together not only students but their families.

It also created a community (temporarily) independent of any temple, addressing not workers' economic concerns (as a union meeting would) but catering to their entire families on many levels, as any community must if it is to hold together. The sense of being part of a "Crusade" is possibly a motivating factor in learning ESL, except that the celebration did not take place until classes were over.

It is worth noting that some CFU leaflets listed "becoming part of a big family" as one of the benefits of joining the union. This is an important example of how the union tried to work within the existing structures and patterns of the Punjabi community, considering people's social and emotional as well as economic concerns.

The main difficulty with the above activities was that we did not carry them out systematically enough. Ideally a union representative would have visited each class at least once a

month, thus establishing a solid relationship with them by the end of the Crusade.

## 12. EVALUATION AND RESULTS

Evaluation of the first three years was based on the following: ongoing contact with tutors throughout the Crusades, contact with students and sporadic feedback from them throughout, observation of classes, final tutor workshops which focussed on evaluation of the program, interviews with each class once the Crusade was over, usually lasting an hour each, and interviews with each tutor, lasting two to four hours. All aspects of evaluation proved useful, the most thorough being the final tutor evaluations, which provided much of the data for this chapter. The student interviews were more problematic, partly because we were not familiar enough with what had gone on in each class to ask very concrete, specific questions, and partly because we were unable to translate specific terms about the teaching/learning process into Punjabi. The result was that information gained from student interviews was briefer and vaguer.

We did not evaluate student progress in any way except with anecdotes from tutors, and students' self-evaluation. Tutors were never supplied with any systematic schema for

evaluating students' progress, and this information as a result is vague. Likewise there was no formal evaluation of tutors' own progress, or of the effectiveness of different methods and techniques which they tried. Information in these areas comes from informal observation and self-evaluation.

Clearly there was room for more formal evaluation of the Crusade, particularly as we began to develop more and more innovative materials and could thus rely less on others' experiences and results. Unfortunately it is generally the first aspect of a program to be dropped when resources are limited. At the same time, each year's evaluation suggested important directions for improvement and change in succeeding years.

I will summarize the results of the first three Crusades in five categories: tutor evaluation, student satisfaction, students' progress in ESL, political results, and union evaluation. All of the conclusions in this section form the basis for proposals for the Crusade in the final chapter.

### 12.1 Tutor Evaluation

Tutors with few exceptions were very positive about their experience in the Crusade, particularly the opportunity to become familiar with their students and their families. Many

tutors became involved with other aspects of their students' lives, such as learning to cook Punjabi food, spending time with their children, and attending weddings and parties.

They also enjoyed spending time together and with the Crusade staff; at times these gatherings were very intellectually and politically charged. They were sometimes frustrated at their inability to teach effectively, their inability to organize, the scarcity of resources, and at the students' apparent low motivation and slow progress. At the same time, they gracefully accepted these as inherent limitations of the situation.

An implicit double standard operated at all times with tutors. That is, everything they did was understood by everyone to be within the ultimate limitation of six to ten hours per week of work. This context determined their evaluation of their own work as well as the coordinators' expectations and evaluations. In other words, they may have been frustrated with their teaching skills, but no one expected them to make the same investment in developing them that a professional full-time teacher would make.

Within the limitations of their commitment, the tutors were very good, but in the larger context of the Crusade's and students' needs, they were generally inadequate. Realizing



this forced us to question the basic set-up of the program.

After the first Crusade, no tutors returned for the second. Two tutors returned from the second to third, and six returned for the fourth. This increase was gratifying, but it still indicated a serious drain of continuity, skill and experience; although we were developing better training and support methods, to train new tutors from scratch each year limited the program's progress. It is worth noting that many of the tutors expressed hopes of maintaining friendships with their students but apparently few did. With language and cultural barriers, a friendship was much harder to maintain than a teacher-student relationship which had been supported by a structured setting.

## 12.2 Student Satisfaction

Students were consistently positive in post-Crusade evaluations, generally saying they were pleased with their progress and had learned more than they expected. This was probably politeness; better indications were continued attendance at classes, and continued attendance from year to year.

The few classes which fell apart, usually did so very early into each Crusade, clearly indicating dissatisfaction. Yet in several cases students who dropped out early in one Crusade returned the following year; this suggests that rather than simply being unmotivated, as they told us at the time, they were dissatisfied with their particular tutor or situation, but did not want to say so.

Eight out of eleven classes continued intact from the second to third year, and another eight continued into the fourth year. This indicated a high level of motivation, but not necessarily of satisfaction; students may have continued precisely because they hadn't learned what they needed to!

In any case, it was an essential task of the Crusade to recognize the complexity and fragility of motivation in

learning languages, and to develop and use the most effective and motivating methods possible.

### 12.3 Student Progress in ESL

Progress, as informally evaluated, was usually slow by language learning standards. A host of factors, all mentioned, may account for this: limitations of the program and limitations of the students themselves.

Students' improvement generally consisted of an increase in concrete vocabulary (nouns and verbs) and in a resulting ability to express more complex ideas in a wide range of language functions. Rarely was this matched with grammatical accuracy: verb endings, other markers, and "function words" such as prepositions remained noticeably absent, and rarely did students produce entire phrases, even simple ones, correctly. Even phrases which they had consciously memorized (e.g. from taped dialogues) were generally produced inaccurately, according to students' highly simplified senses of grammar.

These observations seem to support Krashen's distinction between language acquisition and learning, with students' progress fitting all the criteria of acquisition even in classes which have used many "learning" activities (1982:10).

It is important to note that for immigrants, the ability to communicate in a wide range of situations at the expense of accuracy is much more useful than a narrower range of accurate production.

The most readily observable progress was in basic literacy. Many students, through the program, learned first to read a repertoire of sight words, then learned the alphabet and the general phonetic characteristics of each letter, and finally learned to read and pronounce new words based on knowing those phonetic characteristics. This enabled them to read a wide range of signs, titles, and other short phrases, which is extremely useful in daily life. They were also able to write basic information, such as filling out forms, with an understanding of what each word and letter meant.

There were also a number of very practical indications of students' progress, however, which is the best measure of student satisfaction. A number of women obtained driver's licences; a number learned to use their husband's bank accounts or set up their own; some began to phone their friends and most became much more versatile on the phone. Many started to use the bus system independently of men and children. One woman passed the citizenship exam; another started taking messages for her son's business, resulting in more contracts for him and income for the family. There were

instances of husbands beginning to cook and wash dishes so their wives could study, and one group of women began making their husbands take them on sightseeing trips around Vancouver; until the program they had rarely left their neighborhood. Among the intermediate students, some wrote resumes, and one man obtained a new job. These were changes which we believed to be a result of the program.

#### 12.4 Organizing Results

Before the first Crusade, the general expectation was that most students would already be strong union supporters, and that the program would mainly enable them to better put their beliefs into practice. In fact many of the students did not start out as union supporters; tutors often expressed surprise at how little students knew about the union, even when someone in the family was already a supporter.

It became clear that the Crusade's greatest potential lay in organizing students who were not initially union supporters, although this potential was still a long way from being reached by 1985.

What does "organizing" mean in the context of the Crusade? We hoped that workers would join the union and support CFU in a range of ways: by attending rallies and

demonstrations which concerned them, by directly and indirectly working to organize their co-workers, and ultimately by forming bargaining units through certification votes and defending those units. In short, they should be aware of the risks and benefits of organizing, and willing to take these risks.

There were other ways supporters could help: contributing to strategy and tactic development, decision making, providing money, food, transportation and a range of other support.

We also hoped that that ESL Crusade would increase the union's credibility; workers should see it as an organization concerned with the daily lives of its members as well as with long-term political goals. The Crusade would bring workers into contact with CFU who might otherwise have avoided it. However, these benefits would only be peripheral if workers did not see the union representing their fundamental interests.

The concrete results were that a number of students each year joined the union directly because of the Crusade; either before starting, at a class visit to the CFU office, at an organizer's visit to the class, or at the end-of-year celebrations. Still, in terms of the number of total hours

invested in the Crusade, this number is small: union staff could easily have organized as many workers simply by visiting random families of farmworkers.

Beyond signing up members, it was difficult to measure students' willingness to participate actively in CFU because there were simply too few union activities for them to participate in. Ideally, tutors could regularly have said, "Hey, there's a rally at this farm for unpaid wages tomorrow. Can you come? We'll pick you up at eight." Or: "Everyone who's been hired for this summer by Lotkasot Contractors is signing up this week. As soon as enough people sign up, we'll apply for a certification." With specific, frequent actions that workers could participate in, with immediate, clear potential gains, enthusiasm would likely have been greater.

There were a number of other inherent limitations on tutors' ability to organize; these related to their limited ability to communicate, and their limited familiarity with CFU, organizing, and the Punjabi community.

### 12.5 Union Evaluation

Union staff were surprised after the first Crusade at how limited both ESL and organizing results had been, largely because of unrealistic initial expectations. The results of

the first year, like every successive year, enabled us to make changes which gradually produced more results.

Ultimately, however, CFU's main concern was with organizing, and it continually treated the Crusade as a peripheral aspect of its strategies, and failed to invest the necessary organizing resources in the Crusade. Likewise, the Crusade was not set up in a way that union staff could make maximum use of it, resulting to an extent in a vicious circle. Despite more union-related teaching materials and methods, the Crusade threatened to shift toward a more "liberal" role of focussing exclusively on students' own concerns and needs.

