

REPRODUCTION AND RESISTANCE IN THE HAMILTON WORKER EDUCATION  
CENTRE

REPRODUCTION AND RESISTANCE  
IN THE HAMILTON WORKER EDUCATION CENTRE

By

KATHERINE WATSON, B.A.

A thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

(c) Copyright by Katherine Watson, October, 1989

MASTER OF ARTS (1989)  
(Sociology)

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: REPRODUCTION AND RESISTANCE IN THE HAMILTON WORKER  
EDUCATION CENTRE

AUTHOR: Katherine Watson, B.A.

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Carl Cuneo

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 195

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the contradictions of the reproduction of, and resistance to, relations of inequality in the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. Data were collected through participant observation at an instructors' training session, through in-depth interviews with instructors, staff members and sponsors of the programme and through a content analysis of the curriculum. The focus of my research was two-fold. One was the way in which the practices in the programme contributed to the re-creation of gender, race and class relations. The other focus was the way in which resistance to these relations occurred and was facilitated through a form of popular education. It is through this study that the inherent contradictions in this workplace literacy/English language programme become clear.

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank those people at the Centre for all their help during difficult times. To **Carl Cuneo**- if it wasn't for your help, support and humour through all of this, I never would have finished. To **Liz** for your continuing support and for making me think. To **Barry**, thanks for your encouragement, love and your editing skills. To **Matt, Heather, Marie, Kathi, Luis** and **Deanna** for your help and support during the worst of it. Also thanks to **Janet** for some of the typing work. And last but not least to my Dad & **Mum**-- for being my friend, for always saying what I needed to hear and for believing in me.

"If we're really serious about putting together a program that has the potential for defining a new way or even beginning to mobilize, is it not also necessary for us to break down the contradictions in our own ways of working? How can we expect other people to take the jump and try to fight if we don't do it?"

-Centre Instructor.

Literacy is not the only problem nor the only solution.

-H.A. Graff.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Theories of Reproduction and Resistance	11
Chapter 3: Methodology	36
Chapter 4: Labour, State and Capital	50
Chapter 5: Hamilton Worker Education Centre	82
Chapter 6: Teaching Method and Curriculum	113
Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion	160
Appendix I:	166
Appendix II:	180
Appendix III:	187
Appendix IV:	188
Bibliography:	191

## Chapter One: Introduction

In recent years, there has been an explosion of interest <sup>1</sup> in the literacy and language skills, or lack thereof, of Canadian adult workers. Most of the literature on the subject of literacy, language and communication in the workplace falls into two distinct categories. The first deals mostly with "how to" actually teach classes in literacy and English as a second language at the workplace and/or how to develop curriculum for these classes (Belfiore and Burnaby, 1984; Bell and Burnaby, 1984). The second area is mostly from a business perspective, focusing on the economic costs of illiteracy and inadequate communication skills of workers to society in general and to business in particular (Foegan, 1984; Koen, 1985; McGowan, 1983; McGraw, 1987).

Despite this literature, there have been no systematic attempts to locate these workplace programmes in the greater social context or to employ any of the theory developed around the contradictory nature of education and literacy training as one form of education (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1983; Graff, 1987; Gramsci, 1971; McRobbie, 1978; Willis, 1977). Most of this theory



centres around the role of education in re-creating social relations of inequality while at the same time creating resistance to these relations and creating alternative means of knowledge and education.

Throughout this thesis I use the theoretical concepts of both social reproduction and resistance. By social reproduction I refer to the ideological process by which relations of production are constructed and maintained. This not only involves the training of the next generation of workers with the "correct" attitudes, values and norms for production work, but also the allocation of certain types of work, or no work at all, to women and racial groups. The story of domination and people's place within the societal hierarchy is not only retold but lived everyday. I also argue in this thesis that educational institutions and practices play a vital role (Gramsci, 1971; Althusser, 1971) in this reproductive process, helping to maintain a society with a ruling class, a ruling sex (O'Brien, 1987) and a ruling race.

There are two levels of resistance that appear in this thesis. At one level there is "oppositional behaviour" in which an individual or a group of individuals express or act in opposition to the dominant authority, ideas and cultural forms. The other level of resistance is in the form of "critical" opposition, consisting of a critique of

existing social relations, with the goal of collective social action to change society (Giroux,1983).

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to incorporate these theories in an examination of a literacy and English language programme in the workplace, while at the same time placing the programme within a larger social context. I argue throughout this thesis that the programme of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre is contradictory, re-creating relations of class, gender and racial domination, while promoting individual and collective action and resistance through a form of liberatory pedagogy.

The theories of social reproduction and resistance are explored through the work of A. Gramsci (1971) and P. Freire (1970) in the second chapter. It is here that the role of educational institutions and practices in maintaining a capitalist mode of production and thus class relations are explained through Gramsci's work on hegemony and ideology. Also the connections between Gramsci and Freire are examined through Freire's development of a liberatory pedagogy for the oppressed. I also argue in the second chapter that any adequate understanding of reproduction and resistance must also account for gender and racial subordination because everyday people not only experience class but also race and gender relations. It is from these experiences that people create and re-create

their social worlds.

The third chapter consists of a description of the methodology I employed to understand exactly how hegemonic relations were being reproduced and resisted within the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. This thesis documents the experiences of instructors, staff members and sponsors of the programme during its first several months of operation<sup>2</sup> through in-depth, open-ended interviews. Also examined through content analysis is the curriculum used in the classroom to measure if it contributes to the hegemonic process and/or challenges it.

The fourth chapter is an examination of the sponsorship of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre by labour, capital and the state. The motives and objectives of each group are examined in the context of the reproduction of hegemonic relations and the contradictions between the sponsors. The role of education in training future workers to be disciplined and loyal will be explored along with how education is being used as a process to co-opt traditionally marginalized people in an English-speaking, literate society.

Moving to the level of the Centre, chapter five examines the contradictions within the educational institution itself. By examining the structure of the Centre and the objectives of the popular education

methodology, the contradictions become clear. Also examined are relations, such as the gender division of labour and employee-employer relations, which are reproduced and resisted by both the workers and the managers of the Centre.

Chapter six is an exploration of the level of the classroom. Here, I continue my examination of contradictory relations through the curriculum developed by the instructors and used in the classes. Also examined are the relations between all the participants. This is the chapter which covers by far the greatest amount of material, and documents such things as classroom settings, who the participants were, and how the pedagogy was or was not implemented. Chapter seven summarizes my findings and presents my conclusions.

Throughout the entire thesis I examine the question of how the contradictory relations of reproduction and resistance to these relations were manifested in the different levels of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. All three levels--the sponsorship, the Centre and classroom--each contribute to the reformation of hegemonic relations, but not without struggles and compromises. To further understand the Centre and the literacy and English programme in the workplace, the rest of this chapter deals with the history and background of the Worker Education Centre.

### The Division between Literacy and English Language Training.

Before discussing the background of the Centre, it is first necessary to discuss the division between literacy and English as a second language (ESL) training. For the most part, literacy training has been viewed as the process by which people acquire the skills to read and write one's own language, whereas ESL has usually been seen as acquiring the oral ability to speak English. Throughout the thesis, however, I often interchange or include together both literacy and ESL teaching and learning. I do this because the vast majority of learners within the Centre are actually second language literacy students. That is, these learners are simultaneously attempting to become literate, i.e. learn to read and write or improve upon these skills, while also improving their oral English skills.

There were also learners within the programme whose first language was English and were only learning the skills of reading and writing. These learners would have certain advantages, such as familiarity with the syntax and vocabulary of English that many second language learners would not. Yet these first language learners would also have other difficulties (as we shall see in chapter six) that second language learners, who are literate in their first language, may not encounter. Examples of this include

not having an understanding that sound is represented by letters or the stigma of being "illiterate" in a literate society (See Bell and Burnaby, 1984). Even though there are differences between first and second language learners, it is important to remember that the programme which I studied served mostly second language literacy learners. All three skills of speaking, reading and writing were being taught, hence my integration of literacy and English language training.

#### The Hamilton Worker Education Centre: Background.

Several people from the McMaster University Labour Studies Programme, the Toronto Metro Labour Education and Skills Training Centre, and the Hamilton and District Labour Council (HDLCL) came together to establish a Worker Education Centre in Hamilton. Initially these three groups sponsored a needs assessment study of workers in the Hamilton area to determine if there was a demand for literacy and English language training in the workplace and then sponsored a pilot project by setting up a class in a Hamilton workplace. The needs assessment and the class were used to indicate to the Ontario government that indeed a demand did exist and that a programme could work in Hamilton.

After some deliberation the Ministry of Skills

Development allocated enough money to the Labour Council to start up its own Labour-run Centre. Although the Labour Studies programme and the Toronto Centre would continue to lend logistical support, the main responsibility for delivering the programme would be with the Labour Council, while the Ministry would regulate and fund the programme and local business people, along with union locals, would sponsor the classes in the workplaces.

In September, 1987 the Hamilton Worker Education Centre opened. The three staff members had to organize the Centre, gather resource material, make union and business contacts, give promotional talks to union members, organize classes, recruit learners and hire instructors -- all within four months. The first classes were scheduled to get underway in January, 1988. It was at this time that I started my own research at the Centre.

Throughout the various chapters on the Hamilton Worker Education Centre, it is clear that this literacy and/or English language programme in the workplace is contradictory. At all three levels of analysis--the sponsorship, the Centre and the classroom-- I have found the reproduction of social inequalities and power struggles. However, it was within the levels of the Centre and the classroom that resistance to relations of dominance were

most apparent. Each chapter of this thesis carefully examines exactly how relations were reproduced and resisted, while at the same time documenting the actual lived experiences of a variety of participants in a literacy and/or English language programme in the workplace.



### Endnotes

1. See for example Unesco, 1983; Canadian Task Force on Literacy, 1988; Premier's Council Report of Ontario, 1988.

2. Although the focus of this thesis was January to April, 1988, there are incidents that are discussed in the thesis up until October, 1988 when my interviews actually ended. I had to restrict my analysis on the classroom and curriculum to these first four months because this was the only experience the instructors and staff had. However, there were many incidents that occurred after this first period of instruction that people spoke of in the interviews and are important in understanding what happened in the Centre itself.

## Chapter Two: Theories of Reproduction and Resistance

The practices of education in our society are of a contradictory nature. In order to understand how these contradictions were manifested in the Hamilton Worker Education Programme, it is first necessary to examine theories of reproduction and resistance to relations of inequality in education. Education has traditionally been used as a tool of domination (Freire, 1976; Graff, 1987) helping to reproduce and spread oppressive gender, race and class relations. However, resistance to these practices, by some instructors and students, has demonstrated how education can also be a tool for liberation and social change.

In this chapter I will examine the reproduction of relations of dominance in educational programs through theories of hegemony, ideology, gender and race subordination. Also examined is the question of what forms the resistance to these relations take within education, including Freire's liberatory pedagogy.

### Hegemony and Ideology

In order to understand the complex way in which social relations, ideology, cultural and economic factors intertwine to produce and reproduce our capitalist society, I turn to the writings of Antonio Gramsci on hegemony and ideology. In his Prison Notebooks, Gramsci was concerned with understanding how the bourgeoisie not only established, but also maintained its rule of society on an ever-changing terrain. Gwyn Williams provides an excellent definition of hegemony:

By 'hegemony' Gramsci seems to mean a sociopolitical situation, in his terminology a 'moment', in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse or are in equilibrium; an order in which a certain way of life and thought is dominant, in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles, and all social relations, particularly in their intellectual and moral connotation. An element of direction and control, not necessarily conscious, is implied.

For Gramsci, a class established its rule or hegemony primarily through consent and secondarily through force. This ruling class is able to ensure its moral, intellectual and political leadership in society through compromising with other groups and classes to form alliances. It is these ever-changing hegemonic relations between allies that

sees certain demands of the other groups -- which may seem to hurt or are contradictory to the interests of the ruling class -- being met through compromise and reform, thereby maintaining the leadership of the ruling class who in turn gives up very little in the process.

Gramsci also developed a concept of ideology which was closely tied to hegemony. Ideology was the "cement"<sup>1</sup> or "system of ideas"<sup>2</sup> that held together and unified social groups in hegemonic relations. Gramsci also distinguished between arbitrary ideologies and organic ideologies. Arbitrary ideologies are speculations of individuals and can "create individual "movements", polemics and so on..."<sup>3</sup>. Organic ideology, however, is a "historically necessary"<sup>4</sup> set of ideas for a given structure that "has the capacity to inspire concrete attitudes and give certain orientations for actions"<sup>5</sup>. People act within rules of conduct, hence, ideology also becomes the "terrain on which men [sic] acquire consciousness of their position, struggle etc."<sup>6</sup>

Ideology is thus the informative principle for individual and collective action and is manifested in social relations, institutions and practices. Ideology is also the arena in which people become aware of conflicts and contradictions within world-views and learn about their own social position and interests. "Hence ideology is conceived as the unity between a world-view and its corresponding

rules of conduct...it is in and by ideology, therefore, that a class can exercise hegemony over other classes"<sup>7</sup>.

The complex process of creating and re-creating consent through compromise and reform is achieved through the work of intellectuals. Gramsci did not accept the usual definition of an intellectual as a mental labourer or academic scholar (although they would also be included) but he recognized that

...all men are intellectuals...but not all men have in society the functions of intellectuals...Each man...carries on some form of intellectual activity, he is a 'philosopher', an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it...<sup>8</sup>

Gramsci then draws a distinction between "traditional intellectuals" who incorrectly see themselves as a autonomous, transhistorical, professional group, such as priests, who do not organise the class from which they have emerged (such as the peasantry), and "organic intellectuals" who direct and organize a particular social class out of which they emerge. It is the organic intellectuals who are the main interest here.

Organic intellectuals are created by a social class from its own ranks to "give it a homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields"<sup>9</sup>. It is the

organic intellectuals who develop and spread the ideas, not only educating their own class but also the rest of society. Under capitalism, for example, industrial managers, economists, journalists, publishers etc. are organic intellectuals. Although they create bourgeois ideology from class practice, they also direct and organize that practice at the same time.

Organic intellectuals of the proletariat are those who are trying to develop an alternative proletarian culture, along with others who organize and lead the class such as shop stewards, etc. These intellectuals are not superior to nor outside the working class, for they are themselves from the working class. There exists a dialectic between the intellectuals and the workers; the philosophic ideology is informed by the material practice of the workers who in turn develop a class consciousness through ideology mediated by the organic intellectuals.

However, Gramsci also recognized that it was very difficult for a class such as the proletariat to create its own organic intellectuals.

...the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult, full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings in which the loyalty of the masses is often sorely tried.<sup>10</sup>

This difficult process of forming organic intellectuals, therefore, makes it necessary for the social group to

recruit traditional intellectuals. "One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals"<sup>11</sup>. To conquer these non-working class intellectuals ideologically is to subsume them to the "philosophy of praxis" and hence the proletarian perspective. They would not be above or outside the proletariat but would become part of it.

These proletarian intellectuals are engaged in the further development and extension of the philosophy of praxis, i.e. marxism.

A philosophy of praxis...must be a criticism of "common sense" basing itself initially, however on common sense in order to demonstrate that "everyone" is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's individual life but of renovating and making "critical" an already existing activity <sup>12</sup>.

Thus marxism is developed from the existing activity of the proletariat and class consciousness is a critical world-view started at the level of common sense but developed into a coherent philosophy. It is this development of ideology that drives the struggle to counter the bourgeois hegemony.

Education, for Gramsci, plays a vital role not only in creating and re-creating the ideologies of bourgeois hegemony, but also in developing the "philosophy of praxis". Again we see the contradictory nature of education.

On the one hand, there are institutions of hegemony such as schools, churches etc. These constitute "a framework which serves as the place of production and channel of diffusion of ideologies"<sup>13</sup>.

Within institutions like schools, there are many competing ideologies, thereby accounting for the struggle, resistance and continuous compromises within the classroom. The hegemony of the ruling class in a society, therefore, relies on its intellectuals to diffuse a "correct world-view" that is more coherent and systematic, influencing both the majority of people--despite the fact that this ideology may contradict their actual lived experiences-- and the organization and practices of the institutions of hegemony.

On the other hand, the organic intellectuals of the working class can use education as a means of mediating ideology to help create class consciousness. This education is not imposed, however, but is created from the already existing practice of the proletariat. This is the process of self-generated education through praxis.

Gramsci has laid out a complex theory of how a certain class can produce and reproduce its dominance through hegemony and ideology. The ruling class' apparent willingness to compromise and reform co-opts potentially hostile or competing groups and classes and, in fact, creates alliances between these different segments of



society. These groups and classes produce and reproduce a set of social relations, institutions and ideas that (through their acceptance of compromise) they now have a vested interest in maintaining, even though this may contradict their own experiences. It is through this complex, shifting process that capitalist society is reproduced, not exactly as it was before, as compromises and reforms change relations, but with the fundamental relations of society remaining intact, ensuring power and dominance for the few.

#### Gender and Race Relations.

Despite Gramsci's strong argument for the way in which hegemony is perpetuated and social relations reproduced, his analysis is incomplete. Although Gramsci did acknowledge that sexual relations and nationalism played a part in people's "common sense", he did not systematically examine the way in which the ideologies and practices of gender and racial subordination mediated everyday actions, perpetuating inequalities and therefore the status quo of dominance. Nor did he examine how these ideologies were produced and diffused in the institutions of hegemony, such as schools.

By giving primacy to class relations, he has ignored race and male supremacist ideologies that are also produced

and reproduced, compromised and reformed, producing cultural forms and practices. Class, gender and racial relations cannot be reduced one to the other but, as Roxanna Ng (1986) argues, all three cannot be separated because they all influence people's everyday actions such as the kind of jobs people get and how they go about doing their work. Although race, class and gender are tightly woven together at this historical moment, each is different and retains its own autonomy, i.e., the disappearance of one relation does not ensure that the others will not continue.

Within the realm of education, it has been well documented that schools generally contribute (but not in a uniform or mechanical way) to the reproduction of unequal gender relations (Gaskell & McLaren, 1987; Russell, 1986; McRobbie, 1978; Willis, 1977). There are several ways in which this is done, including the encouragement of "appropriate" gender behaviour, such as passivity and silence for the girls while the boys are encouraged to be aggressive and are called upon more often to speak. Also girls have been directed by counsellors and teachers into semi-skilled jobs that would only be secondary to their supposed primary family responsibilities.

The gender division of labour within the schools reinforces the patriarchal ideology that women are the caretakers of children, as they far out number men in

teaching, while it is overwhelmingly men who occupy positions of power in the upper rungs of the system. Another effective method of re-creating gender inequalities is to portray misogyny as "objective classroom knowledge"<sup>14</sup> or by simply ignoring the existence of any inequalities thereby portraying the hegemonic order as being "natural" and the only reality (Russell, 1987). This "reality" however, does not go unchallenged. McRobbie and Willis have both documented how some working-class boys and girls accept and consent to hegemonic relations while others have created their own counter-culture which rejects the school and everything it stands for.

As Gramsci pointed out, educational institutions are prime sites for the development and diffusion of hegemonic ideas, but they are also sites of continued struggle and resistance. What must be understood is that school relations also help to develop and perpetuate patriarchal ideologies that are struggled over and which influence the actions of many individuals and groups. Any analysis of hegemony must recognize "that cultural forms are subject to the articulation of consent of both a ruling class and a ruling sex" <sup>15</sup>. Although I would agree with this statement, it still only tells part of the story. What also must be addressed is that there are ruling races and ethnicities

that also consent to cultural forms and perpetuate the subordination of other racial groups.

The dominance of one racial group over another or for that matter several others has been based on the ideology of the inherent inferiority of people given certain hereditary traits, such as colour. The ability to impose racial categories, assigning definitions of superiority (usually to European whites by European whites) and inferiority (usually to non-whites), thereby effectively creating a subject and an object (Said,1978), and the resulting struggle and resistance over these definitions, denote the shifting power relations and privileges of certain groups. For example, the period of European imperialism in the 19th Century was dominated by the racist doctrine of whites as masters and non-whites as slaves or as a relationship similar to that of parent and child (Vincent,1984). Fanon summed up these power relations as "[T]he cause is the consequence; you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich" 16.

As Vincent argues, race is a social construct that is "part of everyday belief and experience and therefore a piece of political data whether we like it or not"<sup>17</sup>. People experience what they define as race and they make decisions, act accordingly and at times come into conflict on this terrain. However;

One must recognize that such processes are not static but are shaped and shape the particular context in which they occur. Only through such an analysis is it possible to gain an understanding of how racial inequality is produced and reproduced in the social world of people.<sup>18</sup>

Successful, long term racial domination and subordination not only rests on coercion but also on the consent of people who see this "reality" of inequality and discrimination as valid. This "reality" is produced and reproduced, upholding a ruling race in everyday interactions, relations and institutions.

In the arena of education, for example, we again see the reproduction of racial hierarchies. Unlike the literature on the reproduction of gender relations, which examines both the curriculum and classroom interaction of students and teachers, much of the Canadian work on the reproduction of race centres on the content and development of curriculum (Aoki et al, 1984; Pratt, 1984). This work has documented that much of the curriculum which even acknowledges racial groups is in the area of "social studies". A hierarchy of groups is established through the descriptive use of relatively favourable or unfavourable terms that usually rely on stereotypes. For example, the French Canadians are described as "brave and courageous" while Native Indians are "savages" (Pratt, 1984). The

emphasis in many textbooks has also been on how many minority groups are being assimilated into the mainstream.

The hidden curriculum underlying much of Canadian social education betrays multiculturalism within a hierarchy rather than within an equality of cultures. This is evidenced in the image of minorities as marginal Canadians, as the contributors, as the beneficiaries of majority paternalism, and as those who are attempting to integrate into the mainstream lifestyle.<sup>19</sup>

Resistance to this reproduction of dominance has taken several forms. First, there has been a demand for "heritage culture" curriculum (Cummins, 1984) to counter the above mentioned curricula, while some Native communities have created their own curriculum and trained their own teachers (Wyatt, 1984). However, this resistance is not uniform by any means, with many of the demands for reform being co-opted while the fundamental basis of racism and those who control the educational system remain the same.

Gramsci laid the foundation for understanding how the dominance of a class is produced and maintained; however, his analysis was incomplete. Given that people also experience gender and race relations everyday and that a world-view and cultural forms are generated from those experiences, any adequate analysis of hegemonic relations must also account for gender and race relations. It is also clear from this examination that educational institutions

and programmes play a fundamental role in the construction of people's realities but that they can also be the sites of people's struggles.

### Resistance and Freire.

Education, as noted before, is not purely a tool of dominance nor do all teachers or all of the curricula contribute to a process of "thought control" that preserves the status quo. Education can also be a means of liberation because the very relations of dominance help to create critical opposition that challenges hegemonic consensus. Much of the resistance described above consists of individuals or groups reacting against gender, class and race relations. However, there is also another form of resistance: liberatory or popular education. In order to understand this type of organized and critical resistance, I turn to the work of Paulo Freire.

