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UMI
DOCUMENTS THAT DEMYSTIFY NAFTA
A CASE STUDY OF CANADIAN NGOs OPPOSING NEOLIBERALISM

by

Elizabeth Jones

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Documents that Demystify NAFTA:
A Case Study of Canadian NGO Opposition to Neoliberalism.

An M.A. Thesis by Elizabeth Jones, completed in 1996,
for the University of Toronto, Graduate Department of Education.

This research is an analysis of 24 anti-NAFTA documents produced by a broad range of Canadian NGOs. It analyzes the content of the anti-NAFTA documents, critiques them as sites of praxis, and reflects on the visions of alternatives which are put forward in the documents. The theoretical framework for the research is in praxis-based theories: Critical Pedagogy, Critical Adult Education, and Popular Education. Gramscian notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony are drawn on, as well as post-structuralist notions of anti-hegemony. The research is consciously embedded within the anti-NAFTA struggle. It is an effort to do research as praxis, and models its structure around cycles of grounding, reflecting, and acting.

A key finding is around portrayals of power. The documents construct their readers within "Canadian" and "worker" identities, but visual images portray these communities as weak and powerless in comparison to the United States and Big Business.
I am deeply indebted to many people. This thesis has been strengthened immeasurably by the contributions of Chris Cavanagh, David Robbins, David Langille, Janet Conway, Lee Cormier, and Marnie Hayes, who generously offered their time, experience, and knowledge.

That I have managed to produce this document, and stay sane in the process, is due to the ongoing support of my thesis buddy Beth Pettigrew. Profuse thanks for my sanity also go to the thesis support group: Jeannie Samuel, Rebecca Chernecki, Val Steinman and Sheila Stewart. Tremendous thanks also go to my committee members, Budd Hall and Angela Miles, who have provided me with extremely valuable guidance at key points in the process.
Outline: This research as praxis

Grounding  this research

GROUNDING  NAFTA, Neoliberalism, Canadian NGOs and Me
This research project: an introduction
Canadian NGO opposition to neoliberalism
My journey here

REFLECTING  Methodological approaches
Education as praxis
Research as Praxis
Writing as Praxis

ACTING  How this research was carried out
Collecting the documents
Content analysis

Reflecting  on the documents

GROUNDING  Letting the documents speak for themselves
Grounding  Describing the documents
Reflecting  An analysis of the content
Acting  The implications for our work

REFLECTING  Critiquing the documents as sites of praxis
Grounding  Starting with the readers
Reflecting  Encouraging critical reflection
Acting  Mobilizing for Action

ACTING  Envisioning alternative(s)
Grounding  Finding unity in the documents
Reflecting  Unity as counter hegemony
Grounding  Finding plurality in the documents
Reflecting  Plurality as anti-hegemony
Acting  What to do next?

Acting  on these reflections

GROUNDING  Praxis, Anti-neoliberalism, Canadian NGOs & Me
This research project: an assessment
Canadian NGO opposition to neoliberalism
My Journey from here
Part One: Introduction

--- Grounding this research ---

Part One is the introduction of this thesis. It lays out the foundation on which the research is based. It explains the reasons for which the research has been done. It describes the basis for the methods which have been used. It is the ground in which the research is planted.

Chapter One gives some essential background information for the research project: on NAFTA and its relationship to the neoliberal agenda, on the history of Canadian NGO opposition to neoliberalism, and on my own history as it has influenced how I have approached this research. Chapter Two describes the basic approach I have taken to this research: the literatures which I have drawn on, and the theoretical framework which determined the methods and writing style I used. Chapter Three outlines how the research was carried out.

This represents the first stage in the grounding-reflecting-acting praxis framework of the thesis as a whole.
NAFTA, Neoliberalism, Canadian NGOs and Me

This research project: an introduction

This thesis is about social movements. It is an effort to think strategically about social movements in Canada today. It includes reflections on public education campaigns, working in coalitions, and the quest for a unified social vision. It is specifically about Canadian NGOs that opposed NAFTA, and entails a critical analysis of the anti-NAFTA documents they produced. It also includes an exploration of the possible futures, the visions, and the alternatives which are presented in those documents.

This thesis is research about social movements, but more importantly it is research for social movements. It is research embedded in the larger agenda for social change which social movements represent. It consciously endeavours to link reflection and action together in that agenda. It is hoped that the insights which emerge from this research will be relevant and useful to social activists. This thesis is an attempt to do research as praxis.

When I say that this thesis is embedded in a larger agenda for social change, I mean that it is specifically rooted in the anti-NAFTA struggle, and in broader opposition to the neoliberal agenda. It addresses anti-NAFTA documents as one example of opposition to
neoliberal economic policies. It is hoped that the insights which emerge from this research will be relevant to ongoing work in the struggle to oppose neoliberal economic policies.

The neoliberal agenda is a set of policies characterized by commitments to globalization, free trade, privatization, and deregulation. It is being pursued all over the globe, and has been given different names in different places: Reaganomics, Thatcherism, Structural Adjustment, Neoconservative Economics, and Neoclassical Economics. It represents a fundamental reorganization of our society, where the needs and rights of the majority of people are being abandoned in favour of corporations and those who own them. Neoliberalism literally means "new freedom," but what it represents is a new freedom for corporations, not for most people.

Under neoliberalism trade barriers, tariffs and domestic content regulations are being dismantled. That means corporations can challenge environmental or labour regulations which make them "uncompetitive." They can threaten to move production to other regions with poorer regulations or enforcement.

Under neoliberalism publicly owned and managed companies in fields such as transportation, communication, and health are being privatized. This means services that have been provided by publicly owned companies in order to fulfil basic human needs are now being provided by corporations in order to enable them to make a profit.

Under neoliberalism regulations that protect our social interests are being abandoned. For example regulations used to require that rail companies and airlines had to provide service to remote communities if they wanted to have licences to operate. These regulations are being abandoned so that corporations will not have to provide such "unprofitable" services.

NAFTA is one expression of the neoliberal agenda as we are currently experiencing it in Canada. Trade barriers, tariffs and domestic content regulations between Canada, the
U.S., and Mexico are being abandoned. Under NAFTA it is almost impossible for a government to provide a new public service through a publicly managed agency. If a corporation feels they could make a profit selling that same service, under the rules of NAFTA they can demand compensation for the loss of profits. That means that under NAFTA Canada would not be able to set up the public health insurance system we currently have. This was also a significant barrier to the Ontario NDP's public auto-insurance scheme.

The anti-NAFTA campaign was just one part of what is now coming to be seen as a long term struggle against neoliberal economic policies. In that sense, this research project is a case-study of opposition to neoliberalism. Through analysis and critique of the anti-NAFTA documents I hope to gain insights into how the neoliberal agenda can be opposed more effectively in the future.

In this analysis I have chosen to examine public education documents. I could have looked at many other media which these NGOs used to try to reach the public, including advertisements, articles in magazines, op-ed pieces in newspapers, press releases, television and radio public service announcements, posters, etc. I chose documents aimed at the public for three main reasons. Firstly, because I wanted materials from a broad range of organizations. It seemed likely that many organizations would have produced a printed document about NAFTA, where far fewer organizations would have had the resources to produce television ads, for example. Secondly, print documents seemed to be something that would still be relatively easy to collect from the NGOs, since they are easily filed and retrieved. It would have been more difficult to collect copies of press releases or op-ed pieces. Thirdly, because I am a writer an analysis of documents seemed most relevant to my own practice as an activist. I would be able to integrate the findings into documents that I produce in the future.
Broadly speaking my research questions fall into two categories:

1) descriptive: What is in the documents? What do they say?
               What do they not say?
2) strategic:  What can be learned from the documents?
               How could they be better?
               What do they imply about future action strategies for NGOs?

My approach to this research is rooted in the dialectical notion of praxis, which I describe as repeating cycles of grounding-reflecting-acting. Praxis is grounded in the experience and knowledge of the participants. It encourages critical reflection on those experiences and their links to systems of oppression in the larger world. Ultimately this reflection leads to strategic action to overcome that oppression. The cycle of praxis repeats itself, when the actions resulting from one cycle become the experiences on which the next cycle is grounded. Reflection on those actions can once again lead to further actions...