### 13. REVISED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE CRUSADE

It is now clear that the goals of the Crusade as originally stated did not fully reflect the way the Crusade worked or the situation of farmworkers. For example, even fluent English could not eliminate workers' dependence on labour contractors, because workers depended on them for a range of things besides interpreting: notably finding workers a rapid succession of jobs through the season, and taking them to and from work.

The second objective ("to enable them to understand health and safety regulations, warnings and symbols") was



unrealistic simply because there were no regulations; workers asked to apply pesticides might have access to warnings and symbols, but they did not have the right to refuse unsafe work. In view of this, what concerned workers needed to develop was an analysis of the risks and dangers, a political analysis of why there were no regulations, and strategies for changing this situation.

The third objective ("to enable them to understand and assert their rights as laid out in the B.C. Employment Standards Act, Labour Code, and other relevant legislation") was legitimate but in practice no tutor ever tried to broach these subjects, nor did the program ever develop any suitable ESL teaching materials. On the other hand, CFU consistently made this information available in Punjabi, both printed and spoken; considering the complexity of the laws and the need for precise understanding, plus the beginning level of most students' English, this was the best route to take.

The final objective ("to enable them to participate in the entire spectrum of Canadian life") was well-meant but too vague to be useful as an objective.

In view of this, we developed a revised set of objectives in May 1985:

- 1) BASIC ENGLISH: to equip workers to use English as much as needed in their daily lives, both written and spoken, according to the needs which they themselves determine, and to develop a foundation for further training in, or acquisition of, English.
- 2) To encourage workers to critically analyze their situation as farmworkers, in light of their own interests, and to seek and enact solutions to the problems they identify, such as: lack of health and safety regulations, the labour contracting system, the on-farm cabin system, the lack of minimum wage, illegal piece-rate procedures, the lack of sanitary facilities, and employers' failure to regularly pay wages.
- 3) For those workers who are concerned with improving their working conditions, to familiarize them with the role of Canadian Farmworkers Union and to enable them to participate as fully as their interests allow.
- 4) To promote understanding between the Punjabi community and the mainstream of Canadian society.

#### 14. THE NATURE OF OUR LIMITATIONS

A critical understanding of the ESL Crusade, as it functioned by 1985, consists partly of analyzing the

limitations which constrained it. These fell into four main categories: first, limited resources available to the Crusade in terms of money, teaching materials, and teaching skill; second, limitations on the students' ability to learn, because of their own background, motivation, and living situations; third, the union's limited resources for making use of the Crusade as an organizing tool; finally, and perhaps most importantly, the union's limited ability to organize farmworkers at all, because of its own internal and external constraints.

Funding for the Crusade always consisted of short-term grants, often not lasting even the duration of each program, and while usually covering coordinators' salaries it was often inadequate for obtaining even minimal materials or covering tutors' expenses. Not knowing if the program would survive from year to year was discouraging in terms of developing new materials. The fact that the coordinators had to spend up to 40% of their time each year simply raising money to survive was crippling.

Blanca Facundo lucidly describes other problems with depending on government grants: the need to conform to government requirements at the expense of distorting one's own objectives, the need for multiple descriptions and evaluations of the program (we called them "inhouse" and "outhouse"

reports); these conflicts drain one's time and energy (83).

This chapter demonstrates that many aspects of the Crusade were administrative: developing materials, publicizing the program, recruiting and training tutors, supervising, evaluating: these were only support activities for the actual time tutors spent with students. But because we used volunteers and because there was a turnover of tutors from year to year, these activities demanded a large proportion of time. To a greater extent than most other ESL programs we had to start from scratch, which was politically and educationally exciting, but very draining on limited resources.

Likewise, the arrangements with tutors had many limitations. We had sixteen hours to train them in "radical" approaches to education when some had no grounding in any ESL methodology, and similar time constraints operated throughout the program.

I have mentioned the constraints on students themselves and their limited progress in earlier chapters. It is still important to remember that each Crusade offered only 48 hours of instruction, about half the hours of one year of high school French, and that even under ideal circumstances, progress would have been limited.

Motivation is a complicated issue because it is an interplay of students' own intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation such as the possibility of a better job, family expectations and support, readiness of access to English, response to the teaching situation, time available, and so on. However without specifying causes, the following observations are fairly general: some students actively sought out classes but many waited for the union to come to them; older students may have been curious about Canadian society but they had little desire or opportunity to acculturate; students were willing to "be taught" but were unlikely to take initiatives on their own or to do homework; self-confidence in their ability to learn was often very low; families were usually very supportive of members "being taught" in classes but did little to encourage students outside of class time, and probably had low expectations, especially if the students were older women.

At the same time, motivation is a key aspect of any language teaching; even highly motivated students may be quickly discouraged by teaching which does not provide additional motivation. Although it was not our job to ram ESL down the throats of students who truly did not want or need it, it was our job to motivate them as much as possible; to see low motivation as purely the students' own limitation,

especially given their backgrounds, would have been an abdication of responsibility.

In 1985 we vacillated between two contradictory points of view: first, that students' own limitations had created a ceiling for the program, which we have already reached; thus better-trained tutors or better materials would make no difference to students' progress. The second was that we had reached a ceiling in terms of our present format: that is, using volunteer tutors who were generally trained from scratch each year, we had reached the limit of their effectiveness. There is evidence for each of these viewpoints and it is not conclusive; I prefer the optimism of the second possibility, which I will discuss in Chapter Six.

The next two sets of limitations related purely to the organizing aspect of the Crusade. Tutors were limited in their effectiveness as organizers as well as ESL teachers; however the union was unable to make full use of the Crusade as an organizing tool. Notwithstanding the organizing strategies described earlier, union staff simply did not visit classes regularly enough. Such visits, which should ideally take place once a month to each class, were particularly vital because of tutors' inherent limitations as organizers. A related problem was that because students were not recruited

with "organizability" as a criterion, some classes immediately appeared to the union to be unorganizable.

The final limitation, which became more and more important in our analysis, was CFU's ability to organize farmworkers at all. In Chapter Three I discussed the external constraints: B.C.'s current labour climate and the general difficulties of organizing farmworkers. This is our ultimate limitation, it is a very serious one, and it applies to any educational program operating within a political context.

V. FROM PRACTICE BACK TO THEORY: REFORMULATING OUR  
PHILOSOPHY

1. INTRODUCTION

After three years of working to organize farmworkers through ESL, one principle of Freire's grew more and more solid: the need for a powerful theory of education, a basis of analysis which could lead to action. This analysis could not limit itself to ESL and education; it must encompass the entire spectrum of the Farmworkers Union's strategies, and when basic contradictions appeared, we had to understand them. To reformulate our view of Freire at this point, based on our experience, was not an idle academic luxury; it was a political necessity. Blanca Facundo expresses this very well:

If we find that we are or were unclear about the meaning and objectives of the theory upon which our educational activities were or are being based, and have accepted it as inherently relevant to our work, what kind of clarity can we have when evaluating the process and outcomes of our programs? Particularly when we are supposed to be acting and critically reflecting on our actions! (29).

We must first return to the basic assertions and distinctions on which Freire bases his pedagogy. These are so sweeping, so fundamental, that they resist the kind of critically-based analysis that North Americans are used to,



and can slip into an enthusiastic reader's view-of-things quite readily.

## 2. FORMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

One of Freire's most basic distinctions is between people with "semi-transitive consciousness" and people with "critical consciousness". In other words, he maintains there are people who (wrongly) believe culture, or more specifically, "the system", is fixed forever, and those who (correctly) understand it is man-made and potentially subject to critical analysis, social action, and change.

It is more likely that most people operate on the following lines: certain situations they believe they might change, if circumstances were right; other situations they see as theoretically changeable but practically not under any likely circumstances, while beyond that, they take others to be given, unchangeable, like nature, without necessarily even thinking about them.

Fatalism exists when people do not even analyze the possibility of change, and no doubt it may creep into the very core of people's lives if they are oppressed. Thus I argue that people may be able to conceive of change in some

situations but not others, and they may be unable to conceive of change where it is most badly needed in their own lives.

But it is questionable whether people exist who are unable to conceive of any kind of social change. In the case of farmworkers, many seem fatalistic about the prospect of improving conditions, yet the same people reveal themselves to be highly politicized on issues such as Khalistan, often believing that huge changes can be accomplished through militant action. Their fatalism concerning farmwork may be real, but it may also hide careful analysis of the costs and benefits of trying to change.

When Freire goes on to write that the potential to gain critical consciousness is the only thing giving meaning to the lives of oppressed, objectified people, it suggests another possible reason why radical educators may accept these assertions uncritically: because however substantiated they may be, they are very convenient. Given our goal to organize farmworkers, it was very useful to equate "critical consciousness" with "seeing things our way". Likewise it was gratifying to explain people's refusal to join the union in terms of their "semi-transitive consciousness" or "internalized oppressor consciousness". Seen in this light, Freire's idea of "vocation" - that man's ontological vocation is to become as fully human as possible - makes joining the union almost a

moral imperative, allowing educators, if they so choose, to indulge in a dangerous sense of moral superiority. this is not Freire's "fault", of course, but it may explain in part how readers react to him.