Although Paulo Freire originally developed his pedagogy from working with the oppressed and illiterate people of Brazil, his work has also been utilized in several other adult literacy campaigns in countries such as Chile and Guinea Bissau. Freire's pedagogy is comprised of several important elements that centre on the connections among literacy, critical consciousness and its development and the liberation of people from oppression. To establish

the structure of Freire's pedagogy it is necessary to examine these connections along with his practical method of literacy techniques.

For Freire, education is not neutral: education reproduces the "myths" of society which ensure the continuation of the status quo and the domestication of people. This concept is very similar to Gramsci's idea that bourgeois ideology is reproduced and diffused within institutions such as schools. In rejecting the "banking concept of education"<sup>20</sup>, where the student, as an empty vessel, is filled with information, Freire develops his own pedagogy for liberation. Instead of domination and "deposit making", a pedagogy of oppressed people must be a "problem-posing" education that reveals "reality".

This form of education involves posing problems by both the students and the teachers that relate to their own lives and experiences. Rather than a transferral of information, all the participants reflect upon problems and enter into dialogue, becoming co-investigators.

Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly alienated. <sup>21</sup>



It is through communication that a critical consciousness emerges and through dialogue that action becomes possible. Freire emphasizes that a dialectic must exist between action and critical theory; action informed by theory and otherwise known as praxis is Freire's objective. Again we see the connection with Gramsci's concepts of the self-education of the proletariat through the mediation of the philosophy of praxis by organic intellectuals.

Freire also recognizes that in order to transcend the banking system of education, the relations between the students and the teacher must also change.

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the student, who in turn while being taught also teaches. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore the idea that the teacher knows all and gives this information to the students is broken down by the effort of all participants to contribute, thus simultaneously teaching and learning.

The practitioners of this pedagogy also seek to develop people's critical consciousness or what Freire calls "conscientizacao" by demythologizing the oppressor. There are dominant myths or ideologies in societies which justify the exploitative relations, portraying them as natural and unchanging. Problem-posing education seeks to unveil these myths as creations of human beings for certain purposes. It

also seeks to show that human beings can strive to create alternatives to the prevailing culture.

Within this approach, Freire focuses on language and literacy as playing a critical role in developing critical consciousness. Freire believes that it is important to start with an oppressed group's own language and experiences to name what is happening in the world. "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it"<sup>23</sup>. Freire argues that literacy is not just about "reading the word" but also about "reading the world". This is very similar to the way in which Gramsci critically examines "common sense" in the "philosophy of praxis".

For Freire, literacy is a mental tool which has cognitive dimensions that differentiate the literate and the illiterate. In particular, the acquisition of literacy can develop an increased sense of control over one's environment...<sup>24</sup>

Freire realizes, however, that the use and form of language can also benefit the oppressors by contributing to the dominant ideology. The language and words of the oppressors can effectively silence or replace the language of the oppressed. It is, therefore, necessary for this liberating pedagogy to reject simple, mechanical literacy in favour of a practical literacy technique that strives to produce critical thought.

Freire has developed very detailed descriptions of his problem-posing literacy techniques. First of all, this

education would not take place in formal classroom settings, but in people's own environment, with the study or learning groups called "culture circles".

...we launched a new institution...a culture circle, since among us a school was a traditionally passive concept. Instead of a teacher, we had a co-ordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programs that were "broken down" and "codified" into learning units.<sup>25</sup>

The idea was to develop a program specific to its participants and to relate it to their experiences and use of language, while also developing a critical understanding of society for positive action. Freire developed a five-phase system approach to setting up this program. The first phase consisted of an investigation by an educational team into the "typical sayings, as well as words and expressions linked to the experience of the groups in which the researcher participates"<sup>26</sup>.

This process enabled the researchers to identify the different language used by different groups and how they specifically viewed the world. Phase two consisted of selecting "generative words and themes" from all those studied. These words/themes would be selected according to their phonemic richness and difficulty but also for their "pragmatic tone" or social and political significance.

The theme he [Freire] believed to be indispensable for conscientization was that of the anthropological concept of culture, which

helped people to see the difference between nature and human culture and thus realise their role in creating society.<sup>27</sup>

Phase three was the "codification" of selected generative words or themes. The codifications were then usually represented visually by drawings or slides. In this way, the themes or words were drawn out of the drawings or pictures by the students, who could identify with these words as they came from their own experiences. These words or themes are then written so people can relate the oral with the written.

Phase four saw the developments of agendas which were to assist the co-ordinators in developing the dialogue approach. In phase five, cards were prepared "with the breakdown of the phonemic families which correspond to the generative words "<sup>28</sup>. In this way people learn to form words through combining syllables.

For example, let us take the word tijolo (brick) as the first generative word, placed in a "situation" of construction work. After discussing the situation in all its possible aspects, the semantic link between the word and the object it names is established...By moving immediately to present the "pieces" visually, we initiate the recognition of phonemic families. Beginning with the first syllable, ti, the group is motivated to learn the whole phonemic family resulting from the combination of the initial consonant with other vowels.<sup>29</sup>

An example of how this works is as follows: ta-te-ti-to-tu;  
ja-je-ji-jo-ju; la-le-li-lo-lu.

The participants can soon learn to recognize these syllables and combine them to make other words. The results were impressive. Within six to eight weeks the formally illiterate participants could write simple letters, read newspapers and engage in informed political discussions.

This incredible success rate shows the importance and practicality Freire's pedagogy for adult literacy. However, there are several problems with Freire's theoretical analysis. First of all, his approach to the banking-system of education is quite revealing and correct to a certain extent--given the authoritarian educational system in Brazil (Barnard,1981), Freire's analysis is not surprising. However, Freire fails to see that the school can also be a terrain on which struggle and resistance occur, and although not always critical, these struggles potentially inform social action. His analysis simply does not account for this, but rather portrays school as a very linear and simplistic handing down of information and rules.

Another problem I have with Freire is his assumption that illiterate people have no understanding of politics. He portrays the ideology of dominance and exploitation to be so overwhelming and monolithic that only through the guidance of those with the "correct" consciousness can these people understand their own experiences. It is apparent that Freire puts little faith in self-education by way of

experiences, but believes instead that people must be led to politics, with literacy as the first step. This excludes the illiterate person from participating in political discourse-- which is erroneous. (See Graff, 1987).

Another criticism of Freire's analysis is his categories of the oppressed and the oppressors. The oppressed are all those people who are dehumanized and yearn for freedom and justice. The oppressors, on the other hand, are all those who benefit from and perpetuate the current relations of exploitation and injustice. These categories are so wide and undefined that they are almost meaningless. Freire needs to include a solid analysis of race, gender and class oppression in order to develop an effective critique of society and the role of education in creating an alternative society.

Freire also fails to consider race in his analysis. This is quite surprising considering that not only is he from a nation (Brazil) which suffered under Portuguese colonialism and racism but that he also recognizes distinct languages of peoples and how important these distinct cultures and experiences are in "naming the world". Perhaps Freire places racial oppression under his concept of oppression in general, but no where does he acknowledge this distinction.

Also of concern is Freire's treatment, or should I say lack of treatment, of women and their experiences of language. As Freire points out, language is part of ideology, reflecting the word and the world of the oppressor, but what he does not acknowledge is that the teaching and learning are gendered. Rockhill states:

... "man-made language" eclipses women's presence, cuts out their discourses and effectively silences their gender-specific experiences... even the simplest tenet of feminism -- the use of non-sexist language -- is not adhered to. Especially ironic is that Freire is "the one" who pointed out the power of naming, of voicing, of fighting the oppressor's language by naming the world from the perspective of the oppressed. Not only is the generic "he" used throughout, but there is also the "invisibilisation" of women in the reference, structure and context of the text.<sup>30</sup>

It is obvious that Freire's own "critical consciousness" does not enable him to see the myths of patriarchy and he in turn becomes an oppressor of women and thus his own oppressor as well. Despite these obvious problems with Freire's conceptions, his focus on the contradictory nature of education--either for domination or liberation-- is very revealing and his methodology has greatly contributed to the advancement of adult literacy.

Both Gramsci and Freire have explored the way in which educational practices can produce and reproduce relations of dominance or how education can be used as a means of liberation. Gramsci's analysis, however, is much

more complex, examining the way in which a ruling class maintains its hegemony not only through coercion but also through consent as manifested in social relations, institutions (such as schools) and ideas, creating and re-creating our capitalist society. Freire's focus is on creating a liberatory pedagogy which resists the dominance of the traditional schooling methods.

The problem with both of these theories is that they are incomplete because they fail to discuss how other relations of dominance, namely gender and race, are also reproduced and resisted. Despite these problems, the work of both Gramsci and Freire can be used as a foundation upon which to build an understanding of how gender, race and class relations are reproduced and resisted within educational institutions. In particular, I apply theories of race and gender subordination, along with the theories of Gramsci and Freire, to the Hamilton Worker Education Centre in order to understand how relations of dominance were being reproduced and resisted. The following chapters integrate this theoretical perspective with the research I collected in and about the Centre.



## Endnotes

1. A. Gramsci. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith (eds.), (New York: International Publishers, 1971). p.328.
2. Ibid. p.376.
3. Ibid. p.377.
4. Ibid.
5. J. Larrain, Marxism and Ideology. (London: MacMillan Publishers, 1983). p.80.
6. Gramsci, p.377.
7. Larrain, p.80.
8. Gramsci, p.9.
9. Ibid. p.5.
10. Ibid. p.334.
11. Ibid. p.10.
12. Ibid. pp.330-331.
13. Larrain, p.85.
14. S. Russell. "The Hidden Curriculum of School: Reproducing Gender and Class Hierarchies." in The Politics of Diversity. R. Hamilton & M. Barrett (eds). (Montreal: Book Center Inc, 1987). p.358.
15. M. O'Brien, "Hegemony and Superstructure: A Feminist Critique of Neo-Marxism", in The Politics of Diversity. R. Hamilton & M. Barrett (eds.), (Montreal, Book Center Inc, 1987). p.264.
16. F. Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) p.31.
17. R.J. Vincent, "Race in International Relations" in Culture, Ideology and World Order. R.B.J. Walker (ed), (London: Westview Press, 1984). p.47.

- 18.H. Kennedy, Race and Ethnicity: A Discussion. Unpublished paper, McMaster University, 1989.
- 19.D. Pratt, "The Social Role of School Textbooks in Canada", in Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education. J.R. Mallea and J.C. Young (eds), (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1984). p.295.
20. P.Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (New York: Continuum Publishing,1970),p.58.
- 21.Ibid. pp.68-69.
- 22.Ibid. p.67.
- 23.Ibid. p.76.
24. F. Youngman, Adult Education and Socialist Pedagogy. (London: Croom Helm, 1986). p.165.
- 25.P. Freire, Education: The Practice of Freedom. (London: Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 1973).p.42.
- 26.Ibid. p.49.
- 27.Youngman, p.157.
- 28.Freire, Education: The Practice of Freedom, p.52.
- 29.Ibid. pp.53-54.
30. K.Rockhill, "e-Man-ci-patory Literacy. An essay review of Literacy: Reading the word and the World." in Canadian Women Studies. Fall/Winter 1988 (vol.9 No. 3&4 ). pp.114-115.

### Chapter Three: Methodology

To understand exactly how hegemonic relations were being reproduced and resisted both in the classroom and within the Hamilton Worker Education Centre, and to understand the complex relations surrounding the sponsorship of the Centre by labour, business and government, I needed to employ several different methods. In this way, a clear representation of participants' activities and experiences, within and surrounding the Centre, would emerge. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the details of this methodology.

At first I was introduced to the instructors and staff members of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre as a participant observer. I later assumed the role of interviewer and then moved on to conduct a content analysis of the curriculum developed and used by the instructors. These roles and my experiences are presented in chronological order.

#### Gaining Access

My field research began in November, 1987 when I first made contact with the co-ordinators of the Hamilton and District Labour Council's (HDLC) Worker Education

Centre, informing them of my interest in alternative education and asking whether it was possible to conduct a study. As a result of these initial discussions, I was permitted to attend the Centre's first professional development training session for the instructors in January, 1988, as a participant observer.

Being a participant observer in the professional development session helped my research in several important ways. It gave me the opportunity to meet the key participants and builders of the programme and to develop a rapport with these people, while establishing my presence as a researcher as early as possible. The development session lasted for five days in which time I worked closely with the Centre's instructors and I soon felt quite comfortable. I asked the participants if they would consent to interviews about their experiences after they had taught for a number of weeks. Everyone was very positive and said they would do what they could. This familiarity was to make my later role of interviewer much easier as I found most of the people from this January session very accommodating and eager to talk.

Another advantage of starting my research as a participant observer was to learn first-hand exactly what the programme was about, including the teaching methodology and curriculum content, as the prospective instructors

themselves learned. Being a participant observer was therefore a way of obtaining "insider" knowledge. I received the same training or preparation for leading literacy or English language classes in the workplace; I also took part in the same discussion groups and read the same information as the instructors.

It was in this way that many questions and concerns arose about the actual application of many of the teaching theories and curriculum themes- something that could only be answered by those who have had the experience of teaching a class. Being a participant observer, I was aware of these questions and problems and later included some of them in the interviews of the instructors. I believe that this intensive learning experience helped me to better understand the background to literacy and English language learning in the workplace, the working of the programme and the people involved.

Even though I had been given access to the professional development week, I still needed to be given access to the staff of the Centre and to their files and resources. The process of obtaining access was drawn out over several months, becoming at times frustrating. First, I had to write the Labour Council a proposal which requested access and outlined my research and objectives, then I wrote a follow-up letter. I also found it necessary to hold

several conversations with those who supported my research and had some amount of influence with the HDLC. The Labour Council has an executive which is responsible for the day to day business of the Council on behalf of its affiliate trade union members. The Council also has several different committees, one of which is the Advisory Committee which oversees and evaluates the running of the Worker Education Centre. It was therefore necessary to gain the consent of the members of this committee in order to proceed.

My frustration emerged as I found it difficult to get a clear answer to my request for conducting research. I was to learn, however, that patience and perseverance were the keys to researching trade union organizations. First of all union general, executive or committee meetings may only occur monthly and if one has just missed a meeting, there is a month's wait to get on the agenda. If the agenda is full, for example with updates on negotiations or some type of discussion on collective action, one must wait until the next meeting, since research and the researcher may be of low priority.

I understand my request was discussed by the members of the Advisory Committee but no response was given for reasons unknown to me. I waited several weeks for some acknowledgement and then proceeded to write a letter asking for a response. It was finally forthcoming and in the

affirmative. With access to the Centre assured, I then started the second phase of research.

### The Interviews

I decided to gather data on the programme through in-depth, open-ended interviews. This way my understanding of the complexity of the programme, the teaching, the curriculum development and the relations between the different agents involved, were developed through the experiences of the actual people who created the programme and those who represent the controlling interests of labour, capital and the state. Motivations, actions and goals of those involved and subsequently interviewed are treated as accurate and unimpaired reflections of what was (and is) "going on". It is therefore actual lived experiences placed in an historical context, as advocated by writers such as C. Wright Mills (1969), that form the greater part of my data.

The interviews themselves were divided into five groups. These included instructors, staff members from the Hamilton Worker Education Centre, and representatives from labour, business and the state. The first group was the instructors of the Worker Education Centre. They were asked forty-one, open-ended questions focusing on the instructor's background and motivation, teaching method, curriculum development, the relations in the classroom and the

structure of the programme. The interview schedule (Appendix I.a) was followed quite closely, except when respondents anticipated further questions and covered two or three questions in one answer. This did not cause any problems, since it was not the "order" of the questions that mattered but the information in the answer. As my experience as an interviewer increased, I was more skilled at probing and developing follow-up questions; this resulted in more detailed answers from the respondents. Interviewing (a task I had never done before) familiar people was still very demanding, but it helped to build my confidence for later interviews of people I had not previously met.

The interviews took from one hour to three and a half hours. All interviews were tape recorded with the respondent's permission. However entire interviews were not transcribed; instead important sections and examples were transcribed (by hand), verbatim. This sectional transcription was done because of limited resources (i.e. money and time) and in order to concentrate my efforts on certain crucial experiences of the respondents while weeding out irrelevant aspects. This does not mean that I selectively retained only the responses that supported my thesis. All of the responses to the questions were recorded but delineations were not. One example of a delineation would have been one instructor's description of another



teaching job that he was employed in. The fact that he was a teacher in another place was recorded but the details of the job were not because they were not relevant to the question asked or to the programme under study.

The sample consisted of all but one of the Centre's instructors from January, 1988 to April, 1988: four women and two men (The one instructor who declined to be interviewed said she did not have the time as she had started another job). It is my observation that most of the literacy and English as a second language related jobs are filled by women. The issue of gender will be more fully explored in later chapters.

The second group interviewed was the staff of the Worker Education Centre. This included three people: Outreach Co-ordinator, Programme Co-ordinator and Assistant Co-ordinator, all of whom are women. Two of the three interviews were taped recorded with permission and closely followed a thirty-two question, open-ended interview schedule (Appendix I.b.). These interviews focused on the co-ordinator's background, the goals, methods and structure of the programme and the relations between labour, capital and the state. The first interview was two hours in length the second was an hour and a half and the third was an hour. Each interview has been sectionally transcribed.

The third interview was not taped recorded due to technical difficulties; instead answers were written down by myself. The focus of the interview was the programme's structures and evaluation methods. The main purpose of this interview was to get an update of the Centre's activities and developments over the summer months.

The third interview schedule (Appendix I.c.) was developed to interview a representative of the state. In this case the person interviewed was the Programme Coordinator from the Ontario Government's Ministry of Skills Development. The interview took almost an hour and consisted of eighteen open-ended questions focusing on the role, goals and motivations of the Ministry in the programme and on its relations with labour and business. This tape recorded (with permission) interview was so crucial that the entire interview was transcribed verbatim.

The fourth interview schedule (Appendix I. d.) was developed for a representative from labour, a member of the Labour Council's Advisory Committee for the Worker Education Centre. The interview was tape recorded with permission and was surprisingly short (thirty minutes) considering there were sixteen open-ended questions. The list of topics included labour's goals, the programme's structure, and relations with business and government. This was sectionally transcribed.

The fifth interview schedule (Appendix I. e.) was designed for a representative of management in participating companies. The interview was tape recorded with permission and lasted just under an hour, covering sixteen open-ended questions. The focus of the interview was the reasons why the company was sponsoring the programme in its plant and its relations with the other sponsors.

Since the goal of this thesis is not to generalize to other union-based English and literacy in the workplace programmes (considering only three other such programmes exist in Canada) but rather to understand the case study's processes of ideological and structural reproduction and resistance in historical context, I am not concerned with random samples. However, I am concerned that the people I have interviewed are reasonably representative of the group from which they are drawn.

In the case of the Ministry representative, she was the only person available who had intimate knowledge of the Hamilton Centre and of the Ministry of Skills Development's program for English and literacy training in the workplace. An interview with her was crucial for understanding the role, rules and goals of the government in this programme. My questions were relevant to her position within the bureaucracy and she had the knowledge to respond.

As for the representative of labour, I wanted to talk to someone who was fairly familiar with the programme. The logical choice was a trade unionist from the HDLC, preferably from the Advisory Committee which directly oversees the running of the Centre. I made an attempt to contact several members of the Advisory Committee; however one was unavailable, while another agreed to an interview but resisted setting any specific time. After two follow-up conversations with this member it was clear he had no intention of talking to me. I am unsure of the reasons behind this but his busy schedule may have played a role. The member whom I did eventually interview was the first to grant me time and was very co-operative.

Since the focus of the thesis is the teaching methodology and curriculum content, it was imperative that I interview as many as possible of the instructors and those who directly supervise them. The interviews were representative of both groups because they covered almost one hundred percent of those populations.

The representative from business was indeed difficult to find. I had tried to make contacts within participating companies without any success. In fact one place I contacted that had a programme, claimed they had knowledge of the programme's existence and they had no involvement and therefore there was no one in management I could talk to.

They suggested that I contact the union. It was then that I realized I would get nowhere without actual names of contact people in businesses. I decided to ask the staff of the Centre for their assistance, but nothing was forthcoming. My access problem was soon solved, however.

The Adult Basic Education Association of Hamilton-Wentworth and the Hamilton Spectator Newspaper were co-sponsoring a conference called "Literacy 2000 and Beyond" in which a workshop on Adult Education and Business was being given. One of the main participants was a management representative from one of the companies involved with the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. Also attending the conference was the head of the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy. I was able to obtain permission to tape record the workshop and I learned much about both local and national business views on literacy and English language. However I was not able to ask specific in-depth questions of either representative. I believe the views, motivations and goals as expressed by these two are accurate reflections of their positions and are very useful for this study. However I was still dissatisfied and wanted more detail.

I decided once again to ask for business contact names from the Centre, stressing the importance of my talking to someone from the participating businesses. I received immediate co-operation and within days was in

contact with a business representative who was quite willing to talk to me although he was unsure of what help he could be. Between this in-depth interview and the conference workshop recordings, I believe the views expressed are an accurate reflection of these business persons' positions and interests in the programme.

### Documents

Despite the wealth of information that I collected through this conference and from the interviews, I felt it was important to confirm their validity through supporting documentation. From the Centre I received access to files dealing with curriculum and also applications and reports to the government. From the Ontario government I received their guidelines for workplace programmes and also other discussion papers that dealt in some way or other with the issue of literacy and English language training. From business I received the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy report, "Measuring the Costs of Illiteracy in Canada" (1988). All of these documents are used as support for the perspectives, aims and objectives for the various groups involved.

The curriculum of the Centre is given special attention here. I was able to obtain copies of the actual curriculum developed and used by five of the six instructors

whom I interviewed along with their own descriptions of the material for classes between January and April, 1988. The curriculum content plays a very important role deciphering the resistance and/or reproduction of ideology and relations and must be looked at carefully. Since the possibilities for a content analysis are vast, I decided to concentrate my examination on the themes and the material (i.e. newspapers, union publications, textbooks etc.) used to convey these themes to the learners.

I evaluated each instructor's curricula by first describing the dominant themes and then examining the material used, classifying whether the themes and material reproduce, resist or are contradictory to capitalist, patriarchal relations (See Appendix II).

### The Learners

Another issue that must be addressed within this chapter is why I did not include the learners in my interviews. There are several reasons for this. At first I fully intended to include their views as I believe they are important. However when the issue surfaced, I met with an uneasy resistance from some of the instructors and staff members I interviewed. The explanations for this ranged from the problem of insuring participants' confidentiality (the Centre had promised to protect the names of all the workers

who participated in the programme) to finding a learner with enough confidence in their language ability to talk to me.

I believe that if I had pushed the issue I would have received access to several of the learners through various instructors. However, as my work developed and my focus narrowed, I soon realized that the interviewing of the many learners was beyond the scope of my study because of time and monetary considerations.