In my efforts to do research as praxis I have integrated this cycle of grounding-reflecting-acting into the project in a number of ways: as an orienting concept for the project as a whole, as a theoretical grounding for the research methods, and as a template for the writing of this document.
Praxis as an orienting concept:
In considering how to research for social change, I have found it helpful to think of this project as a cycle of praxis. This research is grounded in my own experience as an activist seeking to oppose neoliberal economic policies like NAFTA. I am reflecting on the practice of Canadian NGOs which opposed NAFTA. The writing of this document represents one action, one outcome of that cycle of praxis, but I do not consider the cycle to have ended here. Ultimately, my intention is to act on any insights emerging from this research, drawing them into my own practice as a social justice activist, and sharing them with others. This sharing may serve as the grounding for other activists to take up reflection and action.

Research as Praxis
The notion of praxis as grounding-reflecting-acting shapes the research methods. The research is grounded in the documents themselves. It starts with a content analysis of the documents, exploring their content and describing themes which emerge from that analysis. The research then critically reflects on the documents, assessing them as sites of praxis. It reflects on how the documents are grounded in the experience of the readers, how they encourage critical reflection, and how they mobilize for action. Finally the research explores the implications for action which emerge from the documents. It analyzes the visions of alternatives they articulate, looking for points of consensus and disagreement.

Writing as Praxis
From the table of contents and the outline which follows it you will note that the notion of praxis has shaped the thesis as a whole, as well as each part of the thesis.

Part One is the grounding stage of the thesis. It provides the background information, the basic approach, and the specific methodologies. These make up the foundation on which the thesis is built. Each chapter also represents a stage in a smaller cycle of praxis. Chapter One shows the grounding of the thesis, outlining the history of Canadian
NGOs which brought us to this moment, as well as the personal path which has brought me to this research. Chapter Two builds on this grounding, reflecting on the disciplinary approaches in which I have chosen to house this research: Critical Pedagogy, Popular Education, and Critical Adult Education. Chapter Two also includes reflections on praxis as the methodological approach most appropriate to build on that foundation. Chapter Three describes me acting on those reflections, outlining in detail the specific methodologies I followed.

Part Two is the reflecting stage of the thesis, and represent the bulk of its content. Chapter Four attempts to ground these reflections in the documents themselves, a detailed description is followed by a content analysis, which describes themes which emerge from a thorough reading of the documents. Chapter Five reflects on the documents as sites of praxis, critiquing them based on Education for Social Change theory. Chapter Six explores the implications for action which emerge from the documents, examining the visions for alternatives that are articulated, looking for unity and plurality, points of consensus and points of disagreement.

Part Three is the acting stage of the thesis. Drawing on the insights emerging from the reflections, Chapter Seven reviews the major strategic implications for the movement. This chapter also articulates my thoughts on the implications for my own practice as a social justice activist.
Canadian NGO opposition to neoliberalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Mulroney elected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Council of Canadians formed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Pro-Canada Network formed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Free Trade debate, &quot;What's the Big Deal?&quot; distributed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Canada-US FTA takes effect</td>
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<td>1990</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>Gulf War</td>
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<td>1993</td>
<td>anti-NAFTA rally 100,000 on Parliament Hill</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Zapatista uprising</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Mike Harris elected</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>OPSEU strike</td>
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For many Canadian NGOs opposition to neoliberal policies began with the struggle over the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the mid-1980s. Brian Mulroney's conservative government took office in 1984, and soon afterwards they moved the FTA to the top of their agenda. Soon many NGOs were doing advocacy work opposing it, and in 1987 a national anti-free trade coalition was formed: the Pro-Canada Network. This was a collection of labour organizations as well as women's groups, farmers' organizations, church based organizations, and seniors advocacy groups. Leadership in establishing this network came from the CLC, NAC, the National Farmers Union, and GATT-Fly (an interchurch coalition working for global economic justice, later renamed the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice).

Organizing against the FTA reached a climax during the 1988 federal election campaign. Public education about the FTA was one element of this organizing, which culminated in the national distribution of two million copies of a popular document "What's the Big Deal" as an insert in newspapers.

Despite the efforts of the Pro-Canada Network and many others, the Mulroney Tories were re-elected in 1988 and the FTA was passed. Soon after, negotiations began for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and most of the organizations which had opposed the FTA continued their work in opposing NAFTA. They were joined by even more NGOs, from a broader range of sectors. Extension of free trade to Mexico brought international development organizations and
Latin American solidarity groups into the picture. It also brought new Mexican partners. In November 1990 Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, leader of the Mexican left wing party, addressed the B.C. Federation of Labour calling for a united strategy.  

In 1991 the Pro-Canada Network was reformed as the Action Canada Network (ACN), and this coalition continued to grow and bring together the work of diverse organizations throughout the anti-NAFTA struggle. The ACN also began to articulate a larger agenda which opposed the whole range of neoliberal economic policies, rather than just free trade. Efforts continued to visit Mexico and establish partnerships with Mexican NGOs also opposing NAFTA.  

In Canada the anti-NAFTA struggle culminated in the summer of 1993 with another federal election campaign. Public education about the deal was again a major element of the strategy of many NGOs, and several of the documents I analyze in this thesis were produced at that time. Mulroney's Tories were not re-elected, and the Liberals established a majority government. "Side Agreements" to the NAFTA were established in order to address public concern about labour and environmental implications about the NAFTA, but these did not change the substance of the deal, which was passed into law on January 1, 1994.  

Since the passage of NAFTA, Canadians have seen an extension of neoliberal policies. We have experienced deeper and deeper cuts to social programs, as well as moves to privatization and deregulation. As these policies have taken effect the range of organizations opposing neoliberal economic policies has continued to grow. Opposition to neoliberal economic policies has now been undertaken in Canada by labour unions, women's organizations, environmental groups, indigenous organizations, peace groups, arts groups, anti-racism groups, solidarity groups, student groups, farmers, religious organizations, social justice, anti-poverty, and third-world development organizations.  

In the 1980s and early 1990s public education about the FTA and NAFTA was undertaken through workshops, townhalls, and advertising, as well as flyers, brochures
and other documents. This kind of work was seen as very campaign specific, part of a strategy to oppose individual policies.

In the mid 1990s our perspective has shifted somewhat. Many of us have come to understand that the free trade agreements are just one part of a larger neoliberal agenda, which is being played out around the world in many different ways. Some NGOs are now seeing the need for more generic "economic literacy" or "popular economics".

Rather than looking at particular economic policies like NAFTA, economic literacy aims to give people the tools to understand the economic system as a whole. Economic literacy looks at economic and political systems as they are structured locally, nationally, and globally. It aims to enable people to understand economics so that they can 1) refute the economic arguments that are being used to justify neoliberal policies 2) develop strategies to oppose the neoliberal agenda, and 3) explore alternative economic and social policies and practices.

This research project is very much a product of this moment in our history. It is the imperative for economic literacy which shapes my perspective in approaching this research. I believe it is crucial to the success of social movements taking on the neoliberal agenda to develop a strong understanding of our social and economic system. We must do this if we are going to be able to develop effective strategies to oppose it, or to propose credible and workable alternatives.
In my former life I was a cognitive psychologist. I was doing mathematical modelling of the visual attention system. I was expecting to spend my life happily researching in university labs and lecturing in classrooms.

Then, in the summer of 1989 I got a summer job canvassing for Greenpeace. That experience changed my life. During those four months I learned a great deal about the environmental crisis. I was inspired by the activists I met who were trying to do something about it. I also learned about the power of my own words as I went door to door and told people about what I had learned. That fall I went back to school but I soon realized I couldn't stay there.