### 3. OPPRESSION

Freire makes a further black-and-white distinction between "oppressed" and "oppressors". This is probably shaped by his Latin American origins, since there it has been much easier, particularly before the rise of a middle class, to make a clear-cut distinction, which in North America would be artificial. Here is a summary of the complexities arising with regard to farmworkers: many of them were landowning peasants in Punjab, well-off by Indian standards, who may have hired migrant laborers themselves. In Canada they became landless laborers, more subject to exploitation, poorer relative to the national average, yet with greater absolute buying power here than in India, and probably with a belief that opportunities for upward mobility were greater here. In other words, although they may perceive themselves as oppressed and exploited they also see Canada as a "land of opportunity", compared to Punjab, both in terms of immediate gain and long-term prospects.

Peasants in Brazil may have nothing to lose except their lives by struggling for change: by comparison, farmworkers here have materially more to lose and perceive a greater interest in the status quo, an interest which is reinforced by North American mythology - "If you are clever and work hard you can make it". This relates to the general ambiguity of class in North America, where upward mobility is possible often enough to sustain this view.

Indeed, there is a certain amount of upward mobility among farmworkers; many Punjabi farmowners began as farmworkers when they arrived in Canada, then became labour contractors, then obtained mortgages on their own farms, and now exploit workers as ruthlessly as their non-Punjabi counterparts. Clearly there is a class division here; yet it can be very flexible, and is often bridged by family ties: many farmworkers have relatives who own farms, and these ties, which owners may take full advantage of, complicate the organizing process. Within the context of larger Canadian society, workers and owners may have close common interests in issues such as racism, blurring the distinction further. Finally, we must consider the class and caste divisions which the community has brought from India as well as those indigenous to North America.

A more prevalent example of simultaneous oppression and oppressedness concerns the position of Punjabi women, whose lives are much more circumscribed than those of men. Ironically, women from more "oppressed" (poorer) families may have more independence than women from wealthier families simply because the former cannot afford to keep women at home. The most independent, assertive woman in CFU had been a widow for 35 years, but she was also viewed with some suspicion by other farmworkers because of that very independence.

This "double oppression" which women face is of course similar in third world countries but in the Punjabi community immigration may make the situation worse. Many women complained in our classes that they were more socially isolated here than in India, that the traditional village women's social networks did not form here. In Canada, the domestic oppression of Punjabi women sometimes seems to outweigh the consequences of economic exploitation of farmworkers as a whole, and is a major limitation in organizing an industry consisting largely of women. In reformulating a realistic philosophy of change we must seriously consider all these aspects of oppression, and in putting that philosophy into practice our strategy, if not our tactics, should be to confront as many as possible together.

#### 4. DIALOGUE VERSUS PROBLEM-POSING

Throughout the ESL Crusade we grappled with the question of what dialogue was, or could be, in our context, swinging between problem-posing as a specific technique and dialogue as an (idealized) relationship between people. As Chapter Four reflects, we tried to pursue both aspects, and found that language and cultural differences imposed severe limitations on both.

Freire himself considers the two aspects completely intertwined, stressing the role of love, trust, humility and faith on the one hand, and the specific goal of naming and transforming the world on the other (1981b:77). One danger of using one term to span such a wide range of meaning is that it becomes open to abuse; in a course led by Freire himself, "dialogue" came to refer to virtually any discussion or lecture, and even silence became "silent dialogue" (1984a).

It now seems useful to make a clear distinction between dialogue-as-relationship and problem-posing-as-technique. Nina Wallerstein partly accomplishes this by distinguishing between dialogue and problem=posing; the latter is a process which "directs students to name the problem, understand how it applies to them, determine the causes of the problem,

generalize to others, and finally, suggest alternatives or solutions to the problem (1983:17).

Both Wallerstein and Freire see dialogue as leading inexorably to problem-posing: "the goal of the dialogue approach is to encourage critical thinking about the world" (1983:16). Our view by 1985 was that a relationship of dialogue was always a desirable ideal, but that problem-posing was only one possible technique which could be used within this relationship, and the two must be kept separate. "Dialogue" implies that the teacher respects the students' experience and starts from their view of the world, respects the students' agendas, and sees education as a two-way process. It also implies that in so doing, educators may use techniques other than problem-posing.

Considering problem-posing apart from dialogue enables us to question Freire's definition of knowledge as a dialogical process of understanding the causes and effects of situations. Although initially we accepted this, it began to seem to be a narrow definition of "knowledge". Even if we believe in this as a kind of knowledge, it is insupportable to reject the other possibilities, such as knowledge-as-something-static and knowledge-as-a-commodity. Furthermore, if we accept Freire's terminology we are left with no way to discuss these other kinds of knowledge, because he has de-named them.

5. BANKING VERSUS DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM-POSING

This leads into Freire's distinction between banking and dialogue/problem-posing, which of all the definitions presented so far has the most serious implications for teachers because it most directly affects our practice. How many "Freirian" teachers have dutifully tried to eliminate banking from their teaching, and measured their success as teachers accordingly? Language teaching is a clear instance where banking, in the basic sense of "imparting information" is necessary: you can draw experience out of people, but you cannot draw language out which they don't have.

Freire's blanket condemnation of banking is wrong, although his analysis is an understandable response to the authoritarian education methods prevailing in neo-colonial Brazil. Banking is concerned with information (including knowledge-as-a-commodity and knowledge-as-something-static) whereas problem-posing is a process of analyzing aspects of that information: a "meta-understanding" of where it came from, why, and how. These are complementary, not contradictory. Freire had the luxury of bypassing banking because he was mainly concerned with drawing on and analyzing "information" his students already had, that is, their own experience. But when students need to master bodies of information outside their own experience (such as a foreign



language, or medicine, or economic theories), banking becomes necessary.

It need not have all the negative characteristics Freire attributes to it, and assumes are inherent to it. Once students have information, or even as they are in the process of mastering it, they can readily problematize it. It is true that many approaches to education do not encourage students to do so, and as such they may be very oppressive, but the banking process in itself need not be.

The very term "banking" connotes the view of students as "objects to be filled" yet good education practice can move beyond this: for example, science, law and even language students are mastering established bodies of information, yet in laboratory and case-study teaching methods, which fit my banking definition, they are actively analyzing evidence and making conclusions all along.

The negative features Freire associates with banking are indeed negative; they are simply not inherently part of banking. Teaching can indeed view students as objects; it can be oppressive. Likewise, the process of problem-posing can be readily abused to foist specific conclusions on students, and for political educators with an active interest in those conclusions, the temptation is very great. One finds this

encouraged in Themes for Learning and Teaching with its laid-out "conscientization objectives" and the guidance that "The conscientization objectives form one of the most important elements in the content guide and, if the teacher is personally convinced of the values which underlie them, consciousness-raising among the students will follow (vi).

One also finds it in the texts of Freire-influenced education systems such as Nicaragua's, and tutors in the Crusade have felt the same temptation. The questions then becomes: is it the process which is inherently liberating/oppressive, or must we also consider the content? To what extent can dialogue ever be separated from political ideology, either liberating or oppressive? To these questions, and other aspects of dialogue, we now turn.

## 6. THE ROLE OF A POLITICAL AGENDA

The question of educators' political agenda has probably created the greatest divisions among North American practitioners of Freire. On a continuum, one finds educators at one end who view problem-posing as a politically neutral process in the sense that it reflects students' own concerns entirely, without the teacher's politics entering the discussion. Besides "neutering" Freire's own philosophy, this interpretation seems unlikely to lead students to action under

any circumstances, and implicitly supports the status quo. At the opposite end of the continuum are programs which specifically aim to persuade students of particular viewpoints, if not action following from them, such as Themes for Learning and Teaching just mentioned, with its "conscientization objectives". Kidd and Kumar discuss more extreme examples, such as a program designed explicitly to promote birth control (27-36).

CFU's program fell somewhere in the middle, and critics on the conservative end accused it of being manipulative or self-serving while those preferring more directive persuasion saw it as too liberal; both criticisms clearly reflect the vested interests of their proponents. As this study has made clear, CFU had to have its own agenda. Nina Wallerstein's work is in principle more liberal than CFU's in that it does not reflect the agenda of an organization, and is more fully concerned with the students' own immediate problems. Deborah Barndt's approach is more directive in that it encourages a specifically Marxist analysis of students' situations, but she has no organizational agenda either. I shall discuss the limitations of this further on.

A more extreme form of persuading or convincing is "manipulation", likely to be associated with propaganda. Critics are more likely to accuse CFU's Crusade of

manipulation when they disagree with the content than when they agree with it, regardless of the process itself.

Freire himself states that "convincing" is an inherent aspect of a dialogical relationship and of problem-posing, and makes a clear distinction between it and manipulation by saying that "convincing" always leaves the subject the option not to be convinced (1984a).

This distinction is significant in situations where educators as leaders actually have power over the students. For example when Freire discusses education in post-revolutionary Guinea-Bissau, he relies entirely on the good intentions of the leaders to maintain a relationship of dialogue with the students: "The dialectical unity between theory and practice, action and reflection stimulates creativity and is the best guard against the dangers of bureaucratization (1978:147).

In this situation the subjects may not have the option not to be convinced, a problem which has led Jim Walker to comment that "Freire's politics threaten to turn back on and attack the very movement toward humanization and liberation it is designed to promote" (1981:121). For CFU there is not this risk because it does not have any power over farmworkers, and it is unlikely that manipulative propaganda (despite the

temptation!) would have any significant effect on workers joining or becoming active in the union.