The learners' experiences in this programme are indeed important and need to be collected and assessed through further study. To facilitate this I recommend the following: a) have the instructors ask for volunteers to participate in the research from their classes; b) ask in classes that have been running for more than the initial fifteen weeks as learners' confidence and willingness to participate may be higher; c) make arrangements for an interpreter if the learners would prefer.

Despite the many delays and frustrations I encountered, I learned much from the people who shared their experiences with me. The new experience of interviewing was challenging and the seemingly never-ending transcription of tapes tried my patience. Despite all it was worthwhile. In the next chapter I examine the social context of this literacy/ English language programme.



## Chapter Four: Labour, State, and Capital

Representatives from the state, business and labour have joined together to establish, support and utilize the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the motives and objectives of each organization's participation in the programme. Also examined are the hegemonic relations between each and the societal context in which all of this is momentarily occurring. Basic skills upgrading is seen by these three parties as a means to an end. For the representatives from the state and capital it is a way to assist in accumulation and to co-opt workers into the mainstream. For the representatives from labour it is a means to strengthen their organization and membership and to reach marginalized members.

The chapter will be divided into three sections and a conclusion. The first section deals with representation from the state and how their intervention in the workplace assists in capital accumulation while playing the role of mediator between Capital and Labour. The second section is an examination of business people's interests in the programme. These include accumulation, increased

productivity and a drawing of marginalized workers into the production process. The third section examines the goals of organized labour in the programme. These include service to members and continued union strength, both economically and ideologically.

### The State.

In the case of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre the sponsorship of the state is at the provincial level. The newly formed <sup>1</sup> Ministry of Skills Development has been the funding agent in Ontario for literacy and English programmes in the workplace, along with other programmes such as Ontario Basic Skills which started in Ontario community colleges. In order to understand why the state has been the prime sponsor of the workplace programmes I interviewed the Ministry's programme co-ordinator and examined supporting documents.

It is clear from this research that the Ontario government has very precise objectives for its intervention in the workplace. The first goal was to promote further economic growth and accumulation of capital in a changing economy. The second goal, although somewhat less obvious, was to act as mediator to further integrate the interests of capitalists and labourers, thereby disseminating the

dominant ideology and extending hegemonic consent on several different levels.

The Premier's Council, an advisory board made up of representatives from labour and business under the direction and leadership of the Premier of Ontario and several of the government's Ministries, stated:

In the future our prosperity will depend increasingly upon our ability to sustain a sufficiently large base of companies competing in world markets, not on the basis of lower labour or raw material costs, but rather through technical innovation, skilled labour, adept marketing and high productivity...The new global economy is one where the traditional barriers to international trade...have broken down...and national economies everywhere are moving toward greater economic integration.<sup>2</sup>

Although this statement is not specifically addressing this programme, it sums up how skill development plays an important role in the states' attempt to further accumulation. As trade barriers break down and competition for market share increases the capitalist class in Canada and specifically in Ontario, must be willing to compete on this new global level in order to continue its accumulation, thus stimulating economic growth.

While being interviewed, the representative from the Ministry stressed that none of this will happen unless the workforce has a grounding in basic skills:

...the economy is changing rapidly. There are a great many technological changes that are necessary right now and will be in the future.

And the pace of that technological change is increasing very rapidly. The workforce needs to be adaptable. It's no longer a matter of you Mr. Worker can't do this job so I'm going to fire you and get someone who can. It's not that kind of a labour market any longer. It's a labour market in which you Mr. Worker can't do this job right now so you're going to have to learn it. I'm going to have to train you because you're the only one I've got. You're my worker and I'm going to have to be responsible for training you. Only [there are] those individuals workers who don't have the basic skills to learn the new technologies. Without that no one's going to get anywhere. And that's why the Ministry is involved in this kind of programme.

The representative went on to reiterate that a training in basic skills "if not for the purpose of undertaking that job then at least for the purpose of training in that job or training in the technology that's changing that job." The basic skills in the workplace programme is therefore viewed by the Ministry as a training in being trained. The following statement from the Ministry's own guidelines supports this further:

The Ontario Basic Skills in the Workplace Program is an integral part of Ontario's training strategy. A strategy of balanced, comprehensive training initiatives designed to strengthen the capacity of Ontario's employers and workers to compete in a rapidly changing intensely competitive economy. The Ontario Basic Skills in the Workplace Program through the provision of literacy and numeracy upgrading is designed to (i) broaden access to skills training (ii) enhance productivity of the Ontario workforce...<sup>3</sup>

According to various authors, such as Graff (1987) and Thompson (1968), literacy and education have been historically used by capitalists to regulate, discipline and train workers so they would produce goods on time. Apparently literacy is also used by the state for the same purpose.

Basic skills are seen as the first step in acquiring other training for the workplace: a training that will allow for new technology on the shop floor, hence making the company more competitive by lowering the cost of labour through job loss. This new technology will also lower the cost of production and escalate productivity, thereby allowing for the continued accumulation of capital. However, Braverman (1974) has pointed out that this type of training results in deskilling of the workers since they are only trained in a routine when new technology is introduced. Workers acquire no new knowledge about, or control over, their work activities.<sup>4</sup>

The argument that a training in literacy is necessary as a precursor for other training can also be applied to learning English as a second language. In fact it seems even more essential for a worker to have an understanding of English to receive further training and routinization in any new technology, especially if those instructing the workers

in this new technology are themselves communicating in English, which in Ontario is most likely the case.

The Ontario government belief that basic skills programmes will assist in accumulation stems from human capital theory.

Without an educated, skilled motivated and adaptable workforce, productivity will suffer and efforts to compete in the global economy will be undermined...While education and training are often seen as social programs, they are really investments in our economic future... Those economies that have invested in the basic and advanced skills of their workforces have achieved stronger economic performance through superior worker training and labour responsiveness... Human capital is therefore a critical factor in achieving the full transition to an advanced industrial society.<sup>5</sup>

The theory of human capital was prominent in the 1960's and 1970's and now it appears to be making a comeback. The essential elements are that education is an investment in one's skill and knowledge which individuals can utilize or capitalize on to improve one's employment opportunities and earning ability in the labour market. The higher or more developed the human capital of workers in a company, or for that matter in a whole nation, the higher their productivity and performance will be, thus helping to create economic growth. The people who support this theory<sup>6</sup> assume that investing in human capital will not only promote economic growth but will also create equal opportunity and upward mobility for workers.

The implications of this theory are many. If persons are poor or unable to move upward in the labour market, it is because they lack the investment in their own resources. Taken further this theory suggests that nations which are poor and underdeveloped are this way because of internal problems, such as lack of human capital. However this theory does not and could not account for the structural inequalities that individuals encounter in the labour market such as racism and/or sexism. Nor could it explain structural inequalities in international economic relations.

Although there is no doubt a connection between the educational attainment of workers in a nation and economic growth, exactly at what levels and what types are complex. Education in the form of literacy is a factor, but it does not exist in a linear relationship to economic growth. It has been argued by Graff (1987) that, although literacy may aid communications, it is not a key variable in economic development.

In fact, Graff claims that education was disruptive to early industrialization because of the demand for child labour <sup>7</sup> . He also claims that many societies, such as Scotland and Sweden, that had earlier reached high levels of literacy at 90% or more remained economically impoverished.

Thus high literacy rates do not guarantee economic development, although they may be a contributing factor.

Another criticism of this theory is that wages or earning ability are not solely determined by worker's characteristics but also by unionization, minimum wage and the reserve pool of labourers, to name a few <sup>8</sup>. Berg's (1970) research in the United States also shows that there is little or no relationship between a person's education and her or his job performance and productivity, again discounting the assumptions of human capital theory.

I do not doubt that the Ontario government, and especially the representative I interviewed, wish to promote and stimulate economic growth in the province through these literacy/English programmes. However they have based their efforts on flawed assumptions which mask the broader implications of the state and capital employing these programmes for the further disciplining, regulation and control of workers. These programmes, though, are not aimed at all workers but at those who have been traditionally excluded from our mainstream literate, English speaking society. This leads to the state's second goal of extending the dominant ideology and creating consent on several different levels.

Livingstone (1987) argues that training programmes for workers spread the ideology of equal opportunity and



upward mobility. For the state basic skills in the workplace programmes are based on human capital theory and liberal ideology. As one staff member from the Centre said:

They're [the Ministry of Skills Development] interested in how many people have completed your programme? Have there been any job promotions?...Has there been any advancements?...or any new jobs?... I think they're very concerned that it looks like they are doing something to improve unemployment in this country. To improve the opportunities of those who are not necessarily unemployed but underemployed perhaps. That people are able to advance in our society and that they're helping them to do that...

K.W.:

Are they promoting equality of opportunity and economic advancement?

Staff Member:

Oh yes, definitely. There's never any word in any of these reports about where these jobs are supposed to come from that people are advancing into. There's just this big assumption that they are there and also that there are no other blocks to people advancing. There's a lot of unstated assumptions.

The Ministry representative also agreed that promotions and job creation were the government's aim.

K.W.:

Do you think this programme will aid workers in getting better jobs? Either promotions or new jobs?

Ministry Representative:

Oh we've already seen that. Yeah...We've had employers call up and say "I've got workers whom I'd like to promote but I can't because they don't have sufficient skills..." They also want to be promoted. We know that there

are an awful lot of people who are functioning at a low literacy level...they won't go for promotion, they won't go for other jobs because they know it will demand more reading and writing than they have.

There seems to be too many variables here that are unaccounted for. Apparently all you need is to improve your skills by investing in yourself and amazingly enough your employment opportunities and earning ability will go up. Exactly where these jobs are supposed to be coming from is unmentioned. Although they may be a certain amount of jobs through attrition, most of the new jobs created are in the low paying service sector.<sup>9</sup> Also structural inequalities such as racism and sexism are completely ignored.

Instead the agents of the state, through this programme and others like it, are facilitating the spread of liberal ideology in terms of upward mobility and individualism to the very people who for so long have been marginalized in our society. In effect this is a process of co-optation or of bringing the margins to the centre. It is in this way that the legitimacy of the state and the hegemony its members helped to produce were somewhat shifted, reproduced and propped up. By extending services to these people and by seeming to do something about employment opportunities and economic growth, a compromise was reached but the problems and inequalities that people

live and experience did not disappear; they were for the moment only quieted.

Another aspect of the state extending consent and establishing consensus is in its role as mediator between the interests of Capital and Labour.

Ministry Representative:

...the unions were chosen as kind of franchisers for this programme because they have to deal with the employer and to mount a course that's in the employer's interest because they'll be donating time and all that kind of stuff. On the other hand, the union's major concern is the workers. So you have a very good combination of the interests of the workplace and the interests of the workers coming together.

K.W.:

Does the Ministry feel that this way it's more even and balanced to include both business and labour? That it makes things easier?

Ministry Representative:

It certainly has been so far. It has been an extremely efficient way for the Ministry to get into workplaces because otherwise we couldn't.

Not only has the Ministry of Skills Development advanced a programme whose success depends on the co-operation of Capital and Labour, it also allows for a part of any recognition to be claimed by the Ministry for it too has become an important part of training for the workplace. This programme, therefore, helps to assure the state's legitimacy by extending opportunities to workers while at

the same time helping the capitalists to continue accumulation.

In regard to establishing more training programmes that will help workers adjust to new technology, the Premier's Council reiterates the need for labour and business people to come together.

This new program will make an important contribution to coping with the effects of technology on the part of both business and labour. Moreover it will enhance the process of consultation between labour and management, both of whom will benefit as much from the opportunity to work together as from the information generated in the process.<sup>10</sup>

State intervention in terms of funding and co-ordinating these training programmes has given the state a pivotal role between and for both Capital and Labour. Its position has also given the Ontario government the opportunity to extend its base of support to marginalized people to form a new consensus.

In conclusion, the agents of the provincial government have very clear objectives in setting up Basic Skills in the Workplace Programs. They believe their intervention will assist in capital accumulation while at the same time helping to reproduce a societal consensus and prop up their own legitimacy. However they have based their assumptions on the flawed theory of human capital, throwing the relationship between literacy and economic development into doubt. The actual relationship is between receiving a

training in discipline and routine, and the worker's successful adaptation to new technology.

### Business

Literacy in the workplace is a profoundly self-interested goal for any corporation...As a trading nation, Canada must compete with two of the best educated workforces in the world, those of Japan and West Germany. Is it purely coincidence that these are also two of the strongest economies? As we enter into a free-trade agreement with the United States, we must be particularly concerned that younger Canadians are scoring lower on literacy measures than their U.S. counterparts. If we love our country and would like to see it prosper literacy in the workplace must become a top priority...<sup>11</sup>

The emotional appeal to one's nationalism and "competitive spirit" sets the tone surrounding the issue of literacy in the workplace and business people's sponsorship of these programmes. However, there is much more going on than the struggle with the American, Japanese or West German capitalists for a share of the global market. No doubt the intensity of competition in the international economy provides the context for business people's involvement, but other reasons, some of which closely adhere to those of the state, are also important.

This section of the chapter will examine the objectives of a national business lobby group in promoting workplace basic skills across Canada and it will also examine the objectives of local business representatives

whose corporations are participating in the Hamilton Worker Education Centre's programme. Some of these objectives include capital accumulation and how training in "communication" absorbs certain workers into the production process, thus propping up hegemonic relations.

According to several authors (Foegan, 1984; Koen, 1985; McGowan, 1983; McGraw, 1987), illiteracy costs businesses millions of dollars in lost profit. In fact one report goes as far as to claim that over two billion dollars a year are wasted due to literacy related costs <sup>12</sup>. The Canadian Task Force on Literacy, which published this report, is a conglomeration of business people who represent various private sector interests. Although they sponsor some literacy programs across the country, their main initiative is in lobbying both governments and individual corporations to sponsor basic skill programs for the workplace.

It is important to examine the work of this Canadian lobby group in order to understand the perspective and motivation of some of the national business elite's involvement with workplace literacy. Their overwhelming concern seems to be the amount of money that inadequate basic skills of workers are supposedly costing business people.

The problem has many facets. Literacy related costs to business include costs due to

industrial accidents, lost productivity, direct training costs, lost markets and problems caused by poor morale. 13

The people of the Task Force have great faith that providing literacy training for workers will reduce a large number of these problems, thereby reducing some of the non-wage costs. Literacy may indeed be a contributing factor. However it is very difficult to establish a linear relationship between basic skills and the above mentioned problems.

Despite the fact that there are no statistics kept on whether or not workers involved in industrial accidents are either literate and/or are able to speak, let alone read or write English, the Task Force report claims that the root cause of 10% of these accidents are the lack of individual basic skills<sup>14</sup>. Exactly where the figure of 10% comes from is unexplained. Their assumptions lead them to meaningless conclusions. It is apparent that it is easier to blame the mistakes, accidents and resulting delays by workers on their lack of literacy skill than examining other contributing factors such as unsafe working conditions, unpleasant work atmosphere and people's alienation from their work.

The authors of this report also see lost productivity as a problem associated with literacy for two reasons. One reason is the lost time incurred while workers actually learn to read and write. They obviously assume that there are programs available in most workplaces where the training

will take place on company time and that all non-literate and/or non-English speaking people will attend. These far reaching assumptions are simply not the case for most Canadian corporations.

The other reason for lost productivity is poor morale. The report quotes a person from Youth Employment Services as saying " the illiterate person has no drive or self-esteem."<sup>15</sup> The implication being illiterate or non-English speaking workers do not work as hard or cannot be as productive as literate, English speaking workers. In response to the supposed connection between productivity and literacy a staff member from the Centre replied:

We don't talk about productivity in the workplace because it is a very difficult thing to measure and it's also an insult to the workers to say they aren't working productively because they can't read or write. Workers have been working in Canada and Ontario and Hamilton for decades and centuries very productively without reading or writing a word of English...

Not only are productivity and work related skills possible in an illiterate or non-English speaking workforce but as Berg's research has shown that there is little or no relationship between a person's education and her or his job performance.

As with the objective that the state's representative articulated, this business lobby group not only connects high literacy rates with high productivity but economic



growth as well. The higher a company's production combined with a lowering of non-wage costs, the more capital accumulation is possible, thereby making growth more likely.

Another assumption that this report makes is that raising worker's literacy rates will help Canadian companies to compete in the global economy. High literacy skills translates into workers who can be molded to fit capitalist's needs through the process of retraining for the inevitable advancement in plant technology.

Canada will require a highly skilled workforce particularly when competing against the Japanese. The Japanese are reported to be more educated on the whole with 95% of the total population having the equivalent to two years college in the U.S..<sup>16</sup>

Workers must have basic skills to receive further training in technological changes on the shop floor. Literacy and/or English can be the first phase in learning how to be trained. Therefore it is viewed as a training in being trained. This in itself is a form of discipline for those workers who have often been marginalized and isolated from managers and other workers who do not share the same language and/or who cannot understand written instructions.

These workers are brought into the mainstream to receive a new routine that will allow for efficiency in the introduction of new technology that assists in capital accumulation. This is not to argue however that this is in

fact the actual process, as it occurs. In the following chapter I will discuss the contradictions in the classroom.

Again we see that this business lobby group has based its work on the borrowed assumptions of human capital theory. First of all, they simplistically blame the worker's individual, personal failure in not acquiring basic skills for billions of dollars in non-wage costs that businesses lose. Although poor literacy skills may be a contributing factor business people cannot actually prove a linear relationship exists between illiteracy and these costs because statistics are not kept and only guesses can be made.

The authors of this report also borrow the assumption that there is a direct relationship between high literacy rates and economic growth. As argued in the first section of this chapter, an education in reading and writing can provide a basis for discipline, order and further training but it does not guarantee economic development. Another major assumption that they borrow from human capital theorists is that workers who are literate will be more productive. However, as noted previously, research does not support this.

If these objectives and ideological stance are being sanctioned at the national level, what then of the local business people who are sponsoring Hamilton Worker Education

Centre classes in their corporations? The objectives expressed in terms of benefits to the company are very similar to those of the national business people: cut non-wage costs and continue accumulation. However the focus of the local representatives was much more specific to their own companies, their productive process and the perceived communication gap between workers and management.

Representative from Corporation B <sup>17</sup>:

It is extremely important that our plant personnel understand all written and verbal instructions. Certainly the co-operation of plant personnel and co-ordinating all aspects of our business depends on the quality of communication. We have experienced great difficulty communicating in our plant due to the lack of English-speaking employees. Therefore we felt as a company that it was imperative that we teach our workers basic fundamentals of reading, writing and understanding English.

Representative from Corporation G:

We found that we got into a reasonable amount of trouble. People will do things and they don't know they're doing things wrong because they've never understood the instructions...We have the written instructions up on a lot of the machines but unless someone can understand them...and that doesn't just apply to foreign people but to Canadians as well. I would always use the initials in memos for things...and someone who should have known said to me "what does that mean?". If they don't know, how are they [the workers] going to know out there?

Although there appears to be a certain amount of paternalistic concern for the workers, the underlying motivation is still how the company will benefit from this

improved communication. There are three major gains that the local business people hope to achieve. These objectives included the lowering of non-wage costs, production efficiency and the drawing of marginalized workers into the production process.

Both corporate representatives expressed the hope that this programme would help them keep down additional costs that are due to mistakes, errors and misunderstandings.

Representative from Corporation G:

You say there's no way that job can get past; a bad part get past that particular operation and it does. And that's all you can put it down to, the fact that someone just didn't understand.

The representative from the other company also had "horror" stories of workers misunderstanding work orders which resulted in the wrong material being delivered to a customer. By promoting reading, writing and the speaking of English in the workplace through these literacy/English classes, it is hoped that communication will be improved and the cost of re-doing jobs will be reduced.

Another non-wage cost they hope to lower by participating in this programme are those resulting from industrial accidents. One representative believed that the occurrence of accidents would decline when the employees could "better understand safety regulations and hazard

warning signs." There is no doubt the promotion of health and safety in the workplace is beneficial to both the workers and to the employers.<sup>18</sup> However to blame industrial accidents only on people's lack of basic literacy skills is misleading. Other factors such as unsafe working conditions are unaccounted for in this analysis. The same type of criticism can also be leveled at the supposed direct connection between literacy and other types of errors on the job. In fact a few of the Worker Education Centre staff members commented on what lengths non-literate or non-English speaking workers will go to, to find others who will read things for them or translate instructions so that they did not make major mistakes for which they could suffer.

Another objective of the business people who are involved in this programme is the effect the programme will have on production efficiency.

Representative from Corporation B:

There [in class] the employees basically learn the basic fundamentals of the English language. In addition they learn the plant terminology that is necessary to run an efficient business.

Most of the instructors strive to make their curriculum workplace related and relevant to the participating workers' experiences. One way of doing this is to include the terminology used at the workplace. Usually this terminology is directly related to the workers' duties, the machines

being used or the product produced, in other words to the production process itself. Knowing the language code at any particular work site will probably make the worker's job that much easier because they can communicate any difficulties or ask any questions of their co-workers or supervisors, thereby effecting production efficiency.

The other representative also shared his view on production efficiency;

Quality product. You start off with a good product and you don't inspect it...It used to be the belief that you could inspect everything out; inspect bad products out. It was never really important if someone was too dumb to understand you just end up inspecting it out... Now it's important that we make good work from the first part. If people don't understand what you want there's no way they're going to make good work.

The point being that a worker must understand what managers expect from her or him and understand that they must work in a prescribed way - a disciplined, controlled routine. Thus the Hamilton Worker Education Centre's programme contributes to the conditions under which continued capitalist production is assured.

An important aspect of these conditions is the reproduction of the relations of production. Here we see the relations of wage labour to capital reinforced. What the worker's "place" is in the societal hierarchy is retold. The labourer produces, the capitalist controls the production and owns the product. However the programme may

also contribute to workers' resistance of these relations. A more complete argument on these contradictions will be made in the next two chapters.

Another important objective of the local business people is motivating marginalized workers to participate in the process of production.

Representative from Corporation G:

Our goals really are for the company's benefit. The company is looking at zero defects...we're competing with the Japanese and the word now is zero defects and employee involvement. We've got employee involvement groups but generally people involved in the employee involvements are Canadians: good grasp of the English language. So it's the employees who haven't been involved [that] have to be comfortable in these groups. Zero defects means people have to be educated not only in language but in the job. And it's hard to give education when they don't understand what you're talking about.

Representative from Corporation B:

I also find it [the classes] really helps the employee to participate, and understand the company...

A major reason for sponsoring these classes from the local business people's perspective is the drawing of those workers traditionally on the margins, whose participation may be limited due to different language skills etc., into the mainstream of production. For the company this is a process of co-optation and of getting everyone involved in the production process "on side".

It is an attempt to extend hegemony and the ideology that capitalist interests are after all everyone's interests. This form of inclusion is therefore one business strategy to help develop loyalty to the company and to assure that workers are labouring not only for themselves but for the good of the company, which will in the end reward the employees. This process, it is hoped, will improve product quality and, along with the lowering of non-wage costs and the introduction of new technology, enable companies to grab a greater market share, whether that be globally, nationally or locally. The aim is to be more competitive in a tougher market and to continue the needed accumulation.