In 1990 I left the world of cognitive psychology to become an environmental activist. I left scientific research behind, but to this day that experience has profoundly affected my ideas about what it means to do "good" research. I have witnessed first hand the limitations of the scientific paradigm, and the notion of "objective" research. I feel secure in the orientation of this research, which is self-consciously subjective. Nevertheless I must admit to a nostalgia for the simplicity of the scientific method. At different points during this project I felt at a loss. I didn't know what to do next. When I was doing scientific research I never felt that kind of self-doubt. The next steps were always clear to me.

After I left graduate school I went back to Greenpeace and worked there for the next four years. My first Greenpeace
"action" was during the 1990 provincial election campaign, where we were trying to highlight environmental issues. I stood on Mike Harris's campaign bus holding a banner, and prevented him from driving to his next destination. I fondly remember that we got a larger scrum from the media than he did.

During my years at Greenpeace I also worked actively on campaigns around global warming, uranium mining, Great Lakes water pollution, and James Bay. I coordinated public education campaigns, made deputations to city council, organized public speaking events, wrote factsheets and brochures. I also hung banners, chained myself to buildings, and blocked train shipments.

In those years I learned about getting a message out through the media. I learned about the power of propaganda, of symbolic gestures, and of thirty second sound bites. I also learned about civil disobedience, about the personal satisfaction of saying "no" to something you know is wrong, and then putting your soul and body behind that.

My job at Greenpeace was coordinating the Direct Mail program and assisting the Development Director. Part of my job was writing and editing direct mail letters. I also edited the Greenpeace newsletter. This experience of writing from a fundraising perspective has profoundly affected my ideas about what it means to write effectively. There is very little room for ego in direct mail. You can't just think about what you want to say. You have to think about how to make it interesting to the donors. As an educator, part of my commitment to the principles of praxis has emerged from this experience, most notably the principle that education must be grounded in a respect for the experience and knowledge of the learners.

Like many Canadians, in 1993 I became very concerned about NAFTA. Greenpeace, like most environmental NGOs, was opposed to NAFTA. We were also seemingly well positioned to fight NAFTA, being one of only a few NGOs with offices in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Despite this advantage we found it difficult to develop a comprehensive strategy to oppose the NAFTA. Our traditional strategies had been very successful at
influencing individual companies and governments, but transnational companies and international trade agreements presented new opponents and a new level of struggle which required new strategies.

We were also finding it difficult to articulate why we opposed NAFTA. We produced lengthy reports about NAFTA and why it was bad for the environment, but we could not express the problems with NAFTA to our supporters or to the public in a concise and convincing manner.

These problems were not unique to Greenpeace. I attended several meetings and conferences of anti-NAFTA activists from a wide range of NGOs. The participants often expressed a sense of frustration at not being able to get the anti-NAFTA message out. Our arguments against free trade always felt too long and too complex.

As time passed I became more and more concerned about our failure in this area. I decided that I needed to take some time to think seriously about how activists could do a better job taking on economic policies like NAFTA. I gave myself two years to think, and started an M.A. program full time at OISE in the fall of 1994.

This research project is the culmination of those two years of reflection. It is informed by the courses I took and the people I met at OISE, as well as many other experiences over the past two years. These experiences include three visits to Mexico, one as an election observer in the summer of 1994, the second as a participant in the Caravan to Chiapas in the summer of 1995, and the third as one of 2000 delegates from 46 countries who attended the Zapatista organized Intercontinental Gathering for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in the summer of 1996.

Another experience which has been an important influence on this thesis is the work I have done over the last year and a half with the Economic and Political Literacy working group of the Metro Network for Social Justice. This has strengthened my commitment to "economic literacy as a strategy in opposing neoliberalism. It has also shown me the
strength of what can be accomplished by broad based coalitions.

Also important was my experience on the board of Nellie's, a women's emergency shelter and housing support service which lost 25% of its funding in the fall of 1995. This has been an important personal experience as I see the neoliberal agenda being played out in my own life.

Endnotes


2. LAWG, *Open for Business LAWG Letter* No. 45, Jan 1991, p.3
Approaches

One of my goals in undertaking this research is to explore ways that Canadian NGOs can be more effective in our efforts to inform the public about economic policies.

I thought about approaching this question through several different academic disciplines. In Political Science I considered an analysis of the anti-NAFTA movement as a political campaign. In Media Studies I could have looked at the techniques and successes of the pro-NAFTA and anti-NAFTA media campaigns. In Economics I could have pursued a critique of the alternative economic proposals that the NGOs put forward.

I did not feel comfortable with any of these approaches, because the modes of analysis which dominate in Political Science, Media Studies, and in Economics are rooted in the perspective of observers. They pose questions like "how has this come about?" and "what will happen next?".

Instead, I want to come to this research rooted in the perspective of a practitioner. I want to ask questions like "where did we go wrong?" and "how can we do this better?". I felt I would be comfortable pursuing these questions in the field of Education, where research often reflects this practitioner perspective.
Within this field I could look at the anti-NAFTA documents as educational tools. Basing an analysis on educational theory I could ask questions like "How effective are they at communicating our message? How good are they at convincing the reader that NAFTA is a bad agreement?"

I am interested in the answers to those questions but they do not really get to the heart of what I mean by "effective". I am interested in more than just their effectiveness as educational tools, I am also interested in their effectiveness as tools for social change.

For that reason I have chosen to draw my analysis from three bodies of literature within the field of Education which address issues around education for social change: Popular Education, Critical Adult Education, and Critical Pedagogy.

For the purposes of this thesis I have drawn these three bodies of literature together under the title "Education as Praxis." These bodies of literature have provided the theoretical foundations for this thesis, so I will be referring to them quite a bit in the text of the thesis. At some points in the thesis I will refer to the individual bodies of literature: Critical Pedagogy, Critical Adult Education, and Popular Education, and to individual theorists within those bodies of literature. At other times I will refer to the broader field which includes all three of these bodies of literature. I have found it cumbersome to continually refer to them as "Critical Pedagogy, Critical Adult Education, and Popular Education." It is for that reason that I developed the umbrella term "Education as Praxis" to refer to all three at once.

Critical Pedagogy, Critical Adult Education, and Popular Education have all drawn inspiration from the work of Paulo Freire, and all share a commitment to education built around his notion of praxis. In the 1960s Freire developed the notion of a "pedagogy of the oppressed" built around a dynamic process of praxis. For Freire praxis is a dynamic process which "starts with the experiences, perceptions or practice of the learners, problematizing that experience and critically deconstructing it to produce a deeper theoretical understanding of it, so that subsequent more strategic action grows out of
their more critical consciousness." 1

These bodies of literature provide the theoretical foundations for this thesis. In the next few pages I will give a brief overview of each, and I will outline the specific works I will be drawing on in my analysis.

**Popular Education**

Popular Education, also called "anti-oppression education" and "education for social change," has its roots in Latin American social movements. It is a process which integrates research, learning and action, where people collectively develop a critical understanding of their situation and strengthen their ability to organize to change it.2 It is practised predominantly in countries of the South and has come to Canada primarily through the solidarity work of social justice activists who have spent time in Central and South America.

Popular Education work in Canada is currently practised primarily by social justice NGOs, labour unions, and community organizations. Because of this location within social movements I have found their insights transfer easily to considerations around the anti-NAFTA struggle.

Popular Education generally takes the form of community-based or workplace-based workshops, and their literature tends to focus on the practice and theory of conducting this type of workshop. As I read some of these works I found insights which resonated for me as relevant to the anti-NAFTA documents and economic literacy work in general. In the critique in Chapter Five I will specifically draw on three such works: *Naming the Moment* by Deb Barndt, *Educating for a Change*, by Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, and Barb Thomas and *Counting our Victories*, by Denise Nadeau. I will also draw on two works which specifically reflect on Popular Education about economic issues and globalization: *Ah-Hah: A New Approach to Popular Education* by GATT-Fly (now ECEJ) and *Tracing the Trail of Tomasita the Tomato* an article by Deb Barndt.
I have sometimes found it difficult to see how the principles of Popular Education as articulated in these works could be applied to a critical analysis of the anti-NAFTA documents. This is because they address Popular Education as it is practised in the workshop format. The focus is on workshops as sites of Popular Education, there are no references to documents as sites of Popular Education. Nevertheless I believe there is evidence within the works that they would support my efforts to apply their ideas to the documents. In particular the authors of *Ah-Hah* argue that the principles of Popular Education, specifically that links should always be drawn to the learners’ experience, should be transferred to other media:

...[there are] some situations where information outside the experience or knowledge of the participants is needed. Films, books, audio-visuals or even lectures are still useful for such purposes, but there should always be a link made to the knowledge and experience of the participants.  

Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy shares much common ground with Popular Education, but its origins are based much more in the North. It also differs from Popular Education in that it is primarily an academic phenomenon, where Popular Education in Canada is primarily situated outside of the academic context.

Critical Pedagogy has grown out of a critique of pedagogical practices in "schools" and other educational institutions, and has endeavoured to bring the notion of praxis to those contexts. Some Critical Pedagogy theorists have attempted to move their thinking beyond this sphere, including Roger Simon, Henry Giroux and David Livingstone.

Roger Simon has explored the application of critical pedagogy theories to cultural practices, particularly those cultural practices which commemorate historical events. David Livingstone has argued for a broadening of the concept of education to include a variety of cultural spheres: popular culture, mass media, union organizing, and the family.  

Going even further Giroux has extended the definition of "cultural worker" to include people working in professions such as law, social work, architecture, medicine,
theology, education and literature.

I was encouraged by these gestures to include the work of anti-NAFTA activists in the realm of "cultural work" considered to be subject to the notions of critical pedagogy. In the critique in Chapter Five I will be drawing on the works of these three authors and particular insights which struck me as relevant to the anti-NAFTA documents.

Adult Education
Adult Education as a field of practice is historically rooted in the British experience of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It emerged from socialist beliefs that the working class should be provided with an education of substantially the same quality as the elites. It now locates itself within a broad range of educational contexts for those who are no longer in school or who never had any schooling: self directed learning, life long learning, continuing education, and literacy, among others.  

Social change is generally not considered to be a central goal within the field of adult education, but there have been elements in the field pushing in that direction throughout its history. This tradition of Adult Education for social change has most recently been embodied in the notion of Critical Adult Education, also called "Radical Education" and "Emancipatory Education". Critical Adult Educators draw on the ideas of critical theorists from Marx to Habermas who argue that oppressed people are victims of causal processes that have power over them because they are not aware of the ways that they have been implicated in the processes that oppress them. Critical Adult Educators thus work to expose these causal processes, enabling people to give up their illusions and act to overcome their oppression.  

Most Critical Adult Education still locates itself within the traditional sites of adult education: self directed learning, life long learning, continuing education, literacy, etc. In the critique that follows in Chapter Five I will draw on the works of Michael Welton, Griff Foley, and David Little. These are some of the Critical Adult Education theorists who are looking beyond the traditional sites of adult education. They consider social movements
as sites of education and are looking for ways to explore the issues of Critical Adult Education within those contexts. Michael Welton in particular has argued that collective protest and social movements can be understood as a collective learning process asking questions like "What are the internal and external conditions that enable critically reflective learning to occur within the movement site?" These questions are very similar to those I am posing in my own research, and I found several insights which struck me as relevant to my analysis of the anti-NAFTA documents.

**Implication for this research: Research and Writing as Praxis**

The Education as Praxis literatures have set the tone for my research, most particularly in their emphasis on praxis, which is reflected in the construction of this research project. The theorists and practitioners of Education as Praxis believe that education can and should be constructed within an agenda for social change. Similarly I have embedded my research project within an agenda for social change. Where they do education as praxis, I have endeavoured to do research as praxis.

The notion of praxis as it is articulated in the Education as Praxis literatures has also set the tone for the way I have written this document. The cycle of grounding-reflecting-acting has been used as a template in the writing of the document as a whole as well as each part and chapter of the thesis. Where a traditional thesis focuses on reflection only, this structure has meant that each section is self consciously grounded, and that implications for action are consciously drawn out of reflections. As well as doing research as praxis, I have endeavoured to do writing as praxis.

I will reflect more on the theoretical foundations for doing research as praxis and writing as praxis in the later sections of this chapter.
Implication for this research: Praxis as an evaluative criteria

As well as setting the tone for the construction of the research project and the writing of this document, the notion of praxis has also provided the theoretical foundations for the critical analysis of the documents which I undertake in Chapter Five. In that chapter I critique the documents as sites of praxis. The principles of praxis which are articulated in the Education as Praxis literatures provide the theoretical foundations for that critique. I draw on insights from works in those fields and apply them to the documents as criteria by which to evaluate them.

The critique of Chapter Five is constructed around the three stages of praxis as I have articulated them: grounding, reflecting and acting. Part One of Chapter Five asks how well the anti-NAFTA documents are grounded in the daily lives and experiences of the readers of those documents. Part Two asks how well the documents encourage critical reflection. Part Three asks how well the documents mobilize for action.

In each case I draw on insights from the Education as Praxis literatures to draw out specific questions to apply to the documents. For example, Part One asks how well the documents are grounded in the lives and experiences of the readers. From the Education as Praxis literatures I have drawn out three specific questions relating to this general theme. First, based on notions put forward in the Ah-Hah manual, it is suggested that when knowledge is referred to which is outside the experience of the readers, links should be drawn to everyday experiences and concerns. One question which is applied to the documents is thus "Are the impacts of NAFTA described in relation to how they will affect the lives of the readers?" A second question is drawn from a suggestion by Roger Simon that effective critical education should construct the learners as members of a public network that sustains them in taking action. Applying Simon's suggestion to the anti-NAFTA documents means asking "are the readers constructed as members of a community that would support them in opposing NAFTA?" The last question in part one is drawn from a principle of Education as Praxis, that the learner's experience should be respected and valued. In the context of the anti-NAFTA documents this means asking "do the documents show respect for the readers' knowledge?"
Each section of Chapter Five draws on different knowledge and insights of the Education as Praxis literatures. The notions of praxis as they are described in the Education as Praxis literatures are thereby used as evaluative criteria in critiquing the anti-NAFTA documents.

**My philosophy of Education as Praxis**

Since I have used the principles of praxis as evaluative criteria in critiquing the anti-NAFTA documents, there is an implicit assumption that a good anti-NAFTA document is one which follows the principles of praxis. Accepting the validity of the critique means accepting that the principles of praxis are valid, and more particularly that they are valid criteria by which to evaluate public education documents produced by NGOs. If these assumptions are not accepted then the critique is an academic exercise with little relevance to the real world.

A theoretical argument about the validity of praxis as applied to education, and beyond that to public education documents, is unfortunately beyond the scope of what can be dealt with in this M.A. thesis. I will at least undertake to state my own position in this regard.

I endorse the notion of education as praxis. Along with the theorists and practitioners I have listed, I too believe that education can and should be embedded in an agenda for social change. I believe that education should be grounded in the daily lives and experiences of the learners, and show respect for their knowledge. I believe that education should engender critical reflection on the world rather than blind acceptance of handed down wisdoms. I also believe that for education to be effective in an agenda for social change it has to self-consciously mobilize for action, rather than assuming that action will automatically emerge from new critical understanding of the world.

I also feel comfortable extending these positions to public education documents produced by NGOs. I believe that such documents can and should be educational, within the context of education for social change, and within the principles I have just articulated,
which correspond to the principles of praxis.

As I argued in the sections on Popular Education, Critical Pedagogy, and Critical Adult Education, I have also found evidence in the works of Education as Praxis theorists that they would feel comfortable extending the notion of praxis to public education documents. I therefore feel comfortable in applying the principles of praxis to the anti-NAFTA documents as evaluative criteria.

This is not to say that these are the only important criteria by which such documents can be judged. I feel confident that a document could follow all the principles of praxis and still be ineffective. Other criteria could include such basics as plain language, attractiveness, font size, proportion of text to images, etc.