We can conclude that there is a dialectical relation between the need to persuade students that one's own point of view is the most valid, and the need to encourage them to think freely; to be "liberating" rather than oppressive, to draw conclusions based on their own analysis, including their own interests.

It is important to acknowledge that just as problem-posing can never be a neutral process, so it can never lead to a truly "objective" view of the world, as Freire has sometimes implied. This is because ultimately our most basic assumptions are mythical, even if they are expressed, as Freire likes to do, dialectically. Manfred Stanley writes that "there is no way in which intellectual criteria can be used to demonstrate conclusively the timeless validity of one set of moral axioms against all others. This understanding has led to a new respect for the role of myth in social life" (45). Likewise, Gleeson asks, "What does he mean by 'authentic', 'true', or 'real' consciousness? To what extent can knowledge be anything other than ideological?" (369). This is not an excuse for sinking into complete relativity, but for maintaining, in Kowalowski's words, a " . . . consciously sustained reserve of uncertainty, a permanent

feeling of possible personal error, or the possibility that one's antagonist may be right" (231).

7. PRAXIS AND PROPAGANDA

Whatever the nature of the problem-posing process, one cannot assume that analysis or reflection will automatically lead to political action. Freire implies that people, once they understand the nature of their oppression will automatically engage in praxis, that is, they will struggle to overcome it. At least he does not discuss factors which might prevent this from happening.

One intervening factor is the price of struggle compared with the cost of being oppressed; this will in turn be mediated by cultural, emotional and psychological factors. Some cultures have a strong tradition of fighting oppression, others of adapting to it. Freire's critic Manfred Stanley puts it in simpler terms: fighting back may just be "too much trouble" (45).

It is easy to put down those who do not fight by saying they have "internalized oppressor consciousness" but this is overly simplistic and ignores the possibility that their analysis may be very shrewd, though perhaps motivated by

different priorities than the radical's. It also ignores the fact that "adaptation" may be an active strategy.

One must also question Freire's basic opposition between reflection and action. There is no question that action is essential to any kind of political change, that reflection by itself will lead nowhere. However the way Freire has intertwined these terms seems unduly artificial, and makes for very slippery definitions. Any activity is both reflective and active depending on the context one views it in. The distinction between "reflection" and "empty verbalism" depends more on what results from the process than from the nature of the process itself. As for "action" versus "mindless activism", who can presume to know what is really motivating someone participating in a particular activity? Again, though, this miniature paradigm is appealing in that it creates an ideological framework where action is the only valid outcome.

Our experience in CFU makes it clear that people are not moved to action solely by intellectual means, even if the action is in their own interest. Political organizing requires a much broader spectrum of techniques: coaxing, prodding, cajoling, nudging, persuading, and joking, many of which are undialogical. Here propaganda does have a role. A picket line is not a place for problematizing.

Saul Alinsky, a master American grass-roots political organizer, writes that "Before men can act an issue must be polarized. Men will act when they are convinced that their side is 100% on the side of the angels and that the opposition are 100% on the side of the devil" (78). This observation puts organizing closer to the realm of propaganda than of simply "persuading". Yet, Alinsky argues, unless organizers are to become political fanatics (which is a poor tactic, if nothing else), they must reconcile the all-or-none view with a more problem-posing view.

What I am saying is that the organizer must be able to split himself into two parts - one part in the arena of action where he polarizes the issue to 100 to nothing, and helps to lead his forces into conflict, while the other part knows that when the time comes for negotiations that it really is only a 10% difference - and yet both parts have to live comfortably with one another. Only a well-organized person can split and yet stay together. But this is what the organizer must do (78).

Our experience in the past three years has made clear the need for dialogue in education and other factors, including propaganda, in organizing. The two can and must co-exist, side by side. In a peculiar way, each supports the other. Dialogue and problem-posing in education will give workers a chance to critically reflect on the process of organizing, including the means such as propaganda that have been used. They will examine why propaganda and other kinds of persuasion are needed, who uses them, who responds to them and why. This should not cause workers to reject organizers' techniques;



rather, because they understand them, they should respond consciously and enthusiastically. Alinsky's metaphor of the individual split into two parts can apply to all politically active farmworkers, not only to organizers.

#### 8. THE ROLE OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

One notices in reading the work of Freire, as well as Barndt and Wallerstein, that none mention the action that their students actually undertook as a result of their "critical consciousness". Thus they beg the question: to what extent does problem-posing education lead to real action? It is vital that accounts of experiments in problem-posing account for the concrete results of the process as well as the theory behind it.

We can consider Freire's literacy work as taking place in two distinct contexts: pre-revolutionary (e.g. Brazil), and post-revolutionary (Guinea-Bissau). The principal difference between them, for our purpose, is that the post-revolutionary context had a structure, that is, the revolutionary government, that "conscientized" people could plug themselves into. There was an organization available through which they could take action.

The relation between dialogical education and political action is still too problematic in his work. With reference to Brazil, he writes that it was best to do literacy work in areas where popular rebellion was visible rather than still buried; in other words, where change was already happening (1978:111). Likewise, in the literacy campaigns of Guinea-Bissau, Nicaragua and Cuba, the education process followed popular revolution rather than instigating it.

Barndt's and Wallerstein's ESL classes parallel Freire's account of Brazil in that they are operating as independent teachers who do not represent any political organization. The problems they have encoded are extremely diverse, even though they are all germane to the lives of immigrants; this reflects the diversity of their students. Furthermore, although they and their students discuss problems which are inherently political, there is no evidence in their curriculums of any local political organizations which students might turn to, or of any ongoing political activity, aside from instances of "direct action" such as petitioning for street lights. However individually "critically conscious" people are, for significant change to occur they must form organizations, whether short-lived or long-term. This takes a great deal of time and effort.

There are certain parallels between the Farmworkers Union's ESL Crusade and Freire's "post-revolutionary" work. Specifically, farmworkers in CFU's program had an organization ready-made to plug into, if they chose. The issues were much more clearly defined than in Wallerstein's case; the strategies for change are largely laid out. The framework was there. In this sense, the farmworkers were a number of years "ahead" of Nina Wallerstein's students, in that it took a number of years to organize CFU to 1985 level.

The existence of a well-developed political organization shapes the relationship of dialogue and the problem-posing process, just as the presence of a "revolutionary" government shapes it. The potential for action is much greater, if the organization is functioning well, and indeed it is probable that a well-functioning political organization is vital to social action. On the other hand, the danger of dialogue degenerating into a bureaucratized exercise of power by the leaders is greater once they gain control.

Saul Alinsky's metaphor of the "split personality" is useful here: people must commit themselves fully to the organization in order to accomplish anything, yet at the same time they must be able to distance themselves from it and view it critically.

9. CLASS SUICIDE, CLASS INTERESTS, AND THE NEW CLASS

Throughout this paper I have emphasized the distinction between the interests of CFU as an organization and those of its members. The union is confronted with the fact that although Anglo support remained strong in 1985, widespread support from farmworkers themselves was probably the lowest it had been in five years. There were a number of external reasons for this: the increasingly harsh labour climate in B.C., the failure of the union's organizing efforts (as opposed to its lobbying successes), and increasingly effective organizing against the union by growers. If the union itself could not win the support of workers, then the ESL Crusade, to the extent that it represented the union's agenda, could not be an effective means of organizing either.

In analyzing this problem, it is useful to consider the overlap between the union's interests and the workers' interests. Ideally it should be complete, allowing for the complex and problematic relationship between what the workers see as their own interests and what the organizers see as the workers' interests. There is no question that a union has its own interests as an organization: it provides jobs to its staff and the wide range of benefits that such jobs entail. However this is a given, and the same could be said of any organization.

The important question, then, is the extent to which the union's interests are different from the workers'. This brings us to Freire's notion of "class suicide", which is central to the idea of dialogical relationship. According to him, upper or middle-class leaders and supporters of popular movements give up their own class interests and come to the side of the oppressed, sharing their interests. The resulting "sameness of interests" creates an equality which makes a relationship of dialogue possible. Freire cites Engels, Castro, Guevara, and Amilcar Cabral as examples of this.

CFU's Punjabi organizers reflected this: all were college or university educated, with a very different view of the world from most farmworkers, although they may have been raised on farms in Punjab. Likewise, most of our tutors were university-educated. The organizers, with no exception, had dedicated their hearts and minds to organizing farmworkers; their commitment to the union was very strong. Although the tutors gave fewer hours to the Crusade, they were often involved in other similar projects at the same time.

Had any of us, then, committed "class suicide"? In terms of the Crusade, what was the basis to our claim to being "on the side of the students?" What really motivated us?

The problem with Freire's notion of class suicide is that it is purely an act of will, or goodwill, reversible at any time, and his explanation of it is in purely idealistic terms. In the Crusade we often spoke of tutors "choosing" to side with the farmworkers, and asked no further questions. We have always recognized that this "siding" might be temporary, and might be confined to specific issues: for example few tutors could side with prevalent male farmworkers' opinions on the role of women in Sikh families.