One of the problems with this, however, is that these representatives do not take racism into account, especially for non-English speakers, as a limitation to people's workplace participation. Another incorrect assumption is that workers will simply be passive receptors of all this company "good will" without being critical or indeed resisting this strategy.

In conclusion, national business people and local business people are both sponsoring workplace literacy and English programmes for very similar reasons. Both are very concerned with the lowering of non-wage costs and with using these classes as the first phase in training workers for the



introduction of new technology. In other words, these programmes are seen as providing a training in being trained. However, they also have differences in what they choose to emphasize. For the national business group they emphasize the connection between high literacy rates and high productivity which will stimulate economic growth. For the local business representatives, the emphasis is on their local production process and the need to co-opt their workers through training in order to be more competitive and assist in accumulation. Despite these differences the objectives of business people sponsoring these programmes are aimed at increasing a company's competitive edge in a time of increasing competition and realignment of world trade.

### Labour.

In order to understand the reasons for and the objectives of organized labour's involvement in the Hamilton Worker Education Centre, I decided to interview a representative from the Hamilton and District Labour Council. This was the labour organization that not only expressed a representative view of its affiliated members but which also was the primary labour sponsor of the programme and was in fact responsible for overseeing the running of the Centre.

There were three main objectives that labour representatives hoped to achieve within the context of economic change and shifting hegemonic relations. The first was to provide a service to their membership. The second was continued union strength which closely adhered to the third objective of trying to establish a form of economic stability.

Representative from Labour Council:

We have a number of goals. The first is to make our people more literate. To read and write better...On a broader spectrum at this time of year when there's a federal election going on to be able to pick up a newspaper and read some of the issues let alone just hearing it on t.v.....So they can communicate when they walk out of the plant let alone in the plant. When they go to the bank or go to buy something or whatever.

The objective of assisting members in getting along not only at work but in the community and the promotion of literacy for the sake of the worker him or herself, is what I have called unions providing a service for a specific group of union members. This honorable goal was not a trivial matter. However, altruism does not account for this programme in of itself. It is necessary to examine the other objectives as well.

The second objective of organized labour representatives was to continue the strength of unions through membership support within particular workplaces. This goal was pursued in two ways. The first was an attempt

to inform traditionally marginalized members of their rights as workers and of what the union is and does.

Representative from the Labour Council:

From labour's point of view it's getting them [the members] to do basic things like pick up the collective agreement and read it. Some of them might not be aware that the company or the foreman is violating the agreement because they don't know how to read. In health and safety...if he doesn't know what the symbols mean, he can't read then the foreman can say here's the sheet, says it's o.k. and go ahead and work with that chemical.

Chapter six explores some of the specific curricula used by instructors in regard to this. Workers who might not know about the union or the work of the union may become aware of what is allowed in the workplace under the collective agreement. It is information about their rights, protection and guarantees under a union contract that may help to influence some workers to more actively support their trade union. The individual worker benefits in terms of knowledge and the union organizations benefit in regard to strengthening or maintaining membership support.

The second way in which the objective of assuring trade union strength was through employing this literacy/English programme as an initial step for further training. One Worker Education Centre staff person saw it this way:

...they [the union] get the input of these workers hopefully in the future. It's a way of strengthening their membership. It's a way

of providing the tools again for them to take further education like steward's training or collective bargaining or health and safety or compensation. Which is all part of public relations in that sense, "Look what the union can do for you."

Trade unions, as other organizations, need trained people to fill vacant positions and carry on operations. These literacy/English classes were one way of promoting further workers' education within the union, thus helping to maintain the organization.

The third objective was very closely related to the second objective of maintaining union strength. The third objective was to help protect jobs through promoting economic stability.

Staff Member:

The reason that...unions are looking at it is; well, the union of course is very interested in keeping their members employable...Some of the benefits that we look at or try to promote is...skill upgrading. In the era of technological change...people are now being presented with situations where their jobs are completely changing or the potential to keep their job will change...Seniority is no longer necessarily a basis for job security. They have to have some foundation for upgrading and skill upgrading...

Representative from Labour Council:

In some of the workplaces there's video display terminals where you have to punch in a programme and the machine does everything automatically. If you can't read what's on the screen or punch some information into the computer...you'll be stuck.

This objective was very contradictory for organized labour. On the one hand representatives from labour were trying to make their members more employable and thus keep up the strength of their organization which depends on actual working members. They were trying to establish a sense of certainty and job stability through the promotion of skill upgrading. However, on the other hand, their struggle for jobs was reactionary and accommodates the capitalist agenda. Organized labour was helping to reproduce the conditions of capitalist production and continued accumulation through upgrading which allowed for the introduction of new technology. The introduction of new technology has traditionally meant a reduction in jobs and of workers' control of the labour process. Therefore, in the long term, the strength of the union is diminished both by actual numbers of members and by loss of control.

In conclusion, the representatives of the labour organization sponsoring this literacy/English programme have very specific objectives. They were trying to provide a service and also to maintain the jobs of their membership. They were also seeking to maintain their organizational strength through bringing non-active members into the fold and through the promotion of skill upgrading. The former action may, however, cost labour both power and control in the long term.

In this chapter, I have sought to explain the goals of the representatives of the state, business and labour in joining together to sponsor the Hamilton Worker Education Centre's literacy and English programme in the workplace. With the breakdown of international trade barriers, representatives from the state and capital have seen the need to become more competitive in order to at least maintain what they have and at the most grab more of the global market share to accommodate further accumulation. These representatives were also concerned with propping up their own legitimacy. Representatives from business were concerned with co-opting marginalized workers into the production process to establish efficiency, discipline and loyalty. Within this agenda the representatives of the state also play the role of mediator, which enables a compromise between Labour and Capital to be reached.

Representatives of labour demand some type of involvement in these workplace programmes that will not only assist their members but also the union organization itself. It was within the confines of hegemonic relations that most of the demands of these three were met and that all of their interests become further integrated. The status quo was maintained or reproduced. Hegemonic relations shift but were maintained.

## Endnotes

- 1."Newly formed" refers to the fact that the Ministry of Skills Development has only existed since 1987.
- 2."Competing in the New Global Economy." Report of the Premier's Council Vol.1 1988. pp.35-36.
- 3."Ontario Basic Skills in the Workplace Program Guidelines." Ministry of Skills Development. Province of Ontario. July 1987. p.1
4. Rhinehart (1987) points out that technological change is contradictory. While some workers' skills are lost, others' remain the same or may in fact be reskilled.
5. Premier's Council. p.215
6. See for example T.W. Schultz (1963;1971).
7. This demand actually resulted in a short-term decline in literacy rates in Britain. see Graff (1987).
8. In the following chapter this theme is once again looked at in regard to curriculum.
9. See Rhinehart (1987) pp.168-69.
10. Premier's Council. p.18.
11. Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy Newsletter. Vol.1 #2. January, 1988.
12. "Measuring the Costs of Illiteracy in Canada." Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy. Feb. 1988. pp.1-2.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid. p.17.
15. Ibid. p.19.
16. Ibid. p.13.
17. The representative from Corp. B was the person who appeared at the conference on business and literacy. All statements are taken from the workshop.

18. Most of the curriculum from the Centre's instructors has the theme of health and safety. This will be addressed in the following chapter.



## Chapter Five: The Hamilton Worker Education Centre

The relations within the Hamilton Worker Education Centre were vast and complex. Not only was it the site where the different interests of the sponsoring triad were mediated and accommodated through the administration of the programme, but it was also the place in which certain contradictory social relations were both reproduced and resisted by management and the workers of the Centre. It is the actual process of this reproduction and resistance that will form the basis of this chapter.

In order to explain these complex relations this chapter has been divided into two parts. Even though they are difficult to separate, it is necessary to first examine the context or site in the form of the ideological perspective of the workers and the structural organization of the Centre. This background then sets the stage for the second section; an examination of the contradictory relations that are both reproduced and resisted within this site of struggle.

## Objectives and Organization

Instructor:

Popular education is based on the principles of [being] student centred, collective, non-hierarchical...with dignity and sensitivity and all that kind of stuff. But what becomes contradictory is when that is what you're taking into the classroom but that's not how you are treated as employees. While we are existing on that level in the classroom we are employed in an hierarchical, undignified structure. In other words we're subject to the very same employee-employer relations as the learners that we're talking to. So if we talk about popular education as a liberatory force then how can it be so if the very structure of the programme is authoritarian?..Isn't it ironic that we teach in unionized workplaces and the instructors are non-union<sup>1</sup>?..Isn't it interesting that most of the instructors are women and the Advisory is almost totally men?

This insightful and important analysis by one of the instructors at the Centre outlines some of the frustrations and limitations that many people involved with the Centre have experienced in some way. To better understand these contradictions it is first necessary to examine the objectives and methodology employed as expressed by the workers of the Centre.

Instructor:

To me the bottom line goal is to enable people-workers- to have some control over their lives and that's what reading and writing will be able to give them, some more control. Now beyond that because you teach from a certain ideological perspective you

hope that you give them the ability to act on their world, on their environment, from a worker's perspective. That they will adopt that perspective and they will see their position in society and realize the inequalities that are structured in society and become the kind of people that will work to eradicate those kinds of inequalities.

Many of the other instructors also expressed similar perspectives on the goals of the programme. The consensus, with one notable exception, was that their work in the classroom was political. English and literacy education was one way in which oppressed people could better understand their condition and acquire some more control of their lives through acting on their world. It is this taking of power and control for oneself and for social transformation that many of the instructors and staff members have called "empowerment". These concepts follow many of Freire's (1970) educational theories and Gramsci's concepts of organic intellectuals. In fact one staff member talked about the connection between Freire's work and the Centre.

Staff Member:

...I think because popular education is learner based and his (Freire) methodology is learner based that it's what we provide as a guideline for our instructors... Their methodologies come from Third World countries, you know where you can see changes happening, you can cause revolutions. I don't think you can quite readily take that program and plunk it down in a highly industrialized country and make it transferrable. But it's certainly the basic theory behind it and is what we developed the Centre around without a doubt.

What exactly are these theoretical guidelines provided by Centre staff to the instructors? During the first professional development session in January, 1988, part of the first day was spent comparing traditional educational methods with popular education and discussing how the instructors could implement this alternative pedagogy in their classes. The facilitator<sup>2</sup> first asked the participants about their own educational experiences. Many of the people talked about how the curriculum was irrelevant to their lives, how they were made to feel stupid and how strict discipline in the school system had hurt them. Despite the overall negative reaction to traditional education, some people did say they enjoyed school regardless of some bad experiences.

The facilitator went on to explain that popular or liberatory education was fundamentally different from traditional education. First of all popular education was not based on a hierarchical structure with the teacher as the holder of all knowledge which they graciously give to the "ignorant" students. Nor was popular education an irrelevant memorization of facts but it was about thinking critically about your own life situation.

Six essential elements emerged from this discussion of the practice of popular education. First, the classes must have a great deal of participation from all learners;

they must take an active rather than a passive role. The second element was that the curriculum material must be "situated" i.e. it must be relevant to the "cultural, political and social situation of the students."<sup>3</sup> The third element was that the curriculum must also be critical; examining the contradictions between the dominant culture and people's own life experiences.

An on-going dialogue between all participants was another essential element. There must be a recognition that the students or learners already have knowledge but that it was the role of the instructor to present and draw out common themes from people's experiences. The fifth element was democracy. This term was defined as the learners and the instructors having different roles where one was no better or worse than the other. All participants' contributions must have equal value and both individual and collective needs should be accommodated as much as possible through an overall willingness by the instructor to be flexible and responsive. The final element was action. The objective of popular educators was to create with the learners strategies and activities that could potentially lead to social change.

The reaction from most of the participants in the professional development session was positive and supportive. Several of the people had either worked along similar guidelines or were aware of this type of alternative

education through their work with other community organizations, such as international development agencies. The one participant who showed little interest in this pedagogy later said in an interview that his commitment was to teaching, not politics:

It's the opportunity to teach. My affinity with labour is not particularly strong...I feel no great social obligation to empower people. I have some difficulties with this concept. Just the opportunity to teach, to help people not in a "priestly" way but to give something to people they can actually use...

Despite this one instructor's views the majority of the instructors were politically committed to this alternative pedagogy.

Instructor:

Literacy is political...It's the kind of work that really interests me.

Instructor:

I have a commitment to progressive social movements ...like this programme.

Although there are problems with popular or liberatory education as first discussed in the second chapter, and with implementation (as will be discussed in the following chapter) the majority of people (both instructors and staff) working at the Centre were ideologically committed to the pedagogy. In this way most of the instructors acted as what Gramsci would call organic

intellectuals. This form of praxis not only initially attracted many of the instructors to the programme but, as evident in the opening quote of this section, it also informed expectations of relations in the Centre and in the classroom. Also the concepts of popular education had become the official methodology of the Centre which was reinforced through periodic professional development training sessions for the instructors. Many people within the Centre used this alternative pedagogy as part of the foundation for the creation of an ideological terrain on which struggles within the Centre were waged.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the ideological foundation of the Centre was the way in which its structure was organized (See Appendix III). At the bottom of this structure were the union members who were participating as learners in the literacy and English classes in the workplace. From here we move up to the instructors. These were the people who facilitated classes; organizing and synthesizing literacy and English language material from the learners' experiences, wants and needs. Primarily their job was to develop curriculum and teach the classes.

The next level consisted of three staff members: Programme co-ordinator, outreach co-ordinator and assistant co-ordinator. As mentioned before, these women have set up classes within the workplaces by negotiating with business

and union people for their participation. They were also responsible for organizing the training of instructors, assignment of classes, curriculum development, evaluation, resource material and administrative tasks such as budgets, bookkeeping, reports and applications for funding.

The co-ordinators had difficult and contradictory positions while playing pivotal roles in the successful operation of the programme. Not only did they have to perform the aforementioned duties but they were the ones who mediated the different interests of business, labour and government. They had to be able to "sell" this programme to business and labour people, accommodating their particular needs and interests while at the same time adhering to the requirements of the Ministry of Skills Development.

As the staff members played these different roles they also acted as supervisors and trainers of the instructors. However, their autonomy and decision making powers were limited by the office manager who was the next level up in the structure. Staff members were in the unique position of having the heavy responsibility of setting up classes, balancing the different sponsors' interests, supervising the instructors and yet having their power continually eroded.

Even though the co-ordinators were in difficult and contradictory positions, it did not mean that they had no



responsibility for some of the problems at the Centre or that they were simply victims of management. In fact when the Centre first opened it was the co-ordinators who were acting as management. During this period there were many problems including fewer classes than expected, thereby providing fewer hours of work and in some classes there were too few students, (partly due to inadequate recruitment) which resulted in the cancelation of some classes. Many of these problems can be linked to the inexperience of the co-ordinators as managers and may have in part contributed to the restructuring of the power relations within the Centre.

In the summer of 1988, the job descriptions of the co-ordinators and the relations within the Centre changed. Hiring of instructors became the responsibility of the members of the Advisory Board (the final decision-making body at the Centre) and a new authority was placed at the top of the office hierarchy: the office manager.

The office manager acquired power over day to day operations of the Centre and he also became the liaison between the Advisory Board and the employees. All input from those actually in the classroom and those working in the Centre had to go through this person to the employer. One staff member explained her perspective on the difficulties associated with limited access to the decision-making body:

Staff Member:

...it seems that the role of the Advisory is much more directive. They are clearly in the driver's seat and the final decision-making power...it [the process] centralizes what already is too centralized...it cuts off communication between the Advisory and the full-time staff; it's created a bottle neck...while they're [the Labour Council members] becoming more in charge, they're becoming further removed from the Centre...This is a whole new venture for Labour Council, they don't know other than what we tell them. If we don't have access to inform them what the Centre is about, how we work, what we're trying to do, the problems that arise, the successes we have then the people who are making the decisions are not going to make competent decisions.

Certain members of the Advisory were moving to concentrate power in the hands of a few people. Effective input into decisions by learners, instructors and staff was severely limited. The concept of equality was not practiced and hierarchical authority became the dominant mode of power.

Staff Member:

We had originally wanted the Advisory to be about thirteen people, (it's six now)...involving the learners, the unions who had given us so much support and the instructors...opening it up to [Labour Council] delegates who would like to be involved in this, then we would get people who wanted to be involved in education...it would provide a commitment to the Centre and to its users. So it's a much smaller Advisory that doesn't really function as an Advisory but as a management team -- not to say we don't need a management team but we also need advice not necessarily rules...

An obvious paradox existed between the principles of the popular education pedagogy and the structure of the Centre. Most of the instructors and staff had an ideological perspective that advocated a learner-based, alternative education that challenged existing social relations through the promotion of individual and collective action. However they worked within an organization that reproduced the predominant mode of institutional organization in our society; a hierarchy with final power and authority residing with the few people at the top. This structure was not learner-based, equal nor did it create social change. Instead the organization of the Centre helped to reproduce the dominant relations of power in a capitalist, patriarchal society. Needless to say, the tension between the practitioners of these perspectives would erupt in confrontation and contribute to an on-going dispute discussed later in the chapter.

The purpose of this first section was to outline the ideological and structural environment of the Centre in which people were acting and re-acting. The terrain simultaneously created and limited the educational practices of the workers but the environment was also produced and reproduced by the very activities of those involved with the Centre. The next section explores those activities,

relations, the contradictions and the interplay among structure, ideology and agency.

### Reproduction and Resistance.

Having explained the contradictions inherent in the set-up of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre, i.e. the ideals of popular education informing the practice and expectations of the workers (some more than others) versus a traditional structure, we move to the social relations that existed within this context and yet created the context at the same moment. In the remainder of this section I will examine the complex array of power relations including dominance, oppression and the resulting opposition. The initial focus will be on the underlying sexist and racist assumptions apparent in people's activities in the Centre. The focus then shifts to the supposed reproduction of the relations of production and the division of mental work from manual work.

While attending the "Literacy 2000 and Beyond" Conference in October 1989, I heard a male workshop facilitator ask the almost exclusively female participants why there were so few men at the conference. Laughter was the immediate response with one woman shouting back that most men would not work as adult educators because of the low wages. Traditionally certain sectors of the labour

market characterized by low pay and relatively low status are dominated by women workers (Armstrong & Armstrong, 1978; Barrett, 1980; Gannage, 1986). The occupation of adult educator/teacher falls within this sector.

Although there are no Canadian statistics for the percentage of adult educators who are women, there are statistics for the percentage of teachers who are women <sup>5</sup>. As of 1985, Statistics Canada reported that 59.9% of all teachers in Canada were women and in Ontario 62.3% of teachers were women. 6.0% of the employed female labour force worked as teachers in Canada while only 3.0% of the employed male workforce did the same. A clear gender division of labour exists within the teaching profession.

The gender division of labour in teaching has been historically constructed (Danylewycz, Light & Prentice, 1987) around the exclusion of many women from male dominated occupations, which created a reserve pool of cheap labour, and around the patriarchal ideology and practice of women as the primary caretakers and managers of children. It may be argued that adult educators do not teach children and therefore the gender division of labour must be constructed from something else. I argue, however, that the teachers of non-literate adults and/or non-English speaking adults are seen to be teaching those who are "child-like".

According to Balbo (1982) women's employment is concentrated in areas where they provide a service or play the role of "helper";

The very "feminine qualities" that make women so highly valued in family work explain why they are to be found in such large numbers also in paid work in the service sector. Female skills in relating to other people, in caring for others, in loving, are crucial in both their unpaid family and their paid service work. By socialization, by training, by everyday experience women are the professionals of servicing.<sup>6</sup>

One of those areas is in health-care -- looking after those with disabilities or who are seen as "incapable" or "incomplete" in our society. Illiterate adults are often labelled as being incompetents who "waste" their lives (McGraw, 1987) and are inadequate in their jobs. Their "disability" makes them somehow inferior and not whole adults.

Non-literate and/or non-English speaking workers, especially recent immigrants and those people of colour, also face the racist ideology and practice of being treated as though they are inferior to white, western European/American peoples. Different forms of this ideology have often served as justification for colonialism, paternalism and genocide. Since non-whites were "subhuman, simple and inferior", their conquest and exploitation was justified by a "superior" white race.

To bring "civilization" to "primitive" people was the facade used by merchants, the agents of the European churches and the governments in their need to acquire markets and cheap labour (Cox, 1948) in Africa, Asia and the Americas. This racist ideology is part of the underlying context for this literacy/English programme. Not only are immigrant labourers "child-like" and "inferior", thereby justifying their needed "care" by women but they must be assimilated and "civilized" into the mainstream white, English-speaking, literate society both for their own good and so they can be trained as "good" workers.

The ideologies and practices of racism and sexism reinforce and support one another within the literacy and/or English programme. Women are "naturally" gifted in servicing children and the non-literate and/or non-English speaking workers are labelled as "children" based on their supposed disabilities and inferiority. This serves to continue the oppression and subordination of both the learners and the instructors.

These ideologies help to explain the gender division of labour within the occupation of literacy and English as a second language instructors. This helps to keep the occupation female dominated with the persistence of part-time work, low status and the devaluation of "women's work" and women as women.

The gender division of labour in teaching is also evident at the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. Out of the initial seven instructors hired, five were women and two were men. Although the starting wage was relatively high<sup>7</sup>, most instructors only worked four hours a week depending on how many classes were running in a given period of time; most only had one or two classes running consecutively from January to April, 1988<sup>8</sup>. This made the job strictly part-time and thus they had a low income. Also as of February 8, 1989, the office manager (and Advisory Board member) declared in a written statement "that no instructor will be assigned a second class until all available and qualified instructors have a first class...[and] that the positions of instructors are part time and were never intended to be otherwise."<sup>9</sup> The Advisory was therefore imposing part-time work on the instructors, whereas the Advisory had previously promised these instructors that seniority would be first priority in class assignment<sup>10</sup>.

In fact one instructor believed she had been deliberately misled by the staff members in terms of teaching hours:

Instructor:

...I had a lot of difficulty with the way we were hired. I started to realize I was promised eight hours a week with the possibility of twelve hours. By the end of the week of professional development it was clear I was only going to have one class.



The limited hours of work, no paid preparation time and lack of job security forced several of the female instructors to take on other part-time, low paying, low status jobs to survive<sup>11</sup>. Still others returned to school to further their education. Although both the female and male instructors were adversely affected by the insecurity of their positions, it appeared to me that it was the women who suffered the most financially due to a lack of other income and lack of any alternative job opportunities in which they could utilize their skills. Both men had other sources of income, but many of the women were financially dependent on teaching more than just one class.

The running of the Centre itself depended on a cheap source of part-time labourers who were available for odd hours of work and were dedicated to teaching others. It was women workers who overwhelmingly filled these roles. Along with being a traditional source of cheap labour, women also filled the role of providing language services to male learners<sup>12</sup>.