This is also not to say that I fully endorse the practices and theories of Education as Praxis. I have chosen to draw on works on these literatures because these theorists have given careful consideration as to how to do Education as Praxis. I am not convinced that they are always right, but I am sure that they have given the matter more thought than I have. I hope to take advantage of their accumulated wisdom and apply them for my own purposes.

A special note to the authors of the anti-NAFTA documents:
I am more than a little uncomfortable in taking up a position as critic of your work. I tried for some time to write this thesis without undertaking a critique. My initial instinct was to take up only descriptive questions rather than evaluative questions. I did not want to be in a position where I said "this document is better than that document." It was only when I figured out the grounding-reflecting-acting framework that I realized that I would have to do a critique in order to fulfil the critical reflection stage of the cycle of praxis.

I also recognize that most of the documents in this collection were not written with praxis in mind, and so in that sense this critique is not "fair."
I acknowledge at the outset that it is very easy to criticize the work of others, and much harder to produce something oneself. I did not produce any of the documents in this collection, but I have produced other similar documents on other topics. I am sure that my own documents could be fairly criticized in many of the same ways that the documents in this collection are.

I have chosen to do this critique because I feel that the insights of the Education as Praxis literatures may be very helpful for the NGO community. I believe that we as activists should be taking advantage of the considerable experience and wisdom that the theorists and practitioners in these fields represent. I hope that they can help us to be more effective as activists, and that they can help us make our documents more effective as tools for social change. It is that hope which has driven me to do this research, and write this document.

Finally, please note that the rigor of my critique is borne out of a belief that public education documents can be better, but not out of a despair that such documents have been badly done until now.
Research as praxis

I wanted this research project to be useful and relevant. I wanted it to be useful to my own practice as an activist, and hopefully also relevant to other activists. Ultimately my hope was that it might make us more effective as a movement. To this end I found the notion of praxis very useful as an orienting concept in the conceptualization of this research project.

Praxis as an orienting concept
I have drawn on Deborah Barndt's definition of praxis as "a practice-theory-practice dynamic, which starts with the experiences, perceptions or practice of the learners, problematizing that experience and critically analyzing it to produce a deeper theoretical understanding of it, so that subsequent more strategic action grows out of their more critical consciousness."\(^1\)

Building on that definition I have consciously constructed this research project as an exercise in praxis. This research is grounded in my own experience as an activist seeking to oppose neoliberal economic policies like NAFTA. I am reflecting on the practice of Canadian NGOs which opposed NAFTA. The writing of this document represents one action, one outcome of that cycle of praxis, but I do not consider the cycle to have ended here. Ultimately, my intention is to act on any insights emerging from this research, drawing them into my own practice as a social justice activist, and sharing them with others. This sharing may serve as the grounding for other activists to take up reflection and action.

This view that research can and should be embedded in a program of social action is strongly related to perspectives put forward in discourses around the methodological implications of critical theory. In her article Research as Praxis Patti Lather considers
the implications of critical theory for research methods, and argues explicitly for a research approach openly committed to a more just and social order. David Little has also considered the implications of critical theory for research methods in educational research, and suggests that in such research one goal is to improve practice in a more humane, just and equitable direction.

Similarly, the methodological implications of feminist theory also suggest that research can and should be embedded in a program of social action. One example can be found in the work of Patricia Maguire, a theorist who has attempted to articulate the implications of feminist theory for defining feminist research. She argues that feminism is a belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation, a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains that oppression, and finally a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression. Within that context she argues that the ultimate goal of feminist research is the emancipation of women and the creation of a just world for everyone. Maria Mies also argues that feminist scholars should understand their research as an integral part of a liberating struggle: "the change of the status quo becomes the starting point for a scientific quest." 

The notion that research should be embedded in a program of social action is also put forward in discourses around participatory research. John Gaventa characterizes participatory research as a site where research is seen not only as a process of creating knowledge, but also as education and development of consciousness, and of mobilization for action. Peter Park says an explicit aim of participatory research is to "bring about a more just society in which no groups or classes of people suffer from the deprivation of life's essentials."

Budd Hall has noted that participatory research explicitly situates itself within social movements. For Participatory Researchers in Toronto that has meant working within the context of popular sectors: immigrant women workers in factories, Latin Americans recently moved to Canada, First Nations' Councils, and literacy workers.
As a part of my construction of this research as praxis I have situated this thesis within the anti-NAFTA perspective. I make no pretences that I am being an objective researcher. In openly disclosing my value-base I am running the risk of being discounted as subjective, as “non-scientific.” Such critiques arise from the premise that there is such a thing as value-free knowledge. Conversely, I am writing from a perspective which believes that there is no such thing as value-free knowledge, that scientific objectivity is a false construction.

Evelyn Fox-Keller has pointed out that the philosophical and historical inadequacies of the classical conception of scientific objectivity have become increasingly evident as historians and sociologists have begun to identify the ways in which scientific knowledge has been shaped by its particular social and political context. This is consistent with the post-modern, post-positivist recognition that knowledge is socially constituted, historically embedded, and value-based.

Traditional positivist notions of knowledge ignore important questions regarding power relations in our society. When objective expert-based knowledge is the only knowledge that matters who controls the production of that knowledge, and who benefits from its production? Peter Park answers these questions:

The producers of knowledge are the universities, industries that are linked to and supported by large corporations and government. Rarely seen are institutions that produce the knowledge to serve the interests of the poor and powerless. Of research and development of new knowledge for instance, only 4 percent is done by non-profit institutions.

Constructing this research as praxis has meant that I have embedded the research in the anti-NAFTA movement. At a practical level this has meant consciously grounding it in my own experience as an activist and in the history of the anti-NAFTA movement as a whole. Hence I included outlines of these histories in Chapter One. It has also meant consciously considering how I will integrate the insights that emerge from this research into my own practice as an activist, I have summarized these implications in Chapter Seven of this document.
That I have constructed this research as praxis has also had implications for the methodologies I followed in the process of inquiry. I will review these in the next section.

**Praxis in the Methods**

In her discussion of what it means to do research as praxis, Patti Lather describes a dialectical tension, an interactive, reciprocal shaping of theory and practice. She argues that we who do empirical research in the name of emancipatory politics must discover ways to connect our research methodology to our theoretical concerns and commitments. "At its simplest, this is a call for critical inquirers to practice in their empirical endeavours what they preach in their theoretical formulations." 23

For me this has meant that, beyond the broad conceptualization of this research project within an agenda for social change, I have also tried to integrate notions of praxis into the practice of research itself. I have taken the notion of praxis as grounding-reflecting-acting and tried to use those three stages to shape the research methods which I used in the process of inquiry.

At a practical level this meant that I first grounded the inquiry in the documents themselves. I was inspired by the notion of grounded theory as articulated by Glazer and Strauss.24 They suggest that theory can emerge from an analysis of the data itself, as opposed to traditional research where analysis emerges as theory is applied to the data. Drawing on the methods of grounded theory, I decided to start the process by "letting the documents speak to me" through a content analysis. I explored the content of the documents and described themes emerging from that analysis. In devising the specific process of that content analysis I drew from the work of Kirby and McKenna who have devised a research methodology grounded in a political awareness of the need for social change.25 The results of this analysis are written up in Chapter Four of this document.

In the next stage of the cycle of praxis I critically reflected on the documents, taking into consideration the categories which had emerged from the content analysis. Drawing further on the Education as Praxis literatures described in the last section I critique of
the documents themselves as sites of praxis. I assessed how well the documents are grounded in the experiences and daily lives of the readers, how well they encourage critical reflection, and how well they mobilize for action. The results of this analysis are written up in Chapter Five of this document.