If we have really abandoned, even temporarily, our own class interests to side with the "oppressed", then according to this view we must have done it out of idealism, out of a desire to help farmworkers, and here the sharp distinction made between "radical" and "liberal" motives for tutoring breaks down, and the criticisms of liberal "helping" being elitist and condescending applied to us as well. The only distinction we are left with is a radical strategy of changing the system versus a liberal strategy of helping individuals, and the criterion of radicals "siding with" the workers seems increasingly an ideological myth rather than a reality.

One "test" of the motive of pure idealism is to ask: "If you are really concerned with poor living and working conditions, why don't you put your efforts into a third world country where conditions generally make those of farmworkers

here look very good indeed?" Although this argument could be used as a red herring justifying exploitation within Canada, it also illustrates what happens if we follow Freire's idea to its conclusion: pure idealism poses too many contradictions to be a satisfactory motive.

An interesting alternative is suggested by Blanca Facundo, who discusses the work of Alvin Gouldner in relation to Freire and "radical" education programs in North America. She argues that on the left it is "a taboo to ask a question as simple as: 'And what are your class and self interests?' unless one is prepared to listen to and accept a very ideal platitude or evasion" (38).

Citing Gouldner, Facundo argues that "we" are part of the "New Class": a cultural bourgeoisie whose "capital" is culture and skills rather than money, which appeared in the U.S. at the time of World War I, and began to challenge the monied class on issues such as "academic freedom, protection of consumer rights, expertise in public policy development, reform movements for 'honesty in government', ecology, and even women's liberation . . . ." (40).

She supports Gouldner's argument that both welfare and socialist states are political strategies of the cultural New Class, as is professionalism, which is "a tacit claim by the

New Class to technical and moral superiority over the old class", as well as "a bid for prestige within the old society'" (41).

The crux of this argument is that for the New Class, a political liaison with the working class is useful, and to the extent that a socialist state is established, the liaison continues, except for the ever-present risk that the New Class simply replaces the old class in the name of working class interests, and becomes, in Freire's term, "bureaucratized".

Facundo asks: "Who are we, anyway, and what moves us? What do we believe in? Are we members of the New Class? Or just kind, loving people prepared to give everything, including our lives, for the oppressed?" (43). One can rephrase this to ask: if we accept that New Class interests largely shape our actions, what place do idealism, kindness and lovingness have? Is idealism only a myth, in the sense of being a metaphor we live by? If so, it is a vital one, because from such masters of political radicalism as Saul Alinsky, Byron Kennard, and Karl Marx, Facundo cites highly idealistic rationales they have given for their work (39).

This theory offers explanations for many of the contradictions in CFU's ESL Crusade. For example, most farmworkers have distinctly materialistic values, reflecting



their rural middle-class origins, which are reflected either in their choice of houses, cars, furniture, and TV's, or in a preoccupation with savings and financial security. Tutors sometimes were initially put off by this, either expecting more obvious poverty or a more evident concern with struggle rather than security. Then, however much the tutor wanted to be "on the side of" the workers, the inevitable question lurked: "How can you tell us to risk our financial security, our jobs, our mortgage by joining the union? You may not value those things, but you've given them up voluntarily (or else not given them up at all)." The converse question which students asked, usually at the beginning of a program, was "Why do you come here to teach us if you don't get paid? Are you crazy?" Both questions reflect a clear sense of class difference, an assumption that people generally act in their own interests, and arguably the people asking these questions had an intuitive understanding of the New Class's role which we could learn from.

The "New Class" analysis offers one explanation of the gap between the union's agenda and students' own concerns: the objectives of organizing farmworkers into a political entity fits with New Class political strategy much more than does simply helping them learn English and find better jobs. It also explains instances where the union appears not to be taking workers' self-perceived interests seriously, seeing

them as "internalized oppressor consciousness" or simply wrong values. We, of course, believed that it would ultimately be in the workers' own interests to organize: they in the meantime, seemed not to. Taking that as given, another contradiction emerges concerning Freire and our educational ideology: if tutors did want to "side with" the students, they discovered they must increasingly abandon the union's agenda and focus on the students' own personal and language concerns. This led to tutors feeling conflict between their commitment to the union and to their students, and while the model of a "dialectical opposition" works in theory, in practice it pushed the Crusade more and more toward liberalism, making it less potentially effective as an organizing tool. The only solution was for the union to bring its strategies more into line with the genuine, widespread concerns of the community. From a New Class point of view, this was likely to be in the union's best interests as well.

Amidst all this discussion of "interests", it is vital to consider: who defines "farmworkers' own interests"? We must distinguish between workers' self-perceived interests (based on what they say), and CFU's view of how they should perceive their interests. Saying that "people act in their own best interests" becomes a tautology if we define interests simply as "what people do".

Obviously the union cannot respond only to workers' immediate self-perceived interests: it must challenge them, using those interests as a starting point, and expand their conception of them. This is where persuasion, discussed earlier as a vital aspect of dialogue and problem-posing, comes in.

If one accepts the theory of the New Class, to what extent is it useful to try to incorporate it into one's day to day world-view and practice? What would the ESL coordinator say to a prospective tutor who said, "I want to promote my own New Class interests by building a stronger alliance with the oppressed"? The mythology of idealism, of "siding with", is very powerful, very ingrained, and perhaps necessary for sustaining our work. While it is unlikely that many people would let their idealism lead them away from their class interests, within the framework of those interests idealism may still be a powerful force which we cannot discount. At the same time, it is vital that we be able to transcend it when necessary, in order to critically analyze our work.

The idea of "dialogical relationship" is enhanced rather than negated by considering New Class interests, because dialogue becomes a realistic rather than an idealistic relationship. A tutor/organizer who wishfully believes his or her interests to be the same as the students' is hardly in a

position to critically evaluate those interests. Tutors who more realistically acknowledge their own roles are more likely to establish rapport with workers and win their respect than those who present themselves as would-be saints, or as pseudo fellow-workers. Evidence for this is that many Crusade students simply assumed that tutors were well-paid by the union, and refused to believe they were volunteers even after being told many times. It might have been a better tactic to say that tutors were being paid.

Thus we can add a new criterion for dialogue: it is possible to the extent that the interests, individual and class, of the participants run parallel.

Finally, it is worth noting that within CFU there was a range of class interest. The union executive were mostly farmworkers, while the Punjabi staff and organizers were educated and would have a wide range of New Class career options were it not for racism and cultural and language barriers. Their position was more ambiguous: they were a New Class within the Punjabi community, but were often confined to working class roles if they sought employment in mainstream society. One would expect to find a similar ambiguity in other oppressed minority groups.

Besides having a great deal of support from the labour movement, whose leaders often had come up through the rank-and-file, CFU had always depended on community support from the educated Anglo left, churches, and other Anglo community organizations which are least ambiguously "New Class". The 1985 union fundraiser drew in 500 Anglos; the union convention of the same year open to all farmworkers attracted only 40. This makes CFU unique in the labour movement, which historically has largely fought its own battles, and it raises a question: in whose interest was CFU operating? If we accept the New Class model even partly, it appears that the union appealed more to the interests of Anglo supporters than those of farmworkers. While Anglo support was vital, it would be ultimately counterproductive if it led the union, in its strategizing, away from the interests of farmworkers themselves.

10. DIALOGUE AND PROBLEM-POSING BETWEEN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

We always assumed that Freire, in his literacy work in Brazil, "had it easier" because he had a language and culture in common with his students. For practitioners adapting his philosophy and methods to ESL, two problems emerge again and again: first, the limitations on combining dialogue and problem-posing with second language teaching, and second, the

limitations faced by those who are unfamiliar with the language and culture of their students. It is noteworthy that both Wallerstein and Barndt speak fluent Spanish, the language of their respective students in the U.S. and Peru.

This is not a simple issue, though, and shared culture is no panacea. Freire stresses that he and his literacy teams had to learn "the Brazilian peasants' way of speaking, which with its concreteness and richness of metaphor was virtually a different language" (1984a). CFU organizers had similar experiences, particularly with translation: leaflets and documents translated into Punjabi by "professional" academic translators often proved unintelligible to farmworkers and had to be rewritten more colloquially by union staff.

Within any society one finds a variety of cultures and subcultures co-existing, determined by such factors as ethnicity, religion, class, and sex. Thus we can speak of Punjabi culture, Sikh culture, working class culture, men's and women's culture, and the role that overarching "mass culture" plays in all of them. Every individual is a product of, and participant in, several cultures simultaneously, since they overlap and are interconnected. Our participation is shaped partly by our upbringing, partly by experience, personal character and preference. If a typical farmworker/ESL student is a Sikh Punjabi woman of the Indian

Peasant class, does she have more in common with: an upper class Punjabi man or a working class Canadian woman? With a Punjabi atheist who rejects Sikhism or a Christian who empathizes with monotheistic faith?

The complex, ambiguous nature of cultural identification was driven home to me when I returned to my former high school, predominantly middle class and overwhelmingly Anglo, with Sarwan Boal, a Punjabi CFU organizer, to discuss the Punjabi community, farmwork, and the ESL Crusade with a Grade 11 sociology class. The class was surprisingly hostile, and politically and emotionally I was siding with Sarwan and the interests of farmworkers and the union, yet, in many other respects I was part of that class's culture: I intuitively knew what they were thinking, why they seemed hostile, why they reacted as they did; in short, I sensed many layers of undercurrents that Sarwan, as an outsider, may not have, and they reflected values which had indelibly influenced me even if I rejected them.