It was ironic and contradictory of the members of the Hamilton and District Labour Council to be advocating (through action and practice rather than stated goals and methods) part-time work and lack of job security for its own employees while other union affiliates such as O.P.E.I.U. and the Canadian Labour Congress were trying to win pay

equity and full benefits for their overwhelmingly female members who work part-time (Gallagher,1982). While some union people were seeking equality in the workplace and a breakdown of the gender division of labour, the Advisory Board members along with the staff members helped to reproduce the gender division of labour within teaching and the job insecurity that is tied to this.

Although staff members initially contributed to this process through their hiring of instructors, this power was taken from them in the summer of 1988 when the office hierarchy was re-structured and the position of office manager was created. This position was filled by an Advisory Board member and therefore it was not surprising that this member was male -- considering that both the Advisory Board and the Hamilton and District Labour Council executive positions were overwhelmingly occupied by men. This process of the centralization of power within male hands over female employees has served to replicate patriarchal relations of dominance and sexism in the workplace.

As mentioned before, it was this centralization of power and the re-structuring of the Centre that erupted into open conflict, however, almost no one I interviewed wanted to speak in any great detail of this power struggle but most acknowledged the difficulties and the personal animosity

that existed between some of the workers (staff and instructors) and management.

Instructor:

We [the instructors] supported the co-ordinators. It was really hard...it was very sad. I had such a good experience teaching and then you have to put up with this bullshit of people and their egos...I'll remember this...They [the Advisory members] can't be trusted to do the right thing.

My understanding of the struggle was that internal clashes about the direction of the programme, authority in the Centre and personality conflicts and grievances erupted into open confrontation when, as one instructor told me, "...there was no more money, they were waiting to hear on further funding so the co-ordinators thought they had to take action. They laid themselves off...The Advisory reaction was very authoritarian; they locked us all out." Despite this worker's claim that they had been locked out, an Advisory member said in a local Hamilton newspaper that the co-ordinators were only laid off due to lack of funding by the Ministry of Skills Development<sup>13</sup>. No mention of the instructors was made. The staff was only allowed back to work and the Centre re-opened after the staff had agreed to a fundamental re-structuring of the Centre.

Staff Member:

It's an employer-employee relationship. You have to learn what the boundaries of your

relationship are and the boundaries of what your constraints are...the way it [the Centre] functions puts a constraint on the programme because if we're trying to be learner-based and very free flowing and developing as our Centre develops...and we're getting constraints from the top then it stops the development or slows it down a lot...we could be much further ahead if we had more room to just grow...It's their money or they're responsible for the money...so if we did majorly screw up they would be responsible for it.

Although not exactly the same as the relations between wage labour and capital, the employee-employer relations within the Hamilton Worker Education Centre imitate the controlling aspect of the Labour-Capital societal hierarchy. The employees provide a service but the employer controls the provision of that service and reproduces the capitalist workplace hierarchy of power and alienation.

What accounts for this conflict and reproduction? Several of the instructors believed that many of the problems were caused by the "newness" of the programme. Such expressions as "growing pains" or "teething pains" were used as explanations for everything from the initial confusion and disorganization any new programme would face to the re-structuring of the Centre and the power struggle between management and the workers. Certainly some of the problems can be put down to the inexperience of all the

persons involved. However after a year of operation conflict within the Centre continued.

Perry Anderson's (1967) article on the limitations of trade union action suggests another explanation. Anderson believed that trade union organization was determined by the capitalist political environment in which it existed;

As institutions trade unions do not challenge the existence of society based on a division of class, they merely express it...by their nature they are tied to capitalism...they are a passive reflection of the organization of the workforce.<sup>14</sup>

Although Anderson has little room for the agency of union members to challenge and change this type of "business unionism" (except perhaps in his account of militant shop stewards), what he sees as the internal dynamics of trade union structure could also be transferred to a union's role as an employer and the relations they help to reproduce with those who work for them. In other words, the employee-employer relations within a union organization will tend to mirror the Labour-Capital relations in our society; they will reflect existing relations rather than challenge them.

This structural reproduction is no doubt an important factor and gives part of the answer; however this is far too deterministic and discounts people's agency. The representative from Labour, however, had his own explanation for the continuing problems at the Centre;

I'll be frank. A lot of the problems of the Worker Education Centre was that a lot of the people that were working at the Centre at the time never had a clue what we were about. "We" meaning Labour...there was some difficulty in that people just didn't know anything about the labour movement- not to knock 'em but they've [instructors and staff] been use to campus life, university life and they come up from high school and if they did work...it would be as a student during the summer. But when you start working with the labour movement they find there's all kind of politics involved and unwritten rules on what [they] should and shouldn't do. I don't know if that's the proper way to phrase it, but we ran into quite a bit of a problem. What was happening was that we were having more arguments and battles then what the Worker Education Centre was there for.

From the perspective of the Labour representative the problem was not inherent in the structure but in the fact that non-labour movement people did not understand the way trade union organizations worked. "Outsiders" without appropriate information expected things from the Centre's management they were unable and unwilling to provide. They were unable precisely because management (who happened to be union officials) choose to replicate traditional management relations rather than implementing a more humane and progressive approach. They were unwilling because the ideology of the supporters of business unionism upheld these relations. Indeed a major part of the continuing conflict centered on this clash between the advocates of the ideology and structural manifestation of business unionism and the ideology of popular education and the demands of its

practioneers for a collective, non-hierarchical organization<sup>15</sup>.

Another important aspect of this conflict and centralization of power was that certain members of the Advisory Board were openly resistant both to the objectives of liberatory education and to the practioneers of it.

Labour representative:

...It's more receptive if you have peer to peer sort of teaching. People don't get intimidated as much if you have somebody who says "Hi, I'm your instructor and I'm out of Stelco or...a postal worker and I'm going to instruct you for the next fifteen weeks." Rather than having somebody who says "Hi, I'm a full-time teacher at high school or university or a student from university." That's sort of, well, wait a minute now I'm going to be taught down to, you know, and that doesn't work too well...You see what we were getting was mini-revolutions in the classes. Part of the problem is the interviewing for the instructors first time around was not done by the Labour Council...Second time around we decided to do the hiring...

The grab for power and control in the Centre was partly due to the Advisory members resisting what they saw as a type of "vanguardism". They rejected what they saw as a bunch of intellectuals telling them and their members what to do and how to do it. Regardless of whether or not that actually happened, the perception was that a group of non-labour movement people were trying to impose their own solutions to workplace problems in the form of a potentially "revolutionary" pedagogy and a particular ideology that

conflicted with the liberal views of the majority of the members of the Advisory Board. Their concerns were valid and have been levelled against popular educators before (Berger, 1974).

The distinction the Labour representative makes between trade unionists and non-trade unionists is valid given the unionists' actual experience of and/or creation of labour organizations and particular workplace relations, that they understand the situation and should therefore determine action for themselves without people who don't live those same experiences imposing "solutions" upon them.

It is obvious from the labour representative's two statements that he does not acknowledge the instructors as "real workers" but only as cerebral beings. In doing so he devalues their labour while elevating physical labour. He falls into the trap of reproducing the distinction between mental and manual labourers just as capitalists with their scientific management have done in the past (Braverman, 1974), only this time superiority was given to manual labour. Granted their labour is different, but one is not better nor worse.

The resistance waged by some of the members of the Advisory Board was both reactionary and contradictory. Although they rejected the popular educators and their pedagogy, the alternative they offered in the form of peer



teaching also had the potential to challenge the status quo through organic educational activity: workers teaching workers. However this practice would also be limited given that the Advisory members fell back on the traditional, hierarchical structures that promoted divisions between workers and stifled societal change.

Despite the strong position of the Advisory members, their reproduction of dominance and authority did not go unchallenged by the workers in the Centre. This resistance has been quite evident throughout the discussions of the conflicting ideologies and of the confrontation where "sides" were drawn and a re-structuring of authority took place. The re-structuring was a result of the interplay among the traditional aspects of the Centre's structure, the conflicting ideologies and the agency of both workers and management. However, there was another aspect to this opposition that has yet to be mentioned: unionization.

Instructor:

In terms of the instructors what we realized was that we have no power. We knew that from the beginning, but that we have to have a little more power...everyone needs a little bit and the instructors have had nothing so we need our little bit. We'll find ways to become more powerful. One of those ways is to unionize, then the Advisory will have to deal with us in a different way but then we'll have a little bit more job security...

Instructor:

Our first step is to unionize, then we'll be in the bizarre situation of a union negotiating with the Labour Council...

This was indeed a bizarre situation and very contradictory. On the one hand the instructors and staff worked for a labour organization and within unionized workplaces, yet they were non-union. On the other, these workers felt that in order to be recognized as workers and have their rights protected (something that they were promoting in their classes for other workers) they themselves needed to unionize. As management the Labour Council by way of the Advisory Board appeared to be no different than any other business management.

Another ironic aspect of all this was that in order to challenge the bureaucratic, traditional setup of the Centre the instructors had to turn to a union which not only had a similar hierarchical structure but was also an affiliated member of the Labour Council. Unionization became one form of resistance the workers at the Centre took in response to actions of the management team. Despite the contradictions and limitations of unionizing, with their relative powerlessness and lack of job security, forming a bargaining unit seemed to these workers to be one of their only options for protection.

The instructors and staff were eventually certified as a bargaining unit with O.P.E.I.U. in January, 1989.

Their resistance to the existing employee-employer relations within the Centre was now recognized by law. However, the story does not stop here. The management of the Centre through the Advisory Board of the HDLC continued to resist the opposition of the workers. The exact sequence of events (See Appendix IV) occurred after my research had ended, but they are critical in understanding the continuing manifestation of resistance and reproduction in the Centre.

By resisting the unionization of the Centre workers, the Centre's management continued to reproduce traditional power relations and inequality in the workplace. Management was charged under the Labour Relations Act with changing the conditions of work before a first contract was signed. Several days after the charges were filed, certain members of the HDLC executive moved in a general meeting that the Centre be closed. They succeeded in passing this motion but the Centre was never officially closed because the Labour Board intervened saying that an operation could not be closed with charges pending. The charges were later withdrawn after management agreed to return to the status quo (See Appendix IV for full details). It was this attempt to quell the workers' resistance by effectively decertifying the workers through closing the Centre that further reproduced inequalities within this workplace.

The Hamilton Worker Education Centre was the site in which many complex and contradictory relations were woven. Here we have seen the reproduction of the gender division of labour in teaching being linked with the racist ideology of inferiority and assimilation. These two not only reinforce one another but they form a fundamental building block in why this programme exists and how its practitioners contribute to the reproduction of sexist and racist relations. The contradictions emerged in that this programme as self-defined by the practitioners was liberatory in nature and yet these oppressive relations were reproduced. Also within this terrain we have seen the re-entrenchment of male managers' dominance over female employees in the way in which the re-structuring of the Centre took place.

Other important contradictory relations were found in the way in which the ideology and structural manifestation of business unionism was in conflict with the ideology and practice of the popular educators. Within this, however, was the agency of the workers and the managers of the Centre sometimes resisting one another's activities as seen by the move to centralize on the one hand or to unionize on the other, while at other times compromising as when the workers, after a long opposition, finally decided to agree to the centralization to keep the Centre open.

By first laying the groundwork of the Centre's structure and the conflicting objectives of the participants it was then possible to describe the interplay between structure, ideology and agency. All three of these aspects moved and developed together, none being the primary mover or determinist. On the one hand there was the traditional, hierarchical structure of power and authority into which a learner-based, egalitarian pedagogy was to fit. Then there was the conflict of perspectives and ideologies as to how the power was to be distributed and the education delivered; each limiting and shaping the other. Also within this site of struggle was the reproduction of other relations of dominance and oppression including sexism and racism. A combination of mismanagement, structural restraints, conflicting ideologies, personal action and inaction and the reproduction of relations of power all had their place in the conflict.

## Endnotes

1. The instructors and staff later became union members with O.P.E.I.U.
2. The facilitator was a staff member from The Metro Labour Education and Skills Training Centre in Toronto, Ont.
3. This quote is taken directly from material developed at the session as I recorded in my participant observer notes.
4. These struggles will be explored in the next chapter.
5. Statistics Canada. Women in the Workplace. Selected data. Minister of Supply and Services. Canada. Ottawa, 1987. The category of teacher is taken from the 1980 Standard Occupational Classification, Minister of Supply and Services Canada. 1981. This category includes university, elementary, secondary, college, and other instructors. There is no category for adult educators; the closest is Other teaching and related occupations in the 1986 Canadian Census where 5,830 men and 7,405 women were working in this area.
6. Laura Balbo. "The Servicing Work of Women and the Capitalist State." in Political Power and Social Theory, Vol.3, 1982. p.255.
7. \$27.00 an hour.
8. Each class was four hours a week for 15 weeks.
9. This statement comes from a letter to all Staff of the Worker Education Centre; dated February 8, 1989.
10. This is taken from a document entitled "Decisions and/or Recommendations as a Result of the Advisory Committee Meeting". This letter is dated January 19, 1988.
11. An example of this is one woman who worked as a cashier at a small store at night.
12. All of the first classes were filled by male learners. Even though this was to change the majority of learners are still men.
13. The Hamilton Spectator, May 4, 1988. p.B1.

14. P. Anderson. "The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Unions. " in Trade Unions Under Capitalism Tom Clarke & Laurie Clements (ed.), Sussex; Harvester, 1978, pp.334-335.

15. Another possible explanation for the relations at the Centre come out of Michels' (1962) work, Political Parties. He argued that people in organizations have the tendency to form oligarchies and become authoritarian.

## Chapter Six: Teaching Methods & Curriculum

The exploration of the contradictory social relations within the Hamilton Worker Education Centre in the previous chapter was only one level of the literacy and English programme. Another level that must be examined is the activities within the classroom itself. Since my research on classroom relations was restricted<sup>1</sup>, I decided to rely on the content of the curriculum developed and used by five of the six instructors, along with their own descriptions of both the material and of relations and activities within the classroom. I acknowledge that this is a limited view given that it relies heavily on the perspective of the instructors but that it is also very important. Despite this limitation it is clear from the instructors' own words and from their curriculum that they, along with the students, participated in the construction of different forms of resistance and reproduction of social relations.

In order to explore these activities of the classroom I will divide this chapter into two sections. The first section will be a description of many of the participants (learners and instructors) and the organization of the



classes. The second section will concentrate on the curriculum in the form of the themes and the material and the way in which these were utilized by the instructors and the learners in the classroom.

#### Classroom settings and participants.

To be able to explain and analyze the curriculum and methodology in the second section, it is necessary to first provide a general description of the classroom context. This context consists of both the instructors and the learners and also the setting which would include such things as where and when the classes were held and under what conditions.

As evident by the discussion of the instructors in the last chapter they were by no means a homogeneous group. The differences in beliefs and life experiences were also apparent during the interview sessions; however many of these people shared several significant characteristics. First, all of the instructors I interviewed had some amount of post-secondary education. All but one had a Bachelor of Arts degree with three either working on or having a Master's degree. All had some amount of teaching experience. This experience was both formal, such as teaching in public schools or universities, and informal

such as teaching in Sunday School or with their own children.

Another important characteristic that all but one of the instructors shared was their involvement in a variety of community political groups. These groups ranged from working with disabled children to peace groups, women's organizations, international development agencies and political parties. Several people talked about how their political activities in community and labour organizations sparked their initial interest in the workers' education programme, and popular education in particular, which directly influenced their work.

Instructor:

I guess I've been interested in the situation of immigrant people. I've been working with an immigrant women's action committee and I'm concerned about immigrant women particularly because a lot of immigrant women have to work in ghettoized jobs like in factories and cleaning jobs...with low pay and they have to work long hours. There's very little protection...So that aspect really interested me because there was a possibility I could work with immigrant women...but I also liked the idea of trying to teach people their rights in the workplace and the idea of empowering people...really appealed to me.

Instructor:

...I liked teaching but I also knew that I did not want to be a high-school teacher...traditional teaching turns me right off. I was very excited about the non-traditional aspect of the programme...I certainly am sympathetic, being a worker myself, to the plight and concerns of

workers...I'm not interested in the Revolution but I am interested in personal revolutions and personal struggles and that's the way I address things.

As argued before, this commitment to popular education, as defined by most of the instructors, not only informed their teaching but also their own struggles in the Centre.

Other important characteristics that must be mentioned were (a) two of the instructors were themselves immigrants to Canada, and (b) of the instructors interviewed four were women and two were men. These few characteristics can only give a minimal sketch of the instructors but knowing these details helps to construct the classroom environment and what, in the general terms of beliefs, knowledge and background or perspective, the instructors brought to the classroom. .

The learners or students, on the other hand, were much more difficult to assess -- considering that none were interviewed. Instead I have relied upon information from official Centre reports to the Ministry of Skills Development and from the instructors themselves. According to the Worker Education Centre's "Activity Report. Funding period September 1, 1987 to March 31, 1988 " there were seventy-three learners participating in the programme in ten different workplaces. The six instructors I interviewed accounted for fifty of these learners in seven different workplaces, making these the focus of the discussion.

All of the learners during this first period of instruction were men. Given that all of the first classes were set up in blue collar, industrial workplaces, it was not surprising that the learners were all men because it was (and is) men who overwhelmingly fill these jobs in the Hamilton area. According to the instructors most of the learners ranged in age from their mid-forties to their mid-fifties although there were a few in their thirties and even fewer in their sixties. For the majority of learners who were not native-born Canadians, English was a second language. These learners' countries of origin were Italy, Portugal, Poland, Pakistan, El Salvador, India, Germany and Yugoslavia. There was also one Canadian francophone from Quebec.

Another important aspect in regard to the learners were the reasons they choose to attend classes. Two very distinct patterns emerged -- those who saw this as a way to improve their employment opportunities, and those who wanted to communicate better, especially with their families, and were not particularly interested in upward mobility.

Instructor:

It [illiteracy] was interfering with his ability to become a foreman. They wouldn't promote him. He was going into his sixties and he was on work crews doing manual labour. That doesn't suit a person of his age.

Instructor:

They see it [the programme] as helping them get better jobs in the plant...for example one of the students picked up a sheet which was a notice of a job that was coming up...we sat down and read through three or four of them and I made sure they could comprehend...and we were going through that and it turned into a good lesson...so it's [the reason for participating] jobs but it's also getting ahead just in terms of being able to communicate with their foreman and fellow workers...

Instructor:

Most of them [learners] it seems wanted to communicate more in English to English-speaking people. They didn't have much trouble in the workplace because they have one supervisor that speaks Portuguese and one who speaks Italian. The Polish fellow sometimes has difficulties but there are at least five other workers who speak Polish so they help each other out. So there's not too much trouble in that sense but they said they find difficulty with the telephone, going to the store, filling out forms, going to the dentist and generally trying to speak to English-speaking people. They want to be able to communicate.

Instructor:

They were older men with grown-up children who have gone to university and who have grandchildren and they realize that they were not able to cope just in their family with a lot of what was going on...one chap said he wanted to learn English because he couldn't talk properly to his grandchild...because his grandchild wasn't learning Italian...he [the learner] was being left behind.

The first reasons for attending classes, as told to the instructors by the learners, were strong indicators of the extent of the re-creation of the ideology of upward mobility, reinforcing their commitment to the job and how

"success" is measured. However, there were also workers who rejected this aspect. These people were in the classes to learn how to communicate better, especially within their own families, rather than as a means to a promotion. This theme will again be illustrated in the curriculum discussion.

Skill levels in speaking, reading and writing differed greatly from one learner and classroom to another. One consistency all the instructors commented on was that the learners could communicate in English fairly well but they needed to improve such skills as pronunciation, verb tense, sentence construction, comprehension and listening.

Instructor:

The majority of the workers that I had certainly functioned very well in English, but things had to be smoothed out and their confidence had to be built up...Usually the speaking was easier for them than the writing.

Some of them could write English sentences quite well though it may be a bit confused. Spelling was a problem. Reading was not really a problem for most of them...

Instructor:

...In my case these guys [the learners] had a fairly good grasp of English. They'd taken some English before they came to Canada and they took some when they arrived. They've been here for some twenty years and now it's been a lot of time since they studied English but they could understand a fair amount.

Most of the classes therefore were a combination of English and literacy skills. Some learners were more developed in one skill than another but both types of skills needed to be

taught together. It was difficult for the instructors to separate these skills from each other; however, special attention was given to those skills the learners' wished to develop.

Also during this first period of classes there was one literacy class for learners whose first language was English. The learners in this class ranged in age from their late forties to early sixties. Another important characteristic of this group was that they were all native-born Canadians and as the instructor said "...they're white, anglo-saxons." The literacy skills of these men also varied a great deal;

Instructor:

Some [the learners] could write but not clearly and not well. It was the same with reading and they couldn't spell...One guy I had...didn't know the alphabet...it was strange. He could only get to "D"... "A,B,C,D"... he just couldn't conceive of it and matching sounds with symbols...it was difficult.

Despite the differences in skill level, all the learners had a very limited knowledge of literacy. Each learner needed a fair amount of individual attention, which was not a problem considering the small number of participants. Although the official report lists five learners as registered in the literacy class, only three showed up with one eventually dropping the programme.

Attrition during this period from January to April, 1988 was a large problem. Although the official report lists fifty learners as registered with these six instructors, the instructors themselves reported that on the whole they only had a regular attendance of thirty-five. Thirty percent of those who had initially signed up for classes either never showed up or dropped out during the fifteen week period.

There appears to be several reasons for this attrition <sup>2</sup>. One reason often mentioned as a problem by instructors was the holding of classes after workers' shifts.

Instructor:

They [the learners] were tired you know. They'd work eight till four and class time was at four-thirty. It's [the learners' job] hard work. They'd have to weld so many pieces...and they're doing that constantly...so they're just exhausted.

Instructor:

I know it's [attrition] a problem of being tired after work, that's probably why I don't have anyone coming in after the dayshift. Especially in the summer when it's so hot in there they don't feel like sticking around the factory for another two hours.

Although there were no classes on company time <sup>3</sup> during this first period of instruction, many of the later classes were, which made them part of the work day rather than in addition to it. Not only are classes on company time a way for



management to take an interest in the programme but it would also be a benefit to the workers in terms of less fatigue and stress. Also by scheduling the classes during the shift there might be more workers participating who couldn't before because of after-work commitments to their families and to themselves. However there were other reasons for the loss of students.

One of the biggest problems for both the recruitment and the attrition of learners was the stigma associated with being illiterate and therefore literacy training.

Instructor:

We actually go down to the plant during their [the workers'] lunchbreaks and just go around and talk to people to see who's interested...the native-born Canadians they just look on it in a much more negative sense. They're not interested and they look down on the people who are there. It's unfortunate but that's just the way it divides up. So when you go down there [to the factory] -- I went down and I talked to a few people that were native-born Canadians and they looked at me like I was from outer-space.