In the final stage of the cycle of praxis the research explores the implications for action which emerge from the documents. This section considers the broader implications of what the documents say about our society. What are the alternatives and visions for our society which are put forward in these documents? What do they say about the larger goals of NGOs that oppose the neoliberal agenda? Is there a consensus across the organizations about these goals or are there areas of disagreement? Drawing on Gramscian notions of counter-hegemony, and more post-structuralist notions of anti-hegemony I consider the implications for the anti-NAFTA movement based on these areas of agreement and/or disagreement. The results of this analysis are written up in Chapter Six of this document.
Writing as praxis

One night in May I was doing some reading. I had drafts of chapters 4 and 5, and was now doing research for chapter 6. I was looking at a friend’s thesis, which related to what I wanted to write about next.

He had used an unusual format, structuring his thesis as if it were a symphony. The introduction was the overture. Each chapter was a movement, and these movements were separated by interludes. At the end came the Coda.

I was inspired by this format to think of different ways that I could structure my own thesis. I wanted to emphasize the implications for action emerging from my reflections. It occurred to me that I could draw them out at the end of each chapter as interludes.

I looked at my still unfinished outline and noticed that chapters 4, 5 and 6 reflected the cycle of grounding reflecting and acting which I was using to describe praxis. I also noticed that the internal structure of chapter 5 reflected the same cycle. I started to get excited as I saw more and more cycles of grounding reflecting and acting in my outline.

Then I saw that the whole thesis could also reflect a cycle of praxis. The introduction and methodologies were the grounding stage. The analysis chapters were the reflecting stage. All that was missing was the acting stage.

I had been wondering how to bring all the different parts of my research together in a concluding chapter. Now it was clear to me that the final chapter would be the acting stage, summarizing and synthesizing the implications for action emerging out of the thesis as a whole.

I started to understand what it really meant to do research as praxis.

This anecdote describes one of the ways this project has developed over time. It describes a formative moment, when I realized that the notion of praxis could be built into the research process in many different ways. I had already realized that doing research as
praxis meant integrating praxis into my research methodologies, but that night I realized that doing research as praxis could also mean integrating praxis into my writing.

I have integrated praxis into the writing of this document in three ways: by consciously bringing praxis into the structure of the document, by involving other activists in the writing process, and by designing the document in a visually interesting and attractive manner.

Praxis in the structure of the document
The anecdote above describes how I got the idea to structure my thesis around the stages of grounding, reflecting and acting. You can see the final structure in the Table of Contents. There is also a full description of the different parts of the thesis and how they reflect the different stages in the introduction (pages 5 and 6).

Until I adopted this structural model the bulk of the content of my writing was reflection. I had preliminary drafts of Chapters Four and Five, but these were mostly abstract analysis and critique. My primary motivation in adopting the grounding-reflecting-acting structural model was that I wanted to self-consciously build action components into the thesis. Deborah Barndt has described praxis as a dialectical relationship between analysis and action where neither is sufficient alone. Without careful analysis, there can be no strategic action, and unless it leads to more effective action, analysis is of limited value. It is this dialectical relationship between reflection and action that I wanted to build into the write-up of my research.

An emphasis on action is built into the structure of the document in several ways. Each chapter of reflection ends with an Action section which considers the implications for action which emerge out of the reflections of that chapter. In Chapter Five I have also highlighted implications for action in each section. Finally, Chapter Seven describes the implications for action which emerge out of the thesis as a whole.
Involving other activists in the writing process

Patti Lather proposes that the goal of emancipatory research (a term she uses to describe research as praxis) is to encourage self-reflection and deeper understanding on the part of the persons being researched at least as much as it is to generate empirically grounded theoretical knowledge. She notes that in order to do this it is necessary to build in a relationship of reciprocity between the researcher and the researched, where the research participants are involved in interpreting the data, and there is a process of negotiation of meaning.

One of the most common forms of this kind of emancipatory research is to submit a preliminary description of the data to the scrutiny of the researched. Lather suggests that this is only a minimum level of reciprocity and suggests several procedures which can be used to attain fuller reciprocity, including:
- interviews conducted in an interactive manner, where there is self-disclosure on the part of the researcher
- sequential interviews of individuals and small groups to facilitate collaboration and discussion
- negotiation of meaning through recycling analysis and conclusions to a subsample of the respondents

For this research project there are no "persons being researched" since the objects of the research are the anti-NAFTA documents. There is therefore no possibility of directly negotiating meaning between myself the researcher and those being "researched." Nevertheless, I have made some efforts to introduce reciprocal negotiation of meaning into this research project.

At the outset I wanted this research to be useful to social activists. I decided to try to ensure this was the case by involving social activists in the writing process. I prepared a partial draft of my thesis which included Chapters One to Five. I distributed that draft to my thesis committee, and to eight other activists directly concerned with issues of economic justice. I asked for feedback, particularly urging them to note instances where they agreed or disagreed with my analysis. I also asked them to consider any
implications they could see for our work as social activists.

I collected their responses several weeks later. In about half of the cases we were able to sit down and have lengthy discussions about their comments, for the others I had to satisfy myself with their written notes. Two of the readers were unable to get their comments to me in time. The feedback from these eight readers (i.e. my committee and the six others) has been integrated into this document in two ways. Firstly, I have amended the text based on their comments. Secondly, I have integrated their thoughts on the most important insights and implications in the final conclusions presented in Chapter Seven. 29

Designing the document in a visually interesting way
The most basic way that I have integrated the notion of praxis into this documents is in its design. I want this thesis to be useful, so I want it to be read. For that reason I have tried to emulate Popular Education and Critical Adult Education documents designed for community education work. I have tried to write in plain language, and I have endeavoured to make the document visually interesting by including images, tables, historical timelines, personal stories. I have also tried to make the presentation of the text itself appealing through the use of different fonts, wide margins, large type size, etc. (Not all of these elements are evident in the version of this thesis which you are reading right now. For the purposes of the university libraries I have had to work within the limits of what is allowed for an academic thesis. Another more "popular" version is available from me directly.)
Endnotes


2. Deborah Barndt, Tracing the Trail of Tomasita the Tomato, in Alternatives Jan-Feb 1996. p.24


22. Peter Park *The Powerful, the Powerless, and the Experts* in Peter Park et al (eds) *Voices of Change* Toronto: OISE press, 1993  p.27. He cites the 4% figure from OECD *Science and Technology Indicators* Paris, 1984


25. Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna *Experience Research Social Change: Methods from the Margins* Toronto: Garamond, 1989  p.63

1988 p.131

27. Deborah Barndt Tracing the Trail of Tomasita the Tomato, in Alternatives January February 1996 p.26


29. I must acknowledge that this does not go very far beyond what Lather suggests as the minimum level of reciprocity. I would have liked to include a much more extensive process of collaboration and consultation. In early versions of my research proposal I had proposed doing a series of focus groups. Unfortunately I have been constrained by the time and page limits of an M.A. thesis.
How the research was carried out

Collecting the documents

Contacting Organizations
I began collecting the documents in January of 1996. I started with a list of about 20 organizations that I would contact. I faxed and/or phoned these groups and introduced myself, explaining my research project and the kind of documents I was looking for. I requested any documents that they had produced. I also gave them a list of the organizations that I was contacting and asked if they had any other suggestions. As I received materials from these organizations I read through them looking for references to other documents. I originally contacted only organizations located in Toronto or Ottawa, but a few organizations in other cities came out of the process of consultation so I contacted them as well. The whole process took about three months.

At the end of this process I had contacted 37 organizations. This was fewer than the 40-50 I had expected, but seemed to be an adequate number, so I moved on.
Choosing the documents to analyze

The characteristics I had set out for documents I wanted to analyze were:

1) printed documents
2) attempting to demystify economics
3) about NAFTA
4) by Canadian NGOs
5) aimed at the general public

Many of the economic literacy materials I had collected did not fit into those criteria. This was in part because my request for materials had not been specific only to NAFTA. For my own interest I had also requested general documents about economics, debts, deficits, and the recent federal and provincial budget cuts. Some organizations also included other material which they felt might be of interest to me.