Thus while language is the first barrier to dialogue and problem-posing, culture, in all its ambiguous aspects, is everpresent as another. Cultural differences of every kind limit what participants can take for granted; neither tutors nor students can "read between the lines", and the possibility of misunderstanding skyrockets. Neither is it enough to

consider cultural differences as simply neutral, for within a larger culture there is often systematic hostility between different subcultural groups. One Crusade tutor, a young upper-class Hindu woman, found her common language an asset in teaching a class of elderly Sikh men, but rapport was limited greatly by students' ingrained attitudes towards Hindus, women, and the Indian upper class. Generally, however, in terms of organizing students, explaining CFU to them, understanding and helping them with their problems, Punjabi tutors proved more effective. On the other hand, in terms of encouraging understanding and trust between Punjabi and Anglo culture, and overcoming racism, Anglo tutors may even have an advantage, although this must be considered peripheral to the goals of the Crusade.

The better students and teachers understand each other, the more possibility there is for dialogical relationship and problem-posing to take place. Neither is simply a rational act of will; intuitive understanding plays a major role.

There is encouragement for overcoming these barriers: both dialogue and problem-posing, to the extent that they succeed, lead to greater mutual understanding, probably better than any other educational process. Since much of people's thinking and motivation are culturally and unconsciously shaped, the more tutors initially understand about the



culture, its ethics, religion, mythology and history, the better. This is one subject of the next section.

#### 11. A LITTLE ANTHROPOLOGICAL LEGWORK

Nina Wallerstein outlines a useful methodology for gaining an understanding of students' culture outside of class time, which centres around "listening": "Listening simply means employing our observational skills with a systematic approach similar to anthropological fieldwork. 'Problem-posing' listening also assumes that everyone - students and teachers - can participate on an ongoing basis" (12).

Her suggested techniques include observing body language, walking through students' neighborhoods and taking photographs, attending social rites and celebrations. These ideas are excellent; my only criticism is that she makes it sound easy, whereas effective observing requires either special talent or extensive training, and she implies it can be done quickly without being superficial. Also many of her suggestions depend on students having good language skills or a bilingual tutor as an interpreter.

Wallerstein has asked as much as the individual teacher, working alone, could probably do, and tutors in the CFU program, as part-time volunteers, have even less time.

However there is a vital role for much more extensive systematic research by the full-time coordinator who then summarizes it and presents it in usable form to tutors, who use it in conjunction with their own intuitive judgement and skills. We have done this all along within the limitations of our resources, but this section outlines much broader, long-term possibilities.

In terms of written material, it is useful to consider both academic and popular sources. Examining the distinctive and well-documented history of Sikhism provides insight into current issues such as the Khalistan movement, or the Sikh tradition of bravery: where they manifest themselves, where they do not, and how they relate to other peasant traditions within Punjabi culture such as a strong work ethic and value placed on economic security. Local sociological studies can provide information on economics of the community, and problems faced by younger generations. A very rich source is fiction, which when read critically can provide insight into every aspect of a culture, including such otherwise elusive areas as mythology, personal relations, attitudes toward work, leisure, food, cleanliness/ contamination, birth, death, the body, bodily functions, sex, gesture, humour, and so on. Furthermore, in literature these themes are developed organically, grounded in a real context rather than academically distilled.

Popular materials seen by the workers and their families themselves are also excellent. Most prevalent, and presumably influential, are Hindi/Punjabi movies, comics, and children's picture books dealing with Sikh history, the materials used by Punjabi schools for children in the Sikh history, the materials used by Punjabi schools for children in the Sikh temples, political and religious tracts, and two Punjabi-language weekly newspapers. Popular visuals include devotional images of the ten Sikh gurus and a variety of illustrated Punjabi wall calendars.

Of course it is not enough to study these in isolation, or take them at face value; it is essential to find out what they mean to people, why they are so compelling. These are tools, background for visits to homes, temples, for conversations and group study sessions.

Besides providing general background, this research process is one source of specific themes or problem-posing topics making up the ESL curriculum. The ultimate source of themes is of course the students themselves: as Wallerstein writes, "A Freire process entails constant listening for students' responses to ensure our own learning and the relevance of the curriculum for each class" (20). Again, however, taking students' statements at face value is not always enough, and background understanding provides an

important head start and complement to getting to know them.

Other ESL Freire practitioners such as Deborah Barndt and Dian Marino offer valuable techniques for participatory research with students. Barndt has developed methods using photo-stories (1981, 82), and Marino has done the same with drawings (1981).

This "participatory research" process can also be done outside the classroom, where members of the community collectively analyze their own situation, to solve problems they have identified, rather than relying on the work of disinterested outside academics. This process, which relates closely to Freire's work, is clearly outlined by Budd Hall (1984). At least one Punjabi collective, Vancouver Sath, was doing research and publishing articles, as well as drama and literature, on a wide range of community concerns in 1985; their findings were feeding directly into the work of a number of community political organizations besides CFU.

It is evident that the volume of background work suggested here is beyond the scope of the ESL Crusade itself: in a sense the small size of the Crusade would not justify it. The Punjabi Community is too young to have extensively examined itself, so materials were not readily available. This means a maximum of coordination would be necessary, so

that resources could be pooled to do the work which was most necessary first. Some of this undoubtedly fits in with the concerns of the ESL Crusade.

## 12. FALLING TREES AND ROCKING BOATS

Paulo Freire tells a story of some Brazilian peasant villagers who confronted him: You are here now, teaching us to cut down trees; but where will you be when the trees fall?" (1984a). Sometimes in the ESL Crusade, when we thought learning English had no effect on students' lives, we were reminded in a grim way that it did. A student was beaten by her husband for attending class; stoically she continued coming. Another husband, drunk, violently confronted a woman tutor whose students had begun complaining among themselves that they wanted more independence.

These are isolated examples, but they illustrate that "liberatory education" can be a powerful process with negative as well as positive consequences for participants. For women, these examples expose the contradiction that while Punjabi men may support their struggle as farmworkers, they less often support their struggle as women, and recognizing that the two are linked, they may refuse to support CFU as well.

More importantly, they show that tutors, as outsiders, usually cannot be there "when the trees fall", whatever their good intentions. Women students who have female tutors and discuss such domestic issues as marriage, divorce, housework, driving, and childraising may take these very seriously; if their discussing them in front of their husbands causes domestic problems, the tutor, having "rocked the cultural boat", may never find out. We have usually learned of such problems only through third parties.

I have argued already that dialogue and problem-posing should be persuasive rather than manipulative. A Punjabi woman realizes the probable consequences of actions she takes even if the tutor does not, and it is vital that problem-posing enhances awareness of consequences. The possibility of manipulation does arise, however, in explaining how much support CFU can provide to people who take risks either at home or at work, and support is an important factor in weighing the costs and benefits of risks. Organizers and educators cannot possibly take responsibility for the consequence of students' actions, but we do have a strong ethical and political responsibility to make clear what support we can provide once actions are taken, and under exactly what circumstances we can and cannot provide it. Failure to provide support is often invoked by anti-unionists as a condemnation of unions; however the same criticism

appears in left-sympathetic works such as Helen Potrebenco's Taxi!:

B.C. Tel employees were on strike and one morning set up a picket line at the bottom of the SFU hill. Bradley didn't cross it and was fired for not coming to work. He didn't worry, thinking that the union would see he was re-hired, but they only laughed and said they hadn't expected anyone to honour that picket line (6).

The criticism here, in the context of the novel, is not of Bradley's action, it is of the union's failure to make clear the limits of its commitment to its workers and supporters.

CFU consistently provided strong support to workers who took action on the job. However, it was not in a good position to support women who faced conflict within their families, partly because much of its active support came from farmworking men. Yet these were the conflicts most likely to arise as a result of the ESL Crusade. Likewise, Anglo tutors were not individually in good positions to provide support if domestic crises developed; they simply did not know the community well enough. In general, all they could do was make the extent of their own commitment clear from the start.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The Canadian Farmworkers Union began the ESL Crusade in 1982 with the twin goals of teaching English to farmworkers and organizing them. The coordinators between 1982 and 1985 brought with us an academic knowledge of Freire's educational ideology and methods and a desire to "put them into practice", and in keeping with Freire's own admonition, we were prepared to modify them as much necessary in light of our experience.

This thesis has addressed the most fundamental question of that work; specifically, in the context of CFU, was it possible to operate a Freire-based program that would simultaneously teach ESL and organize? What modifications would we make to Freire's theory and practice in the course of the program?

In Chapter Two I outlined Freire's ideas as we saw them before our experience suggested any new interpretations. Chapter Four documented putting these ideas into practice. The program's ESL methodology began by falling back on behaviorist assumptions about language learning which resulted in audio-lingual materials and procedures, put little emphasis on farmwork issues and gave little opportunity to experiment with any of Freire's methods. By the middle of the second Crusade we had shifted to a comprehension and acquisition-



based theory of language mastery, exemplified by Krashen and Terrell's "Natural Approach".

This new paradigm allowed us to use a range of methods which were compatible with Freire: Language Experience, problem-posing, photo-stories, visual codes, and videodrama. Each of these interconnected methods allowed us to combine Freire-style discussion and political analysis with sound language teaching procedures.

However, a number of limitations still prevented us from achieving the ideal by the end of this study in May 1985. Of greatest theoretical concern were the language and cultural barriers between Anglo tutors and Punjabi students, which meant that even with ideal procedures and materials which facilitated communication in every way short of using interpreters, dialogue would be undermined by these barriers. This is a fundamental problem for any Freire-inspired ESL teacher who is not bilingual.