Instructor:

One guy was confronting the despair in his life that he had over not being able to read...his children interfered with him [coming to class] saying he didn't need to and that they could teach him. He saw going to his children for reading etc. as a source of despair...he stopped coming.

Instructor:

Yeah, there was a lot of stigma not from the other learners in the class but from other

workers not in the class, who called them [the learners] stupid...

For many people to admit that they cannot read or write in a society where the necessity of literacy skills is seldom questioned, is a very difficult thing to do. Attending these classes as someone who was born and raised in this country and speaks English as a first language is admitting their "disability". The outcome as quoted above can be despair and/or insults from others. It was this type of harassment that kept away many (including many of the harassers themselves) who might need these classes. This may have been true especially for those people who believed that admitting their illiteracy at work could bring on job repercussions.

Although the stigma of being "stupid" was also a problem for some of the English as a second language learners, they were more receptive during recruitment and they made up by far the largest percentage of the learners. It seemed to be more acceptable for people not originally from Canada to attend these classes than for the native-born people to attend literacy classes. Despite this large participation, many of the learners not only had to endure the imposition of this stigma from relatives, friends, co-workers and themselves, but many also suffered racist slurs and harassment in the workplace in general and around the issue of these classes in particular.

Instructor:

I know that racism exists...I wasn't surprised [but] I was disappointed that it had to undermine my course...we'd be sitting in the corner of the cafeteria, maybe the three of us trying to work on something and one of the other workers would come over and make some really insulting comments or ask if we were reading "Dick and Jane"... they just wanted to interrupt and interfere in the class...[The learners] would say under their breath after "why don't we go to McDonald's and have this English class? This is just ridiculous." But they are, unfortunately, in that factory used to being insulted and harassed in that way.

One of these three learners withdrew from this class, citing the harassment as unbearable. Given these conditions it was unlikely that other immigrant or non-English speaking workers would join the programme <sup>4</sup>.

Another factor that contributed to the loss of learners was unemployment. At least two of the companies involved in the programme were going through economic "distress" and were in the process of "re-structuring" their workforce or what is commonly known as laying off workers. Since the programme was designed for employed, unionized workers, those who lost their jobs could no longer participate in the programme.

A final factor that must be addressed was the resistance of workers to the programme. Resistance can take many forms. Here we have seen one form in the resistance of some native-born, English-speaking workers who refused to have anything to do with the classes. While refusing to

view illiteracy as "their own problem" they reinforced and reproduced the idea that anyone who could not read and write had to be stupid, which may have also helped to reinforce and justify their reproduction of racism in the workplace. It was a power relationship that gave these workers some amount of superiority over another oppressed group, thereby reproducing dominance and both their own and others' oppression.

Another form of resistance that occurred within the classroom was from those learners who may have dropped out of the programme for none of the reasons or in addition to those already given. According to several of the instructors some of the learners were disappointed with the popular education pedagogy with features such as no fixed curriculum, no formal evaluation and no credits for the course.

Instructor:

I think we'd have a lot more people if we gave them[the learners] a formal evaluation, like exams and some type of credit toward a degree...these things count to a lot of people.

Although it is speculation on my part, some of the attrition may also be due to some of the learners' unwillingness to participate in the popular education methodology. This question is again examined in the next section.

The classroom setting, the location and the conditions under which classes were conducted also varied. Out of the initial seven classes that the six interviewed instructors taught <sup>5</sup>, three were actually conducted at the workplace while the other four classes were held at the local union's facilities, such as offices or halls. Of the three instructors who actually taught on company property, only one was totally satisfied with the arrangement. A separate room within the plant with a photocopier and in which the participants could leave material etc. was provided. This instructor experienced co-operation from both management and union officials and never had any interference from either party. Despite the desirable setting this was one of the workplaces in which workers were being laid off, thereby creating some stressful and uncertain conditions for both the learners and the instructor.

An instructor at a different site thought her classroom location was "o.k."; however a foreman had monitored the class -- at one point making her "angry because I knew he was watching...by his very presence he changed the scope of things." The monitoring of classroom activities by management created a barrier within this class. All the participants had to be careful not to "offend" this manager by what they said, thereby disrupting

the flow of activities. Union officials also came to this class but they spoke on issues such as the collective agreement and contributed to the class rather than just sitting as monitors. This instructor was not uncomfortable with the union presence at all.

If monitoring becomes more widespread in other workplace classes and is done on an on-going basis, the popular education pedagogy could be seriously challenged and its impact limited on such issues as discrimination or other problems in the workplace. One instructor summed up the limitations of teaching at the workplace;

You can't really go into the workplace and have your "A,B,C 's of Radicalism" or whatever you want to call it because you're in the workplace. You're on the property of the company and so you have to be subtle in the things that you do and combine it with the objectives that the company has. The company's objectives are legitimate in the sense that they're concerned with issues like safety and that sort of thing and you have to work with that as well.

The other class taught on company property has already been discussed to some extent. The class took place in the workplace cafeteria where participants were racially harassed by other workers. The instructor found these conditions extremely difficult but could not get co-operation from either management or the union local to improve conditions.

Instructor:

I had assurances from the union that they would try to get me a better classroom. I had similar assurances from management but there again as I told you our class was caught in the middle...I think we were just caught in some power struggle...I went to both union and management personnel to get this straightened out to no avail.

The problem of adequate facilities for this instructor and these learners never was straightened out. It was not until a new class was to begin that the staff members of the Centre got the company and union officials to agree to a private meeting place for the class.

For the instructors who taught classes in union facilities, the extremes which the other instructors experienced were not as evident. All the instructors reported that the facilities were adequate, providing enough space, privacy and materials, such as tables, boards etc. The only difference between the classes was the amount of contact with union officials (there was no reported contact with management). Contact with union officials ranged from some amount of active participation, especially by union stewards in such things as leading discussions on the union's organization, the collective agreement or showing films on health and safety, to acknowledgement (but indifference) to the programme. There was acknowledgement by allowing the classes in their facilities but indifference through lack of interest and participation. It is unclear as to why some union officials weren't involved but they may

not have felt "qualified" to participate or they may not have had the time or the inclination to do so <sup>6</sup>.

A potential limitation to the popular education pedagogy also exists in using union facilities. If union officials monitor classes, learners may be limited in expressing problems or concerns they have with the union. However the opposite effect could also happen: learners' concerns could be addressed by the officials on hand.

Given that classes take place either within the workplace or at union facilities, class participants should determine whom they will allow to monitor and/or participate in their education. However, if continual monitoring or any other type of barrier such as harassment was to occur, the best possible solution would be for the Centre to have its own classroom facilities. For the learners who are paid half or full time to take part in the classes, classrooms at the Centre are impractical because of shift work. In this case separate classroom space must be provided to avoid a repeat of the harassment at the one worksite.

In conclusion, I have tried to build an outline of who the classroom participants were and the environment in which their activities were taking place. Although there were few consistent patterns across the seven different classes, several things did stand out during this initial period of instruction. The first was the overwhelming



participation of English as a second language learners in the programme and the almost total lack of English as a first language, literacy learners. Another predominant pattern was the fairly high rate of attrition within the classes. The other outstanding feature during this period was the lack of consistency in regard to classroom location and setting. The possibilities of the actual classroom environment ranged from excellent to totally inadequate. Although the location of the classes was negotiated between the Centre staff, the business people and the local union people, and even though most of the classroom space provided was adequate, some minimum standard for the facilities should be established by the Centre's staff to avoid a repeat of the above-mentioned problems. The following section of this chapter will focus on the pedagogy in the classroom and the curriculum developed and used by instructors.

#### Pedagogy and Curriculum.

To complete the outline of social relations within the classroom I now turn to the pedagogy and the curriculum employed by the instructors of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. Although the pedagogy was informed by the writings of Freire, the actual practice of these methods was not

always a straight- forward or easily accomplished matter. The first part of this section of the chapter will focus on the problems and the successes of this non-traditional, learner-based pedagogy. This will then be followed by a descriptive account of five of the six instructors' curricula. By focusing on the curriculum themes and material, an outline of the contradictions within the curriculum and in the implementation of the material will develop.

During the original Hamilton Worker Education Centre professional development session, the fundamental elements of the practice of a liberatory pedagogy were first conveyed to the instructors. Freire's writings were used as "the basic theory" <sup>7</sup> behind the development of this pedagogy which was to be specific to the Centre and to the Hamilton workplaces in which the programme took place. Although I have discussed both Freire's theories of education and the pedagogical guidelines developed by the staff at the Centre in previous chapters, it is first necessary to briefly compare Freire's work with the Centre's pedagogy to establish the theoretical boundaries in which the instructors were working.

Although Freire originally developed his pedagogy for the oppressed, illiterate people of Brazil, his work has been utilized in adult literacy campaigns in other "third

world" countries, such as Chile and Guinea Bissau. As one staff member pointed out, it was impossible to take these methodologies as is and transfer them to industrialized countries. Different languages, and social, political, cultural and economic factors of different societies had to be taken into account, thus making the practitioners adapt these methods to the situation.

In the pedagogy of the workers of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre it is easy to see the common threads and connections to Freire's pedagogy. First, to begin with both share the perspective that the practice of education, and literacy in particular, is a political act. Traditional education and educators have tried to integrate people into the status quo without questioning the ideology or "myths" of society. Liberatory educators, or organic intellectuals, on the other hand promote the critical examination of people's own experiences in order to understand the contradictions and oppression in our society. The latter emphasizes control over one's life while the former emphasizes conformity and complicity.

Second, another shared method included situating or making the curriculum specific to the participant's own environment. This was accomplished through a dialogue between all the participants -- reflecting upon and investigating their own lives and experiences by posing

problems about it. An important aspect of this was that the group be non-hierarchical in the sense that there was no authority and all participants teach and learn simultaneously.

Third, both these pedagogies also shared the common objective of promoting informed social action by the group's participants to change and gain more control of their own lives and in turn promote social change in their own societies. Fourth, the practitioners of these pedagogues also shared a common literacy technique of generative themes. Dialogues and curriculum material were to be structured around specific themes that arose from the participants' own lives. An example of this from Freire was his own emphasis on the theme of culture, while at the Centre a common theme was the work process or the union at a particular workplace.

Despite this lengthy list of methods held in common there were also differences between Freire's and the Centre's pedagogies. By far the most significant differences occurred in the area of literacy techniques or the actual teaching of literacy skills. Freire developed his program for people who had little or no literacy skills whatsoever. To accomplish this he would first send researchers into an area to talk to the other participants to understand some of their experiences and the different languages, phrases, expressions etc. used by different

groups. This research would then be developed into generative words and themes which would be codified and broken into syllables to make further combinations of words<sup>8</sup>.

The instructors at the Centre had none of these techniques. In fact the instructors were given very little by way of formal literacy or ESL teaching techniques. Instead suggestions were given at the professional development session as to how to develop certain techniques and curriculum. One example of this are the photostories. Here the instructor or another participant would take photographs of the workplace and the learners would write a story to accompany the photos. Keeping journals was another example and helped the learners to keep track of the lessons. Also suggested were role plays of situations and themes that could have happened to any of the learners, such as how to talk to the boss, what to do at a job interview or what to do if harassed. From these techniques language functions, such as reading, writing, spelling and speaking, would then be developed.

At the Hamilton Centre, however, there was no set agenda or one way of teaching. An instructor was free to use or not to use any of these techniques. They were provided with some resource material for developing techniques and curriculum and, although most of the

instructors used these resources, many found that the material for basic language functions, such as the differences between adverbs, verbs, nouns and conjunctions, were not readily available at the Centre.

Instructor:

I incorporated from different sources and from other instructors. You have to be pretty resourceful and organized from week to week...my biggest problem was finding material on the basics like what an adverb was...the material that I had, had access to at that point was largely irrelevant. They [the learners] were just above and beyond it. Some of the stuff I could use but I had to modify it. I had to go out and get a lot of my own material... I found some [resources] at the Public Library... I ended up teaching a lot more language functions, nouns, verbs and that kind of thing then I thought I would and less union stuff then I thought I would.

The advantage of having no set agenda was that the instructors could be responsive and flexible. Not only could they meet the specific needs of the learners, they could also use the techniques that they and the learners were most comfortable with.

Instructor:

They [the learners] were really resistant to doing role-playing and that kind of thing.

Instructor:

I wouldn't say "let's imagine so and so has this problem"...it just wouldn't have worked...but if I said "have you had this kind of problem?" They said "oh yeah"...they wanted real things that were happening to them...Men can be very rigid and they don't want to get into this role-playing. It's

childish and it's uncomfortable and it can be kind of frightening.

The flexibility of the programme was therefore one way to accommodate some of the resistance of the learners to any one technique: if one does not work, try another. The disadvantage of not having a standard literacy technique or method, as Freire advocates, is that some of the basic language functions may not be taught or emphasized.

Instructor:

...To learn English, you have to know there has to be a verb in a sentence. If you ain't got a verb, you ain't got a sentence. Really good English there (laughter). Something has to be happening to have a sentence...you have to know parts of speech and what they do. It's essential...we [the instructors] need more of this.

Although most of the instructors did incorporate such material, depending on the level of the learners, it was not stressed in the original professional development session, nor was there an adequate amount of resources available at the Centre. Several of the instructors told me that they requested future professional development sessions deal specifically with teaching the basic parts of speech, reading and writing.

Another significant difference between the official pedagogy of the Centre and Freire's pedagogy was Freire's insistence that the teaching of literacy begin with an

oppressed group's own language and experiences "to name the world" <sup>9</sup>. Although the instructors at the Centre also started with the learners' own experiences as part of the curriculum, most of the learners were not starting with their own language or their own words.

The objective of the instructors' pedagogy may have been for the learners to acquire more control over their lives in an English-speaking, literate society, but to accomplish this there was a subtle push toward assimilation or acculturation. A majority of the learners could not "name the world" in their own language but had to use the form of language ("correct" English) that ultimately benefits those who Freire has called the oppressors by silencing the language and the words of the oppressed.

This is a fundamental contradiction in the programme. Teaching English as a second language in the workplace may result in some control for individual workers and it may promote communication across ethnic and racial lines through a common language creating a greater potential for solidarity between workers, but it also promotes assimilation of immigrant, non-English speaking workers into the Canadian anglo-saxon culture and ideology. It is in this way that the programme helps to reproduce racism.

Clearly the pedagogy employed by people at the Hamilton Worker Education Centre was based on Freire's



theories of popular education. They did choose from Freire those aspects which met the needs and wants of the participants in the classroom. Although the practitioners of this pedagogy have skillfully built their own form of education to fit an industrialized Canadian context, they have also made modifications in the pedagogy and in its implementation to handle the resistance of learners inside the classroom and to live within the limitations created by the sponsorship of government, labour and business. The next part will discuss the problems and successes of implementing this pedagogy.

### Implementation

Within weeks after the five days of training in the pedagogy of popular education, most of the instructors went into the classroom. Here they faced the challenge of implementing the non-traditional, learner-based method of teaching the reading and writing of English to workers in the workplace. The results of their efforts were as varied as the participants and as the classroom environment. Almost everyone met with some type of limitation or barrier to their teaching, which resulted in modifications, but in addition they all met with a certain amount of success <sup>10</sup>.

Since the pedagogy was based on the learners' wants and needs they had considerable impact, next to the

instructors, on the direction of their own education. The flexibility of the programme allowed the instructors to accommodate a full range of possibilities -- from acceptance and participation in the popular education methods to partial acceptance of some aspects to actual resistance by some of the learners and a demand for a more traditional means of education.

Of the seven classes during this initial period of instruction, only one closely followed the popular education model.

Instructor:

... the learners participated a lot...these guys were fairly political and had no trouble talking about free trade or racism but they didn't talk much about their feelings: how political realities affect us as people.

K.W.:

At any point did you specify that these classes were different from traditional forms of schooling?

Instructor:

Yeah, in fact we spent some time talking about what is education. What is knowledge and what are the differences between education and knowledge. What does it mean to be smart?..it was very useful. Education, knowledge and smarts are not always the same thing. They [the learners] came up with the phrase "The most important thing in this world is to be a knowledged man." You don't have to have one fucking day of education to have that.

Not only did the learners participate in a critical dialogue about society and their workplace but the curriculum was

also exclusively student directed and the objective of social action, to a certain degree, was achieved.

Instructor:

...one thing we did around free trade was we were talking about having a referendum...Somebody said "Yeah, we should write a letter to Mulroney." I said "Good, write a letter to him right now" and they did. They all wrote letters to Brian Mulroney...

Another example of action taken by learners in this class was in regard to their union;

Instructor:

They [the learners] had elections coming up for the union president and stuff and they requested a forum to hear the candidates speak...what's happened in the past is most members don't even know who's running until they go to cast their votes...so they asked for that and they were also going to put in a request for a translation of all union materials.

In spite of this apparently successful implementation of the popular education methodology, certain contradictions existed and accommodations were made. Within the practice of the pedagogy a major contradiction took shape around the aspect of the degree to which the programme be learner-directed: how much control the learners should have over the teaching agenda. On the one hand the principle of equality and the belief that all participants were both teachers and learners at the same time established the theoretical boundaries of practice and yet, on the other hand, this

flexibility allowed the learners to steer the class, and particularly the curriculum, away from other fundamental aspects such as critical examination or from themes that the instructors felt were important. For instance in the above class, learners resisted discussing the issue of health and safety at the workplace.

This type of resistance, especially to themes such as health and safety which both union and business people were pushing for and expected, put the instructors in a difficult position. They had to accommodate the learners and yet were expected to accommodate the expectations of the sponsors as well. Most of the instructors, however, felt it was necessary to accommodate the learners first because the classes were centered around them and their experiences.

Instructor:

I told them [the learners] I'm not just going to talk [while] you listen and take notes. It's going to be relevant to you. What do you want to do?..The students then made clear what they wanted and that's what I gave them.

The other instructors had a varying amount of success in the implementation of the pedagogy. In some classes it took time before the learners would accept the methods or participate, while in other classes there was little or no acceptance or participation.

Instructor:

There was a deal of hesitation at first but when they [the learners] saw the method in action, they felt good about it. They felt good that I was interested in where they were from, their family, their job at work...they eventually became participants and not simply students.

Instructor:

They [the learners] just wanted to learn to spell. It was me who was introducing the themes. They didn't come to get a political education. I just knew what the limits were; you have to accept them...I, at one point, suggested we go to a union meeting together but there wasn't enough interest. They really just wanted to learn English...The ideology just wasn't that relevant to them...It was mostly "I want to know more spelling. I want to read more and read better."

Most learners were not familiar with the method of critical, action-oriented participation in education. Therefore they had to learn it. To do this, however, the classes had to be initially instructor-directed. If the learners resisted participating in a dialogue or were unwilling to take actions, they still nevertheless directed the classes. They may, however, have directed it back toward the traditional and perhaps more familiar methods of teaching where the teacher is in charge and sets the agenda.

Instructor:

I tried not to make it hierarchical...but it becomes easy to fall into the pattern of being instructor and being student. With this class I did a lot more talking than I should have but that's a lot of what they wanted.

Another example of this resistance to the popular education method and the resulting contradiction of who was controlling the class and its direction was the insistence of some learners for formal, routine exercises and for formal evaluation of their work.

Instructor:

Some of them [the learners] felt like they weren't really learning unless they had exercises to do... it's all very well to be free floating, but let's face it you're teaching someone how to read and write, they have to read and write... I think that it's necessary to do some exercises not just in the group sense but in an individual sense. How are they going to know and feel encouraged that they've learned? How am I to know? Again we get back to the bloody exams...but what do you replace them with?

The insistence by some learners for more traditional methods was in tandem with the resistance of such techniques as role-playing or keeping a journal. For the most part the instructors learned by trial and error what was and was not acceptable to the learners. The instructors had a variety of success with different techniques but each class was different as were the reactions of individual participants.

Instructor:

You [the instructor] have to listen to the learner...you have to be aware and flexible and be willing to throw out your lesson if they want something else...

Learner-directed education was very contradictory. On the one hand the theory of popular education gave equal

value and control to all participants and it did not reproduce the traditional, hierarchical form of education. Also some of the learners used their own knowledge and experiences as curriculum -- making it relevant to their own lives. However, on the other hand, this learner-directed programme also created reactionary situations -- moving back toward the traditional methods of the teacher as the authority and the passivity of the students. The very power the learners had in this programme enabled them to potentially give up control and power in favour of the instructors.

Despite the problems and limitations the instructors faced in the implementation of the pedagogy, they also achieved a great deal. In most classes there was a certain amount of participation and dialogue and, though not always critical, the curriculum was relevant to the participants by way of their work, their past or their families. Four of the six instructors also said that a certain amount of political discourse about current issues or the union or management occurred at least once within the fifteen week period.

Although only one instructor reported any concrete action resulting from this course, several of the instructors spoke about the role of literacy in future action and the impact of the course on the learners.

K.W.:

What impact do you think this programme will have on the student/workers?

Instructor:

No matter what level the learner is at, this project is going to help his or her self-esteem and confidence. And that is not a small thing, that is a big thing...if they're starting to feel better about themselves as people, as human beings then we're on the road to empowerment...if it does this then the programme's successful...I think it's a stepping stone.

K.W.:

Do you think people are developing some sort of political consciousness from all this?

Instructor:

I don't know whether it's that organized. They're [the learners] not about to become activists because of this course or anything like that, but I think that it raises points that bring home and ring true for them...How far that goes I don't know. We're not with them long enough to see if they've developed in that sense.

K.W.:

What is the most important thing about this worker education?

Instructor:

I would say making people feel that they have something to offer. That just because they can't speak English very well, that they have a lot of potential, that they have rights...when you see that starting to happen it gives great hope...and I think they can see that they can make changes in their lives.



Instructor:

To let people know they have some control and maybe to let them know where they don't have control and why and even that can be empowering. Maybe it will make them feel like they can link up with people in similar circumstances.

Instructor:

Pride. Pride in the sense that I have something to say and I can do something about what I have to say.

Regardless of whether or not their own experiences matched the theoretical aspects of the pedagogy, all of the instructors who were interviewed, agreed that these classes helped the learners' self-esteem, confidence and language ability. Everybody benefitted from the programme whether or not the ultimate objective of political mobilization or "raised consciousness" was achieved. Many of the instructors saw this programme as a start for people to gain more control of their lives in a literate, English-speaking society and this in itself was a form of empowerment. Although it has been impossible to discuss the pedagogy without including certain aspects of the curriculum, it is now necessary to detail what was taught in order to discuss other contradictions in the programme.

### Curriculum

To complete the discussion of relations in the classroom, I now turn to a brief description and analysis of

the curriculum. The curriculum explored here was constructed and utilized by five of the six interviewed instructors <sup>11</sup> in six of the seven classes during the initial period of instruction. All of the material came directly from the interviews with the instructors with examples either being supplied by the instructors themselves or were made available to me through the curriculum files at the Centre and from the yet unpublished Popular Education Manual by Elise Hopkins for the Hamilton Worker Education Centre.