I went through the materials and sorted them by subject matter. I ended up with eight piles:

1) Social Programs/Social Policy Review/Federal Budget
2) Debts and Deficits
3) Taxation Policies
4) Harris Government
5) The G-7 Meeting
6) The Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement
7) General Explorations of Economics and Alternatives
8) NAFTA

Then I sorted the NAFTA pile and took out anything that did not fit the five criteria (one video, some documents by U.S organizations, and several briefing documents aimed at government). In the strictest sense most of the documents I was left with were not aimed at the "public" but rather at the membership of their organizations. I decided to widen the criteria to include these documents.

I was left with 24 documents. This was quite a bit fewer than the 40-60 I had been expecting. I had thought that almost all of the organizations I contacted would have produced something about NAFTA, but only half had done so. Nevertheless, I had what seemed to be an adequate quantity of material on which to do a content analysis, so I
decided to move forward.

A full list of the 24 documents is in Reference List #1. Within the collection there are contributions from a total of 46 organizations, listed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1 - 46 ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COLLECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg</td>
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<td>Action Canada Network</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Canada Network (BC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACN-BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Canada Network (PEI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACN-PEI</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC Daycare Action Coalition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridgehead</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Confederation of the Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives</td>
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<td>CCPA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Auto Workers</td>
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<td>CAW</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Union of Public Employees</td>
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<td>CUPE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canadian Peace Alliance</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
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<td>Canadian Labour Congress</td>
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<td>CLC</td>
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<td>Canadian Federation of Students</td>
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<td>CFS</td>
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<td>Canadian Environmental Law Association</td>
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<td>CELA</td>
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<td>CHOICES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizens Concerned about Free Trade</td>
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<td>CCAFT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Common Frontiers</td>
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<tr>
<td>COC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Unemployed Help Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confederation of Canadian Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council of Canadians</td>
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<tr>
<td>COC Manitoba</td>
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<td>Defenders of Nopiming</td>
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<td>Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice</td>
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<td>ECEJ</td>
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<td>End Legislated Poverty</td>
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<td>ELP</td>
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<td>End the Arms Race</td>
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<td>Greeppeace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Sciences Association of BC</td>
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<td>Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice</td>
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<td>Latin American Working Group</td>
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<td>LAWG</td>
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<td>Manitoba Medicare Alert Coalition</td>
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<td>Manitoba Federation of Labour</td>
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<td>MFL</td>
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<td>Manitoba Coalition against Racism &amp; Apartheid</td>
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<td>Manitobans Against the Assiniboine Diversion</td>
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<td>Metro Labour Education Centre</td>
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<td>MLEC</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Federation of Nurses' Unions</td>
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<td>National Farmers Union</td>
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<td>NFU</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Action Committee on the Status of Women</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Union of Public and General Employees</td>
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<td>NUPGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Native Council of Canada</td>
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<td>NCC</td>
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<td>Oxfam</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSAC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Service Alliance of Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>School of Social Work (UBC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solidarite populaire du Quebec</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Steelworkers of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winnipeg Water Protection Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woman To Woman Global Strategies (now Mujer a Mujer)</td>
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The content analysis

Goals
Through the content analysis I will address two sets of questions to the documents.

The first set of questions is descriptive. I want to gain a critical understanding of what is going on in economic literacy work in Canada, using NAFTA as an example. At a very basic level I would like to explore what is being said by Canadian NGOs about NAFTA.

The second set of questions is drawn from my own experience as well as pedagogical theory, and explore the effectiveness of the materials as pedagogical tools trying to achieve social change. Are fundamental cultural assumptions being challenged? What are the alternatives being put forward if any? How do they relate to the alternatives put forward in alternative economics literature? Is there any common ground across the range of organizations? Are the readers drawn into critical reflection and action (praxis)? How are the experiences of the readers drawn upon?

The research plan
Drawing on the methods of grounded theory (Glazer and Strauss) and of Kirby and McKenna I decided to start by "letting the documents speak to me." I would start my analysis simply by reading all of the documents thoroughly, coding them, and seeing what categories emerged. Through that process I expected to answer the first set of research questions. Then I would go back and look at the documents, critically analyzing them with the second set of questions in mind. After both of those processes were complete I would write up the results, and distribute them to a reference group of practitioners of this work. Feedback from this reference group would further confirm, correct, and elaborate on my analysis.

Although everything was in place for me to move forward on this plan, I was nervous. I didn’t feel quite ready, like something was holding me back. Before moving forward I
added a new step to the research process: a self-interview.

The self-interview
I got the idea to do a self-interview at a meeting of my thesis support group. Six of us have been meeting every month or so to discuss our research, share information, get feedback, and generally support each other. One of my colleagues in the group was discussing a problem she was experiencing. She was going to be doing research with a community organization, and had been making efforts to make her research as true to the principle of participatory research as possible, within the time limits of an M.A. thesis, as well as the personal limits on her own energy. She was particularly concerned about issues of power as they related to her research. She was concerned about coming to the group she was researching with her own agenda, her own expectations, which might end up overshadowing the voices of those she was doing the research with. Another colleague in the group suggested that she do a self-interview at the beginning of the process in order to make those issues more transparent. The self-interview is one method recommended by Kirby and McKenna as a way for a researcher to explore their "conceptual baggage."

I realized that this might also be helpful for me. Through the process of a self-interview I would be articulating my own motivations, goals and expectations about my research. This would help me to put some closure around the process I had been through in developing my research proposal.

I developed a set of questions I wanted to ask myself. I consulted Kirby and McKenna to see what they suggested in terms of interview questions. I also tried to address some of the issues which had arisen in my discussions with my advisor and second reader. I ended up with 22 questions. I sat down and forced myself to answer each, writing in a kind of stream of consciousness. After two days I ended up with 37 pages of hand-written notes.

This self-interview process was helpful because it forced me to recognize some
expectations that I had not previously articulated. Through the self-interview I brought out these expectations and wrote them down. I think it was also helpful in allowing me to clear my mind of those expectations. After I finished writing my answers to the questions I put the notebook aside, symbolizing the mental process of putting my expectations aside. At the very least I felt ready to move forward, and I have a record of my expectations, which I can refer to later and see to what extent I actually did "put them aside".

**Coding the documents**

The next step was to code the documents and see what categories emerged. I read through all of the documents thoroughly, coding them by making pencil notations beside anything I found of interest. Several dozen different codes emerged from this process as well as a few larger categories. At the end of that process I had three categories:

1) Triple A (Action, Agenda, Alternatives)
2) National Identities
3) Control/Power

Then I chose one of the categories and went back through the documents marking any instance of that category with coloured markers. I chose the triple A category to start with: Action, Alternatives, and Agenda. I used three colours to mark the text, yellow for suggestions or examples of action, purple for alternatives, and blue for visionary expressions of an agenda (e.g. "what we want is a society without margins, a society where we all live in solidarity and share control of the economy").

Once I was finished "colouring" I went through the documents again, this time trying to read "across" the documents. I pulled out everything marked with yellow and put it in a pile. Then I went through that pile and sorted it into two smaller sub-categories: individual actions and collective actions. Then I went through each of those piles and sorted them further and made notes on index cards about every type of action that was suggested, and what organizations were suggesting them. I repeated these steps until I had a full set of notes on index for two of the categories: action and alternatives.
It may be no surprise to you the reader that this was a very time consuming process. I must admit that I was shocked at how long it took me. I realized that I would not have time to go through each category in such detail. I also realized that I had jumped ahead in my research plan. I was interrogating the materials according to some of my second set of questions, specifically "What alternatives are put forward?" and "How is the reader drawn to strategic action?".

To figure out what to do next I consulted Glazer and Strauss and Kirby and McKenna. As I read it became clear to me that my mistake was that I had not finished the process of coding and categorizing. I had not spent enough time sorting and resorting my codes. Although I had three categories, I still had many codes that did not fit into those categories.

I went back to the collection of documents with renewed energy. I copied out my pencilled codes onto a new sheet of paper, and looked at it for a while. Then on another sheet I wrote down some possible categories and tried fitting codes into them. Eventually I ended up with 12 categories which fit into four themes (listed in figure 8 opposite). Chapter Four describes each of these categories, giving some examples, and exploring some of the inter-relations between them.