Other problems also extend to programs beyond the ESL Crusade: students' idiosyncratic motivation, inadequate overlap between students' concerns and those of the union, and the union's inability to offer short-term returns in proportion to the risks it needed members to take. Finally there is the vicious circle of inadequate time to train tutors

preventing us from trying and evaluating new methods and materials.

Of course one can present the organizing and language learning results of the ESL Crusade as extensive or minimal depending on one's expectations. However, given the initial hopes of union staff, and our own hopes as practitioners of Freire, results on both counts were less than anyone had expected. This still does not put Freire's own ideas into question, as possibilities remained for improving the Crusade at the end of this study in 1985. At that time we made the following recommendations, which are applicable to any program of this kind:

- 1) Although students' intrinsic motivation may be a given, it is important to develop in-class strategies which maximize extrinsic motivations.
- 2) As CFU is able to develop organizational strategies (apart from the Crusade) which appeal more to workers, and frequent, result-producing actions that workers can participate in, it should be easier for the Crusade to fulfill its organizing role.
- 3) Change the Crusade's format to using full-time teachers rather than volunteers, with each instructor teaching a number of classes. This would enable resources currently being put into tutor recruitment, training and supervision to be put into teaching, and

would also leave staff in a better position to develop and evaluate methods and materials. None of the political ESL programs we used as models, such as Barndt's and Wallerstein's, have relied heavily on volunteers. Even in the Cuban and Nicaraguan literacy crusades the tutors, though not "professional", were working full-time for the duration of the programs. I now believe this difference is a qualitative, not just a quantitative, one. This format is somewhat more expensive in terms of wages, but in terms of training and materials costs it would be cheaper.

There is no question that using volunteers generated a great deal of publicity and support for the program and for CFU; it gave the Crusade the romantic aura of being a "mass movement" even if it was small in size. However, this is ultimately peripheral to the goals of the Crusade: its central task must be educating and organizing the workers themselves, and all other considerations must be subordinate to this. The Crusade does not exist for the gratification of its Anglo volunteers, or its Anglo coordinators.

- 4) To the greatest extent possible, the program should hire Punjabi tutors and ideally a Punjabi coordinator. Even if CFU were to keep the volunteer

format, this would be vital. If these tutors were unfamiliar with the union to begin with, the potential for them to be effective as organizers would still be much greater, and if they were properly trained as ESL teachers, they would probably have more potential to teach effectively as well. There would also be a greater opportunity for them to be involved with the union in other ways. Although bridging the Anglo and Punjabi communities and overcoming racism by using Anglo tutors is important, it is peripheral to the objectives of the ESL Crusade and of CFU.

- 5) CFU as a whole must, if it wants to benefit from the Crusade, involve its organizing staff as fully as possible in the Crusade.
- 6) Crusade staff should attempt to select students with some criterion of "organizability" in mind. In other words, if it appears from the outset that a group of students are unlikely to ever join the union, then they should not be registered.

Through 1985 the program accepted anyone, even set up entire classes where no one was apparently a farmworker. This may have had certain benefits in terms of general goodwill toward CFU; it also inflated the size of the Crusade. The union's

ability to recruit students was always the limiting factor in the program's growth; there were always more tutors available than classes.

So far none of these conclusions have brought Freire's own ideas into question, and the preceding proposals would bring the Crusade close, if anything, to the ideal of Freire-based practice. At the same time, our experience in the Crusade did encourage reformulation of a number of Freire's theoretical concepts, and these may be useful for future efforts to apply Freire's work in North America.

Certain ideas did not change: that educational theory and practice should continually reshape each other, that education is never politically neutral, that it can play an important role in movements for social change, and that students' own experience and world view are a vital starting point. Most important is the view that people can analyze their political situation in terms of their own interests through dialogue and problem-posing.

We did find that Freire's simple dichotomy of oppressed versus oppressor did not fit in the case of farmworkers, but that the two are intertwined in complex ways. Educators must understand that the ambivalent relation that immigrant workers

often feel toward the status quo; they see much to gain from it even if they feel exploited in certain ways.

In terms of teaching practice, it is useful to break Freire's "dialogue" into two parts: "dialogue" as an ideal relationship between teachers and students, and "problem-posing" as a specific methodology of political analysis. We also found that "banking", which Freire condemns as the antithesis of dialogue/problem-posing, has an important role when students must learn new information as opposed to analyzing what they already know. Teachers and students can then problematize the new information. Only when this is not done does banking risk becoming oppressive. Teachers who try to avoid banking altogether may severely limit their students' access to new information.

Another aspect of dialogue and problem-posing is its twin temptations of liberal "neutrality", focussing entirely on students' concerns without challenging them, and manipulation, focussing exclusively on the political organization's concerns. The former is ethically legitimate but pointless for organizing, while the latter is unethical and probably does not promote constructive organizing in any case. Yet North American Freire practitioners often swing one way or the other. The ideal middle ground is a dynamic balance between the students' concerns and the organizational agenda. Then,

through problem-posing, students consider their own vested interests in relation to the possibilities offered by the organization. In general I have treated students' political action more explicitly as an outcome of "analysis of vested interests" than Freire does.

The last question is that of the teacher/organizers and their own motives in the process. While Freire attributes moralistic and idealistic motives to them, I have used Gouldner's "New Class" argument as put forward by Facundo to consider teachers' vested class and individual interests. Recognizing these puts teacher/organizers on a more equal and honest footing with students and is more likely to win their respect and so facilitate dialogue and problem-posing. The same kind of honesty should lead teachers to make clear how much support they and their organizations can give to students who decide to "rock the boat".

The future of the Farmworkers ESL Crusade is still bright, simply because basic format changes offer so much potential success. If they are implemented, these changes will open up further research possibilities, since there should be a greater range of results to study. The same research could be equally profitably done in other contexts.

There is much work to be done developing ESL materials that combine effective language teaching with problem-posing, and more testing of the materials already developed for the Crusade is required. This could lead to a more general model of effective materials which would be applicable in a wide range of situations.

In order to develop these materials effectively for a specific group, one must do the "anthropological legwork" described in Chapter Five. The approaches I outlined are introductory and would profit from testing, modification and expansion. A specific aspect of this, identification of students' own generative themes, has already been researched by Millard (1986), but other areas, in terms of ESL, remain unexplored. Again, we need both specific information and general guidelines.

A question affecting all ESL students, but particularly immigrant women who may be ghettoized, is language-learning motivation. Developing procedures for determining exactly what motivates students and how lack of intrinsic motivation may be counterbalanced with motivating teaching approaches would contribute to the success of many programs. A related question, of interest to Freire practitioners with specific political agendas, is identifying what really motivates people to political action. It is facile to assume that rational



analysis is always enough, and the role of forces which appeal to people's emotions need to be clearly understood.

At the same time, teachers need to be keenly aware of their own ethical position in order to feel comfortable engaging students' emotions as well as their intellects. We tend to react to words like "propaganda" and "manipulation" as red herrings, which distorts our sense of how far we can push our students in the dynamic relation between our agenda and theirs. An excellent project would be to consider the implications of the two terms with regard to Freirian practice; it would provide a shining beacon along the narrow path between political impotence and oppressive dogmatism.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### EDUCATION AND ESL

- Alinsky, Saul D. 1972. Rules for Radicals. New York: Vintage.
- Arnold, Rick, and Burke, Bev. 1983. A Popular Education Handbook: an Educational Experience Taken From Central America and Adapted to the Canadian Context. Toronto: CUSO/OISE.
- Asher, James J. 1983. Learning Another Language Through Actions: the Complete Teacher's Guidebook. Second edition. Los Gatos, CA: Sky Oaks.
- Barndt, Deborah. 1981. Just Getting There: Creating Visual Tools for Collective Analysis in Freirian Education Programs for Migrant Woman in Peru and Canada. Working Paper #7. Toronto: Participatory Research Group.
- Barndt, Deborah, Cristall, Ferne, and Marino, Dian. 1982. Getting There: Producing Photostories with Immigrant Women. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Bell, Jill, and Burnaby, Barbara. 1984. A Handbook for ESL Literacy. Toronto: OISE Press/Hodder and Stoughton.
- Bowers, C.A. 1974. Cultural Literacy for Freedom. Eugene, Oregon: Elan.
- Dixon, Carol, and Nessel, Denise. 1983. The Language Experience Approach to Reading and Writing. San Francisco: Alemany Press.
- Draft Union Report on Adult Education Program. 1982. Typed report. Canadian Association of Industrial Mechanical and Allied Workers (CAIMAW), Lower Mainland Council.
- Duncombe, Brenda, ed. 1979. Themes and Tools for ESL: How to Choose Them, How to Use Them. Toronto, ESL Core Group.
- English for Work: English as a Second Language for Adults. 1982. Victoria: British Columbia Ministry of Education.
- Facundo, Blanca. 1984. Issues for an Evaluation of Freire-Inspired Programs in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Rio Piedras, P.R.: IRCEL/Alternativas.