The amount of material, with several different themes and language functions being used in classes, was vast. Therefore the first part of this section will concentrate on several of the common themes employed while the second part will explore some of the unique themes developed. Appendix II has a comprehensive outline of the curriculum with examples.

By way of introduction all the instructors used a lesson called "Life Journeys" from ESL for Action. Problem Posing at Work. by Elsa Roberts Averbach and Nina Wallerstein. This was a way in which all the participants could get to know each other through sharing their life stories (see example 1, Appendix II).

Lesson: Life Journeys. Learners located their homeland and hometowns in atlas. Informal discussion of our life journeys. Class collectively composed life journey of one

selected learner which was written on both flipchart and in learners' journals. Noted past tense endings in above life journeys. Discussion of verbs as action words. <sup>12</sup>

The discussions of life journeys often included what was happening in their country of origin at the time they immigrated and what they hoped to find by coming to Canada. Also discussed in many classes were the reasons the learner had come to class and what they wanted to learn and how. Many of the instructors would then use people's experiences as discussed in the life journey lessons to build other curriculum and language functions.

Instructor:

I tried to incorporate their personal histories with particular work themes and with language functions and tie it all up together.

Another theme common to all but one <sup>13</sup> of the classes was health and safety issues on the job. One instructor used a dictionary around this theme: the learners would have to look up words related to health and safety. This exercise would help in their spelling and build confidence for writing. The learners would then make up sentences using these words and read out their work to the class. This is a good example of not only teaching reading and writing but listening and speaking skills around a theme that may help the learners on the job.

Other instructors who used this theme also did such things as discussing the hazards that existed in the

learners' particular workplaces, the learners' own experiences around this issue, procedures for dealing with hazards and the learners' right to refuse unsafe work according to the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act. The emphasis in the curriculum was workers' rights and the actions the learners as workers could take to protect themselves. The theme of health and safety contributed to the struggle of workers for better and safer working conditions but at the same time it accommodated the concerns of the employers who wanted to reduce non-wage costs of compensation payments and the down time of workers and machines. This theme also benefitted the government by potentially lowering the costs of workers' compensation while the union benefitted by protecting their members, keeping them at work while improving the union's role of defending and improving these protections.

Another reoccurring theme was the learners' own work process; what they were doing in their jobs.

Instructor:

...one of them [a learner] was having problems doing a report for his shift...there were certain things he was having problems expressing in his report because of his English and he said it was really crazy. Sometimes he'd say there was a problem when there wasn't...he understood his machine there was no problem there, but he wanted to express more exactly what was happening. So we did a whole thing looking at his machine's parts and talking about the words he used, the terminology he used regarding the shift.

Another instructor used the theme of the labour process to ask the learners to describe what they were producing and how they were producing it. Several different language functions would then be developed from their descriptions, such as the writing of sentences, grammar and verb tense practices.

These instructors were following the popular education pedagogy by exploring the learners' own experiences, in this case in regard to their work, and by incorporating them into the curriculum. They were also meeting the needs of learners who had particular problems with their machine or with shop floor terminology. Despite this, the use of the labour process as part of the curriculum was contradictory because, as they are following the learners' direction and validating those experiences, they are also reproducing and reinforcing the capitalist relations of production. The labour process as it existed was legitimized through this curriculum. Working in a predetermined manner for somebody else who received most of the profits but produced little or nothing was again the right thing to do.

Not all of the learners, however, were interested in this theme.

Instructor:

...we often talked about them [the learners] and what they do in the workplace. But they didn't like to talk about it very much. "We do it [work] eight hours a day and we don't want to talk about it." So it was really hard.

Instructor:

...They [the learners] didn't want to talk about their work..."it's not so interesting" they'd say, "we just do the same stuff all the time." They were bored with their work.

Instructor:

They [the learners] weren't really interested in talking about what they did all day...but we did talk about the workplace in the context of who does what jobs in regard to workplace discrimination.

There were many learners who resisted discussing their work process. This resistance may not in itself be a challenge to the existing relations of production but may instead show the extent to which these workers were alienated from their own labour. However there was also a general pattern in that those who resisted this work process theme were for the most part also those who were not interested in the promised promotions but were more worried about communicating with their grandchildren. Those learners who wanted to discuss their work and learn how to write better reports etc. were mostly those who were interested in the possible opportunities for promotion that they believed such skills could open up for them.

Three of the five instructors also used the local union as another curriculum theme. One instructor used the booklet It's Our Union Too! A handbook for immigrant workers in Unions in Ontario. by Betty Dondertman and Najja Modibo, to discuss the positive and negative aspects of union membership. Such language functions as comprehension skills, vocabulary, verb tenses and sentence structure were practiced.

The other two instructors used the collective agreement as their material to discuss the learners' rights as workers and their experiences with the union. One instructor also got the union steward to talk to the class about the collective agreement by explaining what benefits workers received and other issues. In this class there was a disagreement on the status of the union and how and why one should or should not participate.

Instructor:

They [the learners] basically agreed that before the current shop steward came that the union really did not look out for the member's interests and especially not the interests [of those] who spoke English as a second language...we talked about what this place would be like if there weren't a union and they agreed that it would be shitty...without it the benefits they do have, they wouldn't.

By examining the contradictory nature of trade unions and of being a member, these learners were able to express both their positive and negative experiences, to critically

examine them and perhaps take action as the one group did through requesting a forum and translations at union meetings.

Another theme that these same three instructors incorporated into their curriculum was "Free Trade". Two of them used newspaper articles to discuss the impact of the free trade deal on the learners and their co-workers in the plants. The language function of this exercise was mostly reading comprehension, although one instructor did develop an exercise using capital letters and punctuation (see example 2 in Appendix II). The third instructor also had free trade as a theme for discussion with the learners who, as was previously noted, wrote the Prime Minister as a protest action.

The emphasis of this theme was very much against the trade deal, with concerns being raised about what it meant for Canada as a nation and what it meant for them as workers. This topic was definitely one of the most political they discussed and, although not all the instructors spoke or had the opportunity to speak on this issue, those that did were very strong and clear in their stance against the deal. These instructors also indicated that most of the learners agreed with them in opposing free trade.



Another theme that was discussed in two of the classes was discrimination and racism. In the one workplace where people were being harassed, racism was not a theme as such but an on-going issue.

Instructor:

It [racism] wasn't a theme really because it was happening right in front of our eyes, so you don't need to make it a theme. We dealt with it in every class and we talked about why people acted that way...they [the learners] realized that these hasslers were inept and felt inadequate. These guys [the learners] knew that. They understood that these people were harassing them were feeling inept and threatened because they see these new Canadians trying to get ahead.

In another class the issue of discrimination was discussed in terms of the learners' experiences in the workplace.

Instructor:

...One guy told the story of coming to Canada and not having any skills in English. He was made to feel stupid...he was told he was stupid because he got a job as a cement finisher, [was] put on the job not given any training or whatever and people were speaking out instructions to him in English and he didn't speak the language. He was moved to tears. On that first day [on the job] he got down on his knees and prayed to god to get him through the day...He was made to feel like shit and this is somebody who spoke three languages.

The learners defined racism as it actually happened to them and discussed why this existed, in this way the instructors and the learners resisted the reproduction of racist relations. From these discussions grew language functions

such as writing dialogues and reading these to the class and creating sentences with articles such as "this", "that" "those", "these". Another related theme in another class was a discussion of human rights and wartime conditions in one of the learners' country of origin. This person spoke about his own experiences while the instructor quietly corrected his grammar and pronunciation at his request.

Another unique theme was developed by one of the instructors to meet the conditions of a particular workplace. With most of the learners facing the possibility of being laid off, this instructor developed curriculum for a "Job Search". First the class explored the skills of the learners, listing what types of jobs they have had in their homeland and in Canada. Then they discussed the kind of jobs they would like, the skills they needed and how to fill out job applications and forms. This theme came from the immediate needs of the learners and their insecure conditions of employment.

Although I have not extensively discussed all of the themes listed in Appendix II <sup>14</sup>, I have covered a majority of the common themes and described several of the particular workplace themes that developed in these classes. This examination of the curriculum themes of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre clearly shows the contradictory nature of

the programme. On the one hand there were themes, such as free trade and racism, that were critical of and resistant to the status quo and from which a dialogue was created from the learners' own environment and experiences. The theory of popular education and the practice of the pedagogy came together as praxis in these highly political discussions. These were a form of resistance to the capitalist hegemony of the denial of racism because each individual has equal opportunity in our society and of the supposed benefits of free trade.

On the other hand, however, most of the instructors were also reinforcing the labour process of the learners. This in itself is contradictory because there are learners who want and need to talk about their experiences in the workplace and the affirmation that brings but, at the same time, many of the relations of production are re-affirmed.

### Conclusions

In this chapter I have shown the variety of people who participated in the Hamilton Worker Education programme and the inconsistent conditions under which classes took place. It was within this unstable environment that the instructors skillfully adapted Freire's popular education methodology to their own unique situations. This adaptation, however, also was a form of modifying the

pedagogy by accommodating the demands of both the learners and the sponsoring triad of business, labour and government.

Within the classroom the instructors met with a varying degree of success in their implementation of the pedagogy. Many learners were very receptive and actively participated in the dialogues and techniques while others would have little or no part of the methodology. One of the most important aspects of this pedagogy is that activities within the classroom be learner-directed. However, a major contradiction existed if the learners decided that the direction of the class should have been a more traditional form of education with the teacher as authority, formal evaluations, etc. Despite the varying degrees of resistance to the popular education method, most of the instructors agreed that these classes were a starting point for people to gain some control of their lives in a literate, English-speaking society.

This chapter has also focused on the curriculum in the classes. By examining the different themes the participants developed, it is evident that another major contradiction existed. First there were themes that resisted capitalist hegemony like free trade and race discussions, and then there was the theme of the labour process that reproduced the relations of production. However there were also those themes like unions and health

and safety that were in and of themselves contradictory-- where not only the learners benefitted but the demands of business, union and government were all met for different reasons. In conclusion, the examination of the relations and activities in the classroom has further supported the main thesis that this programme had several fundamental contradictory relations that existed on several different levels.

## Endnotes

1. These restrictions were explained in the third chapter on methodology.
2. Once again these reasons are interpreted through the instructor's experiences. The conclusions may in some cases be speculative, making a follow-up of learners necessary.
3. "Company time" means that classes took place during the workers' shift and many learners were paid either half or full time for attending classes.
4. The problem of some workers interfering in the classes was somewhat resolved when the location (after a long battle by the staff of the Centre and the instructor) was changed to a private meeting room instead of the workers' cafeteria. However, racism and harassment are not so easily solved.
5. One instructor had two classes during this period.
6. The aspect of local shop steward's participation needs to be further explored.
7. This quote is from a staff member on the place of Freire's work in the Centre.
8. See chapter two for further detail on this method.
9. P. Freire. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. (New York: Continuum Books, 1970), p. 76.
10. It is difficult to separate the implementation from the curriculum because they are bound so closely together. Although some reference to the curriculum will come up briefly in this section, a more detailed description will follow.
11. I could only gain access to the curriculum of five of the instructors since the sixth had not compiled his work nor was he willing to give any examples to me.
12. A passage taken from an instructor's course outline.
13. This one exception tried to introduce the theme of health and safety but the learners resisted --suggesting instead another theme for discussion.
14. This is due to lack of information.

## Chapter Seven: Summary and Conclusions

In this thesis I have demonstrated that relations of dominance are both reproduced and resisted within the Hamilton Worker Education Centre. This work relies heavily on the theoretical writings of Gramsci and Freire, both of whom see educational practices as contradictory. On the one hand, schools are institutions of hegemony, helping to create the ideologies or "myths" necessary for consent and adhesion in society. On the other hand, resistance to these ideologies is created within the institutions which may result in alternative knowledge and education. It is potentially within these alternative forms of education that people may learn to critically assess societal relations while organizing for action to change these relations.

In order to assess how social relations of inequality were being reproduced and resisted, it was first necessary to place the literacy/English language programme within a greater social context. By examining the goals and objectives of the sponsoring triad of business, government and labour, I was able to explain why this programme existed and how it was connected to other social processes that were contributing to a realignment of hegemonic relations.

For the business representative, this programme was to assist in co-opting marginalized workers into the production process, thus extending the capitalist's control while supposedly establishing efficiency, discipline and loyalty. This extension of control was deemed necessary to continue the process of accumulation as competition on the world market increased.

Representatives of the state recognized that their own legitimacy partially rested on assisting the capitalists in this further accumulation. In this way the government could argue that they were not only helping the economy but they were also helping people to "better" themselves through training. Those who became literate would become "productive" citizens, able and willing to work. This programme also enabled the state to assume the role of mediator between Capital and Labour, again propping up their legitimacy.

For the representatives from labour, this programme had two very important aspects. First it was a service for those members who had been neglected and marginalized within the union movement. However, it was hoped that this service would also strengthen or establish support for the union organization. Secondly it was hoped that members would not only support but sustain the organization by becoming involved and perhaps filling union positions, etc. It was



within the level of sponsorship that each of these groups manoeuvred to have their own interests and needs met while momentarily establishing an alliance to support this programme. The relations of hegemony have been reproduced within the context of this programme.

Within the levels of the Centre and the classroom the complex dialectical process of the reproduction of, and resistance to societal inequalities was discernable. The Hamilton Worker Education Centre was the site for the reproduction of sexist relations, as the gender division of labour demonstrates, and of racist relations --given the implicit goal of assimilation. Yet the latter were also resisted through discussions in the classes of discrimination.

Other important contradictory relations were also found within the Centre. These included the way in which the structural manifestation and ideology of business unionism was in conflict with the ideology and practice of the popular educators. However, there were also several forms of resistance occurring at the same time. These included the re-structuring of the Centre and the unionization of the staff and instructors, both of which depended on the agency of the managers and workers.

However, it is within the level of the classroom that the contradictory nature of the literacy/English language

programme is best illustrated. By examining the curriculum I have shown that a certain amount of critical dialogue did take place around issues like free trade and racism. Nevertheless, there were also themes like work process that reinforced relations of production. On the one hand, capitalist hegemony was challenged and on the other, reproduced. There were also different forms of resistance in the classroom, such is evident by the difficulty some instructors had in implementing the liberatory pedagogy. The instructors were in difficult positions, having to meet the needs and wants of the learners, follow their own political beliefs and yet accommodate the demands of the sponsors-- all of which contributed to the contradictions.

In this thesis I have not only documented and probed the experiences of instructors, staff and sponsors of the programme, but I have also placed the programme in the greater social context of capital accumulation, the extension of legitimacy and the shifting relations of hegemony. I have extended the application of theories of reproduction and resistance in education to a workplace programme of literacy and English language training. Up until now social scientists have all but ignored this field. My thesis is unique because the existing literature either consists of "how to" approaches or are strictly from a

business perspective that regards literacy as a way of extending control and boosting profits.

There is a need for continued research in this area. For example, the students own experiences and world-view would add another important dimension to the reproduction of relations of inequalities and how students have or have not resisted these relations. Also needed is the learners' own thoughts on the liberatory pedagogy, such as what type of impact it had on them if any, and thoughts on interaction in the classroom and in the workplace. A follow-up study of students would also document whether or not literacy and ESL affected their lives, in particular their jobs, and to what degree.

As for the future of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre, it is difficult to say. The conflicts that I spoke of have continued, erupting into public disagreements among some HDLC delegates, the HDLC executive, the staff and the instructors. Although the structure has altered somewhat from the period when I did my research, the Advisory Board remains in control and in conflict with the practice of popular education.

As competition between different literacy and English language programmes increases for government funding, I believe we will see a tightening of teacher certification and a standardization of curriculum. Both of these mean

added problems for the Centre as its pedagogy demands a certain political perspective (not easily found in our society) and the ability to develop curriculum from workers' own experiences. If the trend toward more government control continues, the popular education methodology will probably wane in order for the Centre to survive. This may also mean a lessening of conflict within the Centre as the ideology of business unionism co-opts or pushes out the popular educators. However, if the reproduction of inequalities persists in the Centre (as no doubt it will), then resistance will not disappear but merely change and shift form.

Appendix I.a  
Interview Guide for Instructors

Teacher Background:

1. What is your level of education?
2. What teaching experience, if any, did you have before teaching for the Hamilton Worker Education Centre? (If some) Did any of this experience help you in this programme? Why or why not?
3. Were you involved in any union activities before? (If yes) What and where?
4. Have you been or are you now involved in any political and/or community activities? (examples of this; peace groups, women's groups, political parties, environmental groups, Solidarity groups etc.) (If yes) What are they?
5. What interested you in this worker's education programme?
6. Could you describe what you see as the goals of this programme?

The Classes:

7. Where did you teach? (Company and union local).
8. Were the facilities adequate? (e.g. Was the place of instruction too noisy or cold? Was there enough room? (If not) Was the company and/or union accommodating?
9. In what ways is teaching in this programme different from what you expected? (How is it better? How is it worse?)

10. Did you actually have any contact with union/and or management people? (If yes) How were you received?
11. Did you ever have a government official or anyone else (e.g. union steward) monitor your class?  
(If yes) How did you feel about this?
12. Were the classes before, during or after working hours? Were there any problems associated with this schedule? (e.g. students being tired, family obligations etc.) (If yes) Was it different for male and female students?
13. How many students on average were attending the class?  
Did you experience any problems with attendance?
14. How many hours a week and for how many weeks did you teach?
15. Were your classes primarily English as a Second Language (ESL) or upgrading of literacy skills?  
Or both?

Student Background:

16. Were students selected by the union, management and/or educational people, or were they recruited?  
(If recruited) Do you know what means were used to recruit students? Stigma of 'literacy' Were students honest?
17. Can you give me a profile of the students in the class.  
(Ages, sex, ethnic groups, length of time in Canada etc.)
18. What were the students' levels of ESL and/or literacy

(pre-literate, basic, intermediate, advanced) in writing, reading, listening and speaking skills?

19. Did you find the evaluation or placement interview was very useful or reliable in measuring a student's literacy/ESL levels and needs? Would you use them again? Why or why not?
20. Do you know if any of the student/workers experienced any problems, stress factors or disruption in their family, job or other relations because of things they were learning or experiencing in the programme? (Would a longer programme have helped?)

Student/Teacher Relations:

21. Were students willing to participate in the process by sharing their experiences and problems? (If yes) Can you give a few examples?
22. Did students suggest themes or issues for the class or did that responsibility rest mostly with you? If they did suggest themes can you give some examples? How did you incorporate these into the curriculum?
23. Did you ever feel that there was a rift or gap between you and the students because you were 'the teacher', or because of cultural, ethnic, or gender differences?
24. At any point did you specify that these classes were 'different' from traditional forms of schooling? (If yes) Was there any reaction from the students?

25. Do you think these classes actually were 'different' from other forms of education you have experienced? (If yes) How?

Content and Process:

26. Did you concentrate on only one or two of the students' needs of writing, reading, listening and speaking, or did you try to incorporate all of these into the lessons? Can you give me an example?
27. What techniques did you use in teaching? (Life journey, photo stories, songs, poems, filling out forms and applications etc.) What was the most successful?
28. Did you use the technique of posing-problems when introducing a theme and teaching different language skills? (If yes) Can you give me some examples?
29. Was the class interested in action-orientated activities and curriculum? (If yes) What were some of these activities etc.?
30. We have already discussed some of the themes that students suggested. Could you tell me about some of the themes that you introduced?
31. (If there was no mention of the following themes , suggest them, and ask why not). Work process/technology. Health and safety. Racism. Sexism. The Union. Management.
32. Where did your curriculum material originate for these themes? (Newspaper, union, W.E.C., professional development, your own creation etc.) Format/material.
33. Did you ever use 'ESL for Action', 'A Handbook for ESL



Literacy', or 'Teaching English in the Workplace' to develop your curriculum? (If yes) Could you show me what lessons you incorporated?

34. Did you incorporate students' experiences into your curriculum material? (If yes) Please give me some examples.
35. Did you find it very difficult to develop curriculum material?
36. Were you unrestricted in developing curriculum as you saw fit, or were there limits? (If limits) What were they and from who?
37. I want to talk about the programme structure itself. Were you satisfied with the set-up? (If no) What could be done differently? (If yes) Why?

Conclusion:

38. What impact do you think this programme will have on the student/workers?
39. What impact has this programme had on you?
40. Do you believe that you have learned anything by teaching in this programme? (If yes) What?
41. What is the most important thing about this worker education?

## Appendix I.b

### Interview Guide for Staff Members

#### Background

1. What is your level of education?
2. Did you have any teaching experience or other co-ordinating experience before coming to WEC? Did this contribute to what you are doing?
3. Were you involved in union activities before?  
What and when?
4. Have you been, or are you now involved in any political and/or other community activities? What?
5. What initially interested you in this worker's education programme?
6. What are your duties as co-ordinator?
7. In what ways has working at WEC been different from what you expected? What was better? What was worse?

#### Programme

8. What are the official goals of this project?
9. Does the programme have a definition of 'literacy'? What is it? Or illiteracy? Are there definitions of different levels?
10. How does this definition compare or differ from ESL? (EWP)  
Where do your standards come from?
11. Why do you think that workers need this kind of programme?  
For what purposes and why now? (Technology - type? Computer crisis?)
12. Do you think that this programme will aid workers in getting better jobs? i.e. promotions etc. What about getting workers to participate in the union, or at work, community etc.?

13. Where did the initial demand for this programme originate? Is there any increasing demand now that you are established? (If yes) from who? Government, business, workers, unions?
14. Why do you think that the government is sponsoring this programme? What benefits do they get from this? Are there disadvantages to their sponsorship?
15. Why do you think 1) businesses are involved and 2) unions are involved? Are there problems with having all three parties involved?
16. Do you think that the government is adequately funding workplace literacy programmes. What about your own programme?
17. How have relations been with government? Management? Unions?
18. What is different (better-worse) about workplace literacy EWP from other forms of literacy programmes or traditional schooling?
19. Are the popular education methods similar to those used by Freire or Shor, the official methodology of the programme? What benefits are there to these methods? What drawbacks?
20. Do you think the instructors used this methodology? (If yes) Was it successful?
21. What themes or issues do you think are the most important and should be discussed in class? --> unions, free trade, health/safety, racism, sexism, work process.
22. Do you believe that the government is trying to streamline the programme by standardizing the curriculum and certifying teachers? What would be the consequences?
23. Do you think there should be a set curriculum? (If yes) What? (If no) Why not?
24. Did you or anyone else review the curriculum that teachers were creating and using? (If yes) What did you find?
25. Did you or anyone else place formal, or informal, limits on the curriculum taught?
26. Do you think it is essential that the curriculum be based on problem-posing whose goal is action-orientated activities? Why or why not?

27. How were, or are students, recruited? Selected by union management and/or yourselves? Self-recruited? Any problems with this?
28. When teachers were hired -- what were the most important things that determined their hiring? Union activities, teaching experience?