After completing the content analysis my ideas about the rest of the thesis became much clearer. I realized that I wanted to write two more chapters. One would look at the documents as sites of praxis, critiquing them based on Critical Pedagogy, Adult Education and Popular Education theory. The other would analyze the documents looking for evidence of unity and plurality in the visions and alternatives they put forward. Those two chapters now correspond to Chapters Five and Six of this document.

I wrote Chapter Five next. Then I went back and pulled together a partial draft of Chapters One to Five. I distributed that draft to a group of eight colleagues and fellow activists, soliciting their feedback, particularly around the implications for action emerging out of the research. Their feedback was be integrated into the final version.
Questions of Validity

Given that this research is embedded in a program of social action, traditional "objective" measures of validity do not apply. Patti Lather suggests four criteria of validity appropriate for praxis-oriented research. First, triangulation establishes data-trustworthiness by using multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes to confirm the results. Second, construct validity requires a systematic reflexivity, where the researcher operates within a conscious context of theory-building, and theory is changed by the logic of the data. Third, face validity is measured by recycling analysis and conclusions back to the respondents, the results are valid when there is a click of recognition, a 'yes of course' instead of a 'yes, but' experience. Fourth, catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it.¹

These are the measures of validity by which I propose to evaluate the results of this research. I will include a discussion of each in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

Endnotes

Part Two: Analysis

Reflecting on the documents

Part Two is the analysis section of this thesis. It deliberates on the documents, which are the subject of this analysis. It reveals their character, indicating their strengths, and pondering on their weaknesses. It is a series of reflections, on which action is to be taken.

Having set out the groundwork in Part One, this section is a critical reflection on the anti-NAFTA documents. There are three chapters, which also reflect the three stages of praxis. Chapter 4 grounds the analysis in the documents themselves, using a content analysis framework to allow the documents to speak for themselves. Chapter 5 critically reflects on the documents, assessing them as sites of praxis. Chapter 6 considers the larger implications for action which emerge from the documents, looking at the visions and alternatives which they offer as new ways to organize our society.
Letting the Documents Speak for Themselves

GROUNDING

As the first chapter in the analysis section of this thesis, Chapter 4 will ground the analysis in the documents themselves. Chapter 5 will then critically reflect on the documents. Chapter 6 will consider the implications for action which emerge from the documents. These three chapters thus reflect the grounding reflecting acting stages of praxis.

The cycle of praxis is once again reflected in the structure of Chapter 4:

Section 4.1 grounds the analysis with a general description of the documents, outlining the types of documents in the collection, the sectors they represent, and the years they were produced.

Section 4.2 reflects on the content of the documents. Grounded Theory suggests that analysis can emerge from data directly, unlike traditional research where analysis emerges from an application of theory on to data. Based on this notion I will begin by trying to let the documents speak for themselves. I have used methods of content analysis as described by Kirby and McKenna\(^1\) as well as Glazer and Strauss\(^2\). Section 4.2 describes the themes and categories which have emerged from this analysis.

Section 4.3 explores how we might act on these observations, considering the implications for our work as activists.
## Describing the Documents

The collection includes 24 documents (Reference List #1, shows a full list). They include newsletters, brochures (one page fold out format), factsheets (one page flat), sets of fact sheets, booklets, and collections of articles. There is also one chapter from a book, one pull-out section from a magazine, and one kit including articles and educators' tools. They range from 2 to 60 pages.

They were produced in the years between 1991 and 1995. More than half were produced in 1993, the year of the federal election. The content of these documents may therefore place more emphasis on political strategies than would be true of the organizations in general.

The 24 documents were produced by 19 organizations. The other 27 organizations in the collection are represented through articles contributed to the three large collections of articles (Action Dossier #38, #39, and The High Cost of Free Trade) or by contributing to the production of a document.

There are a few organizations which are heavily represented in this collection. The Action Canada Network (ACN) produced 6 of the 24 documents. This predominance of ACN materials reflects the materials that were in circulation during the anti-NAFTA struggle. The ACN was the largest anti-NAFTA

### Document List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Title</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>JESUIT CENTRE</td>
<td>As The Empire Grows</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LAWG</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Open for Business</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CONFED'N OF CDN UNIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Told You So!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>ACN</td>
<td>NAFTA and the Public Sector</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Action Dossier #38</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CAW</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Give me a mandate...</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>ACN</td>
<td>Ten Reasons to Oppose...</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAFTA: Not Another...</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Action Dossier #39</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACN-BC</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don't Vote for Free Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CELA and OXFAM</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAFTA Facts</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CHOICES</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The High Cost of Free Trade</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COUNCIL OF CANADIANS</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Campaign for Canada</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CPA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peace Movement and NAFTA</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CUPE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Why you should say no!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>END THE ARMS RACE/CPA</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>NAFTA Fact Sheet: Militarism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GREENPEACE</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NAFTA factsheet</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>The NAC Voters' Guide</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WOMAN TO WOMAN</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Changing Economies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>ACN</td>
<td>Ten Ways to Promote Alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CCAF</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Fight for Canada Goes On</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ECEJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Economic Integration of the Americas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>CCPA</td>
<td>Monitor, Vol 2, #7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
coalition, and their materials were better distributed than most other organizations (in fact, a number of the organizations I contacted said they had used ACN materials rather than produce their own).

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) and the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice (ECEJ) also both appear six times in the collection. Each produced one document and contributed five articles to the Action Dossiers.

**Representation across sectors**

My intention in contacting a large number of organizations had been to collect documents from a broad range of sectors including labour, feminist, environmental, social justice, anti-poverty and development groups.

In fact the distribution of organizations across these sectors is quite uneven, as can be seen in Table 2. Labour is the most highly represented sector with eleven organizations. Environmental and Solidarity/Social Justice groups are fairly well represented, with five each. I could find only two women's organizations that had produced documents about NAFTA (although I found several that had produced materials around the U.S. Canada Free Trade Agreement). Also there are only two anti-poverty groups and two development organizations represented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>ORGANIZATIONS BY NAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>National Farmers' Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Poverty</td>
<td>ELP, Community Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Racism</td>
<td>Manitoba Coalition Against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>Canadian Confederation of the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad Coalitions</td>
<td>ACN, ACN-BC, ACN-PEI, CHOICES, Solidarite populaire Quebec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Bridgehead, Oxfam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>CELA, Defenders of Nopiming, Greenpeace, Manitobans Against the Assiniboine Diversion, Winnipeg Water Protection Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous</td>
<td>Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg, Native Council of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>CAW, CUPE, Confed of Cdn Unions, Health Sciences Association of BC, MFL, MLEC, National Federation of Nurses' Unions, NUPGE, PSAC, Steelworkers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>CPA, End the Arms Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Programs</td>
<td>BC Daycare Action Coalition, Health Sciences Assoc of BC, Nat'l Fed'n of Nurses' Unions, PSAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity/</td>
<td>Common Frontiers, ECEJ, Jesuit Centre, LAWG, Woman to Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Canadian Federation of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>NAC, Woman to Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>CCPA, CCAF, COC, COC-Manitoba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the collection.

The collection does include materials by organizations in some sectors that I had not explicitly sought out, including peace, anti-racism, Native Canadians, students, agriculture, the arts, and groups actively working to defend our social programs. Five broad-based coalitions are also listed: the Action Canada Network and four of its provincial equivalents (BC, PEI, Quebec, and Manitoba). The representation of labour in the collection is higher when one considers that these coalitions have a high proportion of labour membership and an even higher proportion of labour funding.

Although I had hoped to have a more even representation across sectors, the predominance of labour organizations makes the collection more reflective of the materials which were available to the public during the NAFTA struggle.

Representativeness of the collection

The array of documents I have collected is not exhaustive. It does not include materials by every Canadian NGO that wrote about NAFTA. Nor does it include all the materials produced by the 46 NGOs in the collection. Because of this I want to be careful to avoid making evaluative comments about