- Faigin, Sybil. 1985. Basic ESL Literacy from a Freirian Perspective. Unpublished major M.Ed. essay. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, Department of Language Education.
- Freire, Paulo. 1970a. "The Adult Literacy Process as Cultural Action for Freedom", Harvard Education Review 40:2 (May 1970): 205-225.
- . 1970b. "Cultural Action and Conscientization", Harvard Educational Review 40:3 (August 1970): 452-477.
- . 1973. "By Learning They Can Teach", Convergence 6:1, 78-83.
- . 1978. Pedagogy in Process: the Letter to Guinea-Bissau. Translated by Carman St. John Hunter. New York: Seabury Press/Continuum.
- . 1981a. Education for Critical Consciousness. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. First published in Portuguese, 1965/68. New York: Continuum.
- . 1981b. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. First Published in Portuguese. 1970. New York: Continuum.
- . 1984a. "Education and Empowerment." University of British Columbia: Education 508 course, July 1984.
- . 1984b. Interview with Canadian Farmworkers Union staff, Burnaby, B.C., July 13, 1984.
- . 1985. The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation. Translated by Donald Macedo. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.
- GATT-Fly. 19893. Ah-ha! A New Approach to Popular Education. Toronto. Between the Lines.
- Gleeson, Denis. 1974. "'Theory and Practice' in the Sociology of Paulo Freire", Universities Quarterly 28 (Summer 1974): 363-371.
- Gouldner, Alvin. 1979. The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class. New York: Seabury/Continuum.
- Grabowski, Stanley M., ed. 1972. Paulo Freire: a Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Publications in Continuing Education and ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education.

- Hall, Budd. 1984. Participatory Research: Popular Knowledge and Power. Toronto: Participatory Research Group.
- Jupp, T.C. and Hodlin, S. 1975. Industrial English: an Example of Theory and Practice in Functional Language Teaching. London: Heinemann Educational Books.
- Kidd, Ross, and Kumar, Krishna. 1980. "Co-opting Freire: A Critical Analysis of Pseudo-Freirian Adult Education", Economic and Political Weekly 16 (January 1980): 27-36.
- Kowalowski, Leszek. 1971. Marxism and Beyond. Great Britain: Paladin.
- Krashen, Stephen. 1982. Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Krashen, Stephen and Terrell, Tracy. 1983. The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom. San Francisco: Alemany Press.
- Kozol, Jonathan. 1978a. Children of the Revolution: a Yankee Teacher in the Cuban Schools. Preface by Paulo Freire. New York: Delta.
- . 1978b. "A New Look at the Literacy Campaign in Cuba", Harvard Educational Review 48 (3): 341-377.
- . 1980. The Night is Dark and I am Far From Home. New York: Continuum.
- McBride, John. 1980. A.B.C./Construction and General Labourers' Union Curriculum Project. Construction and General Labourers' Union Local 602.
- Mackie, Robert, ed. 1981. Literacy and Revolution: the Pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Foreward by Jonathan Kozol. New York: Continuum.
- Marino, Dian. 1981. Drawing from Action for Action: Drawing and Discussion as a Popular Research Tool. Working Paper #6. Toronto: Participatory Research Group.
- Matthews, Michael. 1981. "Knowledge, Action and Power", in Literacy and Revolution: the Pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Edited by Robert Mackie. New York: Continuum.
- Millard, Joanne. 1986. The Investigation of Generative Themes in ESL Needs Assessment. M.A. Thesis. University of British Columbia.

- Monette, M. 1979. "Needs Assessment: A Critique of Philosophical Assumptions", Adult Education 29: 83-95.
- Oller, John W., Jr., 1983. "Some Working Ideas for Language Teaching", in Methods that Work, pp. 3-19. Edited by John W. Oller, Jr., and Diane Richard-Amato. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- . 1985. Interview, University of Victoria, January 28, 1985.
- Richards, Jack C., and Rogers, Ted. 1982. "Methods: Approach, Design and Procedure", TESOL Quarterly 16 (2): 153-168.
- Selman, Mary and Mrowicki, Linda. 1984. A New Start Canada - A Functional Course in Basic Spoken English and Survival Literacy. Agincourt, Ontario: Dominie.
- Shor, Ira. 1980. Critical Teaching and Everyday Life. Boston: South End Press.
- Stanley, Manfred. 1972. "Literacy: the Crisis of a Conventional Wisdom", in Paulo Freire: A Revolutionary Dilemma for the Adult Educator. Ed. Stanley M. Grabowski. Syracuse: Syracuse University Publications in Continuing Education and ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Education.
- Sunrise of the People - Teachers' Guide. 1980. Republic of Nicaragua Ministry of Education.
- Terrell, Tracy. 1983. "The Natural Approach to Language Teaching - an Update". In Methods that Work - a Smorgasbord of Ideas for Language Teachers. Edited by John W. Oller and Patricia A. Richard-Amato. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Themes for Learning and Teaching. 1979. Toronto: ESL Core Group.
- Trebbles, Maggie, and Wallace, David. 1981. English Language and Basic Literacy Training in a Trade Union and Work-related Format. North Vancouver: Capilano College.
- Walker, Jim. 1981. "The End of Dialogue: Paulo Freire on Politics and Education", in Literacy and Revolution: the Pedagogy of Paulo Freire. Edited by Robert Mackie. New York: Continuum.

Wallerstein, Nina. 1983. Language and Culture in Conflict - Problem-Posing in the ESL Classroom. Don Mills: Addison Wesley.

FARMWORK AND THE CANADIAN FARMWORKERS UNION

Agricultural Pesticides and Health Survey Results. 1982. Abbotsford: Matsqui Abbotsford Community Services.

----- . 1979a. Labour Code. RSBC 1979 ch. 212.

----- . 1979b. Workers Compensation Act. RSBC ch. 437.

British Columbia Laws, Statutes, etc. 1981a. Employment Standards Act. RSBC 1981 ch 10.

----- . 1981b. Employment Standards Act Regulations. B.C. Reg. 37-81.

----- . 1983. Employment Standards Amendment Act. RSBC 1983 ch. 16.

Bains, Amar. 1979. "Conditions of Farm Work". In Teacher's Guide on Farm and Domestic Workers. Vancouver: Labour Advocacy and Research Association/Legal Services Society.

Bulletin. 1980-1983. Canadian Farmworkers Union Local #1. All issues.

Cameron, Ann, and McRae, Brian. 1982. Labour Law. Second Edition. Public Legal Education Series. Vancouver: People's Law School.

Eaton, Rex. 1983. Pesticides in B.C. Agriculture. Report submitted to A.L. Reigert, Director, Industrial Hygeine, Workers Compensation Board, February 1983. Available from Workers Compensation Board of B.C.

Farmworker. 1980-1983. Publication of the Canadian Farmworkers Union. Issues 1-5.

Farmworkers and Pesticides. 1982. Report submitted to Consultative Committee on IBT Pesticides. Canadian Farmworkers Union.

Forsythe, Linda. 1979. "A Short History of Farm Work". In Teachers' Guide on Farm and Domestic Workers. Vancouver: Labour Advocacy and Research Association/Legal Services Society.

Handbook for Pesticide Applicators and Pesticide Dispensers.  
1980. Province of British Columbia, Ministry of  
Environment, Pesticide Control Branch.

Ministry of Agriculture and Food, Province of British  
Columbia, 1983 Mushroom Production Guide. Victoria:  
Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

Sandborn, Calvin. 1981. "It Smacks of Something Other Than a  
Coincidence." Vancouver Sun, October 7.

Steeves, John. 1982. Your Safety and Your Rights: Workers'  
Compensation, Health and Safety in B.C. Public Legal  
Education Program. Vancouver: Legal Services Society of  
B.C.

Support B.C. Farmworkers. 1980. Booklet. Vancouver:  
Farmworkers Organizing Committee.

Taylor, Ronald B. 1975. Chavez and the Farmworkers: a Study  
in the Acquisition and Use of Power. Boston: Beacon  
Press.

A Time to Rise. 1981. (16 mm film.) National Film Board of  
Canada.

#### FARMWORKERS ESL CRUSADE

Faigin, Sybil, and Jackson, David. 1986. Farmworkers  
Zindabad - Tutors' Manual. Photos by Craig Condyl-  
Berggold. Burnaby, B.C.: Canadian Farmworkers Union.

Farmworkers are Workers Too! An Introduction to the Canadian  
Farmworkers Union. Leaflet. Vancouver: Canadian  
Farmworkers Union.

"Immigrant Workers Tutored by Union". 1984. Vancouver Sun,  
16 October: F-10.

Jackson, David Lee. 1985. "Union Activism: Punjabi Theatre  
in B.C.", Fuse IX:3 (Fall) 10-14.

----- . 1985b. "Living and Learning", Fuse IX:4 (End of  
1985): 32-35.

----- . 1985c. A Time to Grow: a Set of Ten Problem-  
Posing Drawings for the Farmworkers ESL Crusade - Tutors'  
Guide. Drawings by Shirley McGrew. Burnaby, B.C.:  
Canadian Farmworkers Union.

"Literacy a Crusade", 1984, Vancouver Sun, 9 January: A-3.

Steeves, John, and Boal, Sarwan. 1982. A Time to Learn - a  
Report on the Needs Assessment Survey for the ESL Crusade  
of the Canadian Farmworkers Union. Vancouver: Canadian  
Farmworkers Union.

A Time to Learn: an E.S.L. Crusade for the Canadian  
Farmworkers Union. 1982. Vancouver: Canadian  
Farmworkers Union.