#### Conclusion

29. What impact do you think this programme will have on the learners?
30. What impact has this programme made on you?
31. Do you think literacy will mobilize or politicize workers?
32. What is the most important thing about worker education?

## Appendix I.c

### Interview Guide for Ministry of Skills Development Representative

1. What are the Ministry's goals in sponsoring OBS in the workplace?
2. What is different about OBS in the workplace as opposed to the community groups or colleges? What is better, what is worse?
3. (If employment is a goal) How does literacy and numeracy relate to the skills of individual occupations? i.e. What roles does literacy play in increasing peoples' skills for their jobs? How does it make a workforce more flexible?
4. Does the programme have a definition of literacy or illiteracy? What is it? Different levels? Where do these standards come from?
5. Why do you think workers need this kind of programme and why now, as opposed to ten years ago?
6. Do you think that this programme will aid workers in getting better jobs? Either promotions or new jobs? (If yes) then you would agree that this programme promotes equal opportunity for all workers through upgrading?
7. Talk about funding -- the government funds these programmes by contract hours -- why is this? Is it most efficient?
8. Is funding adequate in your opinion? Or is there more demand than the Ministry can fund?
9. Could you tell me why the government has come together with business and labour to promote and implement OBS in the workplace?
10. How have your relations been with business and labour?
11. Your programme guidelines specify that this programme is trying to reach and increase the participation of under-represented minorities such as women, Native, disabled people etc. Do you believe that these people are now being better served?
12. Does the Ministry have any policy, or guidelines, on the teaching methodology in the programme? What is the Ministry's position on 'learner-centred' methods? Is it good, bad, effective?

13. In the Ministry's guidelines there is a list of subjects that cannot be used as curriculum, is there a list of what should make up curriculum? (If yes) What is included? (If no) Why not?
14. Did you, or anyone else in the Ministry, review the curriculum that workplace literacy/English programmes are using? (If yes) What did you find?
15. Do you believe there should be a set curriculum for these programmes? (If yes) What? (If no) Why not?
16. Is the Ministry moving toward standardizing the curriculum and requiring certification of teachers? What would be the consequences?

#### Conclusion

17. What impact do you think this programme will have on the learners?
18. Is there a crisis in literacy in the workplace in Ontario?

## Appendix I.d

### Interview Guide for Labour Representative

1. Could you outline the relationship between the Labour Council and the Worker Education Centre?
2. What are the goals of the Labour Council in participating in the Literacy/English in the Workplace programme?
3. Do you think that the goals of the affiliate member unions who are participating in the programme, are the same or similar?
4. Why do you think that workers need this kind of programme? Why now, as opposed to 10 years ago?
5. Do you think that this programme will aid workers in getting better or new jobs? (If yes) Then would you agree that this programme promotes equal opportunity for participating workers?
6. (If control not mentioned) Do you think this Literacy/English programme will contribute to workers' having more control over, or knowledge of, any new technology on the shop floor?
7. Do you believe this programme will have any effect on worker productivity?
8. Is the Labour Council and/or the Advisory satisfied with the classes and the amount of participation from workers?
9. Did you or anyone else in the Advisory, review the curriculum of the programme? (If yes-himself) What is your opinion?
10. Do you believe there should be a set curriculum for this programme? (If yes) What? (If no) Why not?
11. Have you or anyone else from the Advisory been to any of the classes? Why, or why not?
12. Does the Advisory have a policy on how classes should be taught i.e. teaching methodology?
13. This programme requires the cooperation of labour, management and government. How have your relations been with these two groups regarding the programme?

14. Has the Labour Council been satisfied with the funding from the government? (If no) Why not? Has there ever been any consideration of alternative funding?
15. What do you see as the future of the Worker Education Centre?
16. What is the most important thing about this type of worker education?



## Appendix I.e

### Interview Guide for Business Representative

1. Could you describe how you and your company first became aware of the Literacy and English in the Workplace programme?
2. What are your company's goals in becoming involved in the Literacy/English in the Workplace programme.
3. Why do you think that workers need this kind of programme? Do you have any examples of problems related to literacy and English occurring within your company.
4. Do you think this programme will aid workers in getting better or new jobs?
5. Do you encourage certain employees to take this programme in order to promote them?
6. (If the last 2 are affirmative) Then would you agree that this programme promotes equal opportunity for participating workers?
7. (If technology not mentioned) Do you think that this programme will have any effect on the workers' ability to deal with any new technology that your company may introduce? (If yes) How? (If yes) Does your company intend to introduce new technology in the near future?
8. Do you believe that this programme will have any effect on workers' productivity? (If yes) Then in some way will your company's participation affect your profits?
9. Has your company been satisfied with the classes and the amount of participation from workers?
10. Have you or anyone else in management been to any of the classes? Why or why not? (If yes-himself) What did you think?
11. Have you or anyone else in management looked at the curriculum being used? (If yes-himself) What is your opinion of it?
12. Is there anything you would like to see included in the curriculum?

13. I understand your company pays half-time for the workers participating -- is this true and if yes, why?
14. This programme requires the cooperation of business, labour and government. How have your relations been with these other two groups regarding the programme.
15. What do you see as the future of this programme in your company?
16. What is the most important thing about this programme?

## Appendix II

### Curriculum Themes and Language Functions of the five instructors at the Hamilton Worker Education Centre

Instructor One:

1. Life Journey
  - use of atlas to locate homeland
  - informal discussion on coming to Canada
  - wrote out one Learner's storyLanguage function - verb tense
2. Daily Routine -- Work Process and Machines
  - what the workers did on the job
  - went through machine manual
  - compiled list of machine parts and production vocabularyLanguage function - spelling, composition  
(enabling worker to write reports) and verb tense
3. Health and Safety
  - film on injuries
  - discussion on health and safety procedures at the workplace
  - discussion of the worker's right to refuse unsafe work --> Occupational Health and Safety Act.
4. Layoffs and Retraining
  - used newspaper articles with this theme.Language function - reading skills, verb tense, pronunciation
5. Wartime conditions and human rights in homeland  
Language function - grammar and pronunciation
6. Preparation of resume  
Language function - spelling, grammar, reading
7. Racism
  - not necessarily part of the course but a constant on-going discussion and why people are racist etc.

Instructor Two:

1. Introduction
  - names; where learners are from and what they do.Language functions - simple sentences. Identify nouns and verbs. Introduce pronouns.
2. Combination of information -- from introduction with general work-related themes  
Language function - verb tense, spelling, plural of nouns
3. Job Search
  - what skills did the learners have? (Jobs in homeland and in Canada)
  - how to complete job applications and forms
  - what kind of job do you want?Language function - verb tense, spelling pronunciation
4. Applying for Unemployment Insurance
  - how to apply - who to talk to and what the process is.Language function - reading, writing and spelling
5. Health and Safety
  - using a dictionary to locate words related to health and safety.
  - the procedure for a health and safety problem in the workplace --> both the role of the union and management in the procedure

### Instructor Three:

1. Introductions
  - describing yourself
2. Describing your job and workplace
  - workplace conditions and type of work the learners do.

Language function - construct sentences, grammar, pronunciation, verb tense
3. Health and Safety
  - right to refuse unsafe work - Occupational Health and Safety Act
  - plant rules

Use of ESL for Action and newspaper articles for the language functions of sentence construction, prepositions, grammar, verb tense, punctuation
4. Union Membership
  - positive and negative aspects of membership

Use of newspaper article to practice the language functions of reading comprehension, punctuation and the use of capital letters.
5. Free Trade
  - what impact this "deal" would have on the workers at the plant

Use of newspaper article to practice the language functions of reading comprehension, punctuation and the use of capital letters.

### Instructor Four:

1. Life Journey
  - learners' own experiences

Language function - present, past and future tenses
2. What are good and bad jobs?
  - list of positive and negative aspects of jobs
3. Work Process
  - how work was assigned and how work was organized among themselves. Wrote a story as a group.

Language function - spelling, writing, use of contractions.
4. Workplace Discrimination/Racism
  - the learners discussed their own experiences and how this is connected to respect and democracy.

Language function - use of articles - this, that, these, those

5. Free Trade

- how this would affect workers
- wrote a letter to the Prime Minister.

Language function - spelling, reading, writing

6. Union Membership

- difficulties that workers had in the unions; what they could do to change it. Discussion of union elections.

Use of the collective agreement for reading practice etc.

**Instructor Five:****1. Life Journeys**

- where learners were born. When did you come to Canada?
- identify problems that learners face in learning or improving English.

Language function - changing past tense to present.

**2. Health and Safety**

- hazards on the job. Learners' own experiences.

Use of newspaper articles to practice sentences, grammar and verb tenses.

**3. Work Process**

- what the learners produce and how this is produced.
- experiences of the learners

Language function - sentences, grammar, verb tense, writing practice

**4. Union Membership**

- experience of learners in the union
- what the procedure was if they had a problem.
- why the union was important/workers' rights.

**5. Jobs and Promotion**

- discussion of how to get a promotion.
- examine job descriptions and postings.

Language functions - reading comprehension

**6. Free Trade**

- what could make Canadian workers big losers.

Use of newspaper articles for reading skills

## Appendix II. Example 1

### My Life

I am born in Hungary in 1939. In 1973, I leave Hungary to come to Canada. I find a good job at Stelco when I settled in Hamilton. I go to school to learn English, but I have no time to study because I worked very long hours at the factory. When my children are old enough to look after themselves, I decided to try once more to improve my English skills.

I learn to speak some English at work over the years, but I want to read and write better. My union steward tell me if I improve my reading and writing abilities, I will have a better chance of getting a promotion. That is why I decide to take this course.

How many verbs can you find in this story that need to be changed from the present tense to the past tenses? There are 10 incorrect verb forms altogether.



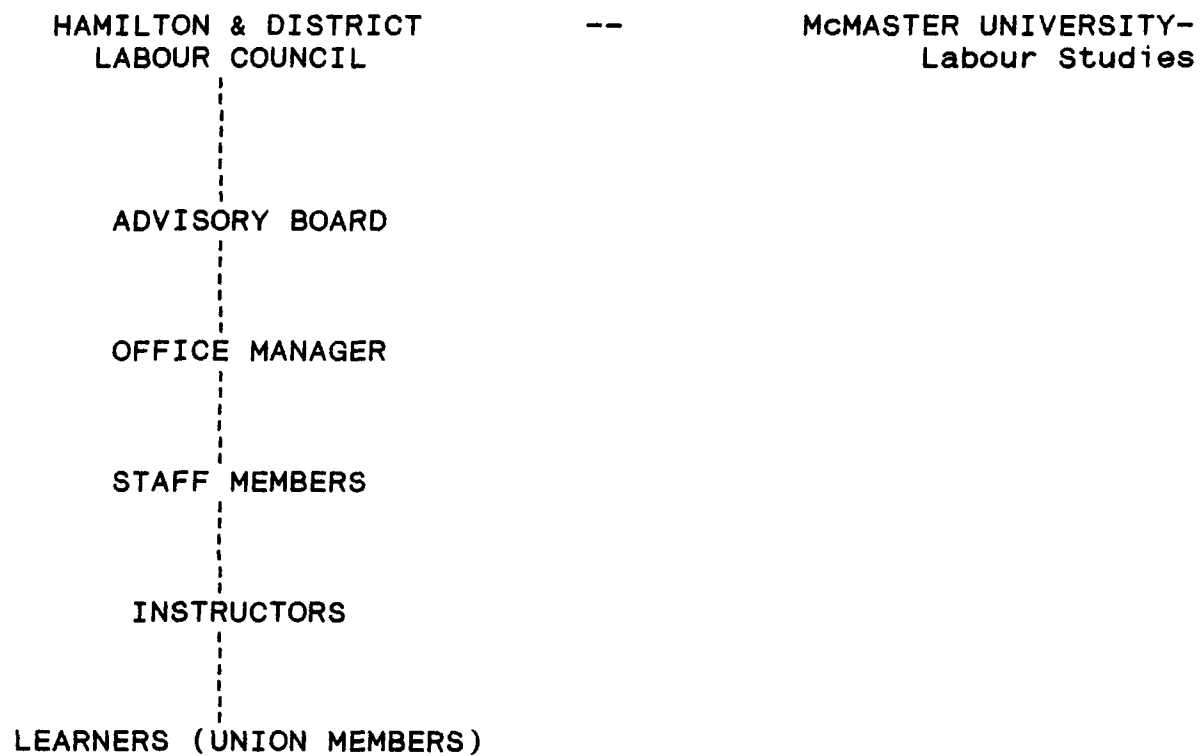
**Appendix II. Example 2.**

Read the following passage and circle where you think a sentence finishes and a new one begins. Also, write in a capital letter for the word that begins a new sentence.

opponents of the Mulroney - Reagan free trade deal took to the streets yesterday launching a cross-country person-to-person campaign against the deal in Metro, 600 volunteers handed out leaflets, signed up petitioners and chatted up strangers on the deal due to become law Jan. 1st they could be found on downtown street corners or in suburban malls another 600 worked the malls and main streets of 35 other Ontario towns thousands more across Canada took part in what was billed as "the largest ever anti-free trade event," said spokesmen for the Pro-Canada Network the network, a hodge podge of anti-free traders from unionists to small businessmen hopes to get at least 500,000 signatures on the petition calling for an election so Canadians can debate and decide the petition campaign continues all week through saturday

### Appendix III.

#### The Structure of the Hamilton Worker Education Centre



#### Appendix IV

-Sept. 1987--- Centre Opens.

-January 1988 --- The first instructors have been hired.  
First Professional Development Day. First Classes begin.

-January 19, 1988--- Letter outlining terms of employment including pay and setting out that the first instructors hired had priority on any class. This letter also stated that there would be no written contract between the staff and the Advisory at the Centre.

-April 29, 1988---Co-ordinators lay themselves off due to lack of money- they were not being paid. The Advisory response was to close down the Centre, locking all the workers out.

-May, 1988--- Centre re-opened with major restructuring of authority.

-January, 1989---Several new instructors hired by the Advisory Board.

-January 27, 1989---The Staff and instructors were certified as a bargaining unit of O.P.E.I.U.

-February 8, 1989--- A letter from the Advisory Board to all staff at the Worker Education Centre stated that the position of instructors were strictly part-time and that the

first group of instructors hired would no longer have seniority in matters of class assignments.

-March 17, 1989--- Letter sent to the Programme and Outreach Co-ordinator informing them that their positions were illegitimate because the Advisory "never codified" these positions, even though the positions and duties had been in existence since the previous year. The Advisory members also state in this letter that the Centre would again be restructured "with a director in overall charge of the day to day running of the Centre and an organizer." The present co-ordinators were therefore informed that they were laid off effective March 31, 1989 and were encouraged to apply for the new postings.

-March 19, 1989---"New" job positions were posted. The director would now be a management position with many of the same duties that the office manager had, such as participating in formulating policy and hiring staff. The Organizer had the same job duties as the Outreach co-ordinator; however there was to be a cut in salary.

-April 14, 1989--- All of the instructors from the initial group hired (six now remained) and the Outreach Co-ordinator through O.P.E.I.U. filed charges under the Labour Relations Act, section 79. The Hamilton Worker Education Centre was named as the respondent and charged with changing the conditions of work before the first contract was signed and

after certification had occurred. The conditions that were supposedly changed included a) a reduction in workload for the instructors given the Feb.8 letter, b) lay-off notices given to the co-ordinators in order to restructure the Centre and c) renaming the co-ordinator's current position to organizer at a lower salary and opening the position for applicants, all in violation of section 79.

-April 20, 1989--- General Meeting of the HDLC- the executive moves to close the Centre supposedly due to lack of money, time and expertise. It was a very long and heated meeting with the final vote in favour of closing the Centre.

-However, the O.P.E.I.U. went to the Labour Board to get the decision reversed because the HDLC was closing down an operation when charges were pending.

-The Centre was never shut down. The co-ordinator was reinstated.

-May 26, 1989--- The complainants withdrew their charges from the Labour Board because the employer had agreed to rectify the situation.

## Bibliography

- Aoki, T., W. Werner, J. Dahlie and B. Connors. "Whose Culture? Whose Heritage? Ethnicity Within Canadian Social Studies Curricula" in Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education. J. R. Mallea and J. C. Young (eds.) Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1984.
- Althusser, L. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus" in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Anderson, P. "The Limits and Possibilities of Trade Unions" in Trade Unions Under Capitalism. T. Clarke and L. Clements (eds.) Sussex:Harvester, 1988.
- Armstrong, P. and H. Armstrong. The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work. Toronto: McClelland and Stuart, 1978.
- Balbo, L. "The Servicing Work of Women and the Capitalist State" in Political Power and Social Theory. vol.3, (1982).
- Barnard, C. " Imperialism, Underdevelopment and Education" in Literacy and Revolution. The Pedagogy of Paulo Freire. R. Mackie (ed.) New York: Continuum, 1981.
- Berg, I. Education and Jobs: The Great Training Robbery. New York: Praeger, 1970.
- Berger, P.L. "Consciousness Raising: To Whom, By Whom?" in Social Policy, (Sept/Oct.), 1974.
- Braverman, H. Labor and Monopoly Capital. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.
- Bowles, S. and H. Gintis. Schooling in Capitalist America. New York: Basic Books, 1976.
- Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy. "Business Task Force on Literacy Newsletter." vol 1, no. 2 (January, 1988).

- . "Measuring the Costs of Illiteracy in Canada. A report of the Canadian Business Task Force On Literacy" (February, 1988).
- Carnoy, M. Education as Cultural Imperialism. New York: McKay, 1974.
- Carnoy, M. and H. Levin. The Limits of Educational Reform. New York: McKay, 1976.
- . Schooling and Work in the Democratic State. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.
- Cox, O.C. Caste, Class and Race. New York: Modern Reader Paperbacks, 1948.
- Cummins, J. "Heritage Language and Canadian School Programs" in Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education. J. R. Mallea and J. C. Young (eds.) Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1984.
- Danylewycz, M., B. Light and A. Prentice. "The Evolution of the Sexual Division of Labour in Teaching: A Nineteenth Century Ontario and Quebec Case Study" in Women and Education. J. Gaskell and A. McLaren (eds.). Calgary: Detseliy Enterprises Ltd., 1987.
- Dondertman, B. and N. Mobido. It's Our Union Too! Handbook For Immigrant Workers in Unions in Ontario. Toronto: Centre for Labour Studies, 1986.
- Fanon, F. The Wretched of the Earth. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.
- Foegan, J. H. "Let's Develop Employee Assistance Programs to Teach Reading and Writing" Personnel Journal. vol 63, no.3 (March, 1984).
- Freire, P. Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum Publishing, 1970.
- , Education: the Practice of Freedom. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative, 1973.
- Gaskell, J. and A. McLaren (eds.). Women in Education: A Canadian Perspective. Calgary: Detseliy Enterprises, Ltd., 1987.

- Gannage, C. Double Day, Double Bind: Women Garment Workers. Toronto: The Women's Press, 1986.
- Giroux, H. Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981.
- , Theory and Resistance in Education. South Haddley, MA.:Bergin & Garvey, 1983.
- Graff, H. A. The Labyrinths of Literacy. New York: The Flamer Press, 1987.
- Gramsci, A. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. Q. Hoare and G. Nowell-Smith (eds.) New York: International Publishers, 1971.
- Hamilton, R., and M. Barrett (eds.). The Politics of Diversity. Montreal: Bookcentre, Inc., 1987.
- The Hamilton Spectator. May 4, 1988.
- Hopkins, E. Popular Education Manual. Unpublished Paper, Hamilton Worker Education Centre, 1988.
- Kennedy, H. "Race and Ethnicity: A Discussion". Unpublished Paper, McMaster University, 1989.
- Koen, S. "Functional Illiteracy in Today's Workforce" in Business and Health. vol. 5, (January, 1988).
- Larrain, J. Marxism and Ideology. London: MacMillan Publishers, 1983.
- Livingstone, D. W. "Upgrading and Opportunities" Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Power. D. W. Livingstone (ed), Toronto: Garamond Press, 1987.
- McGowan, W. "Corporations Aim to Wipe Out Illiteracy" Business and Society Review. vol. 44, (Winter, 1983).
- McGraw, H. W., Jr. "Adult Functional Illiteracy: What To Do About It" in Personnel. vol. 64, no. 10, (October, 1987).
- McRobbie, A. "Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity" in Women Take Issue. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (ed.) Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.



- Michels, R. Political Parties. New York: The Free Press, 1962.
- Mills, C. Wright. The Sociological Imagination. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Ministry of Skills Development, Province of Ontario. "Ontario Basic Skills in the Workplace Program Guidelines." July, 1987.
- Ministry of Supply and Services. 1980 Standard Occupational Classification. Canada, 1981.
- O'Brien, M. "Hegemony and Superstructure: A Feminist Critique of Neo-Marxism" in The Politics of Diversity. R. Hamilton and M. Barrett (eds.). Montreal: Bookcenter Inc., 1987.
- Pratt, D. "The Social Role of School Textbooks in Canada" in Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education. J. R. Mallea and J. C. Young (eds.) Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1984.
- Premier's Council, Province of Ontario. "Competing in the New Global Economy" vol. 1, 1988.
- Prentice, A. The School Promoters. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977.
- Rinehart, J.W. The Tyranny of Work. Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987.
- Roberts Auerbach, E. and N. Wallerstein. ESL for Action. Problem Posing at Work. Don Mills, Ont.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1987.
- Rockhill, K. "e-Man-ci-patory Literacy. An essay review of Literacy: Reading The Word and the World" in Canadian Women Studies vol.9, no. 3 & 4, (Fall/Winter, 1988).
- Russell, S. "The Hidden Curriculum of School: Reproducing Gender and Class Hierarchies" in The Politics of Diversity. R. Hamilton and M. Barrett (eds.) Montreal: Bookcenter Inc., 1987.
- Said, E. W. Orientalism. New York: Pantheon, 1978.
- Schultz, T. W. The Economic Value of Education. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1963.

- . Investment in Human Capital: The Role of Education and Research. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1971.
- Statistics Canada. Women in the Workplace. Selected Data. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services, Canada, 1987.
- Thompson, E. P. The Making of the English Working Class. Hardmonsworth: Penguin, 1968.
- UNESCO. Adult Illiteracy in Canada: A Challenge. Occassional Paper 42. Ottawa: Canadian Commission for UNESCO, 1983.
- Vincent, R. J. "Race in International Relations" in Culture, Ideology and World Order. R. B. J. Walker (ed.) London: Westview Press, 1984.
- Williams, G. "Gramsci's Concept of 'Egemonia' " in Journal of the History of Ideas. No.4, 1960.
- Willis, P. Learning to Labour. Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1977.
- Wyatt, J. "Native Teacher Education in a Community Setting: The Mt. Currie Program" in Cultural Diversity and Canadian Education. J. R. Mallea and J. C. Young (eds.) Ottawa: Carlton University Press, 1984.
- Youngman, F. Adult Education and Socialist Pedagogy. London: Croom Helm, 1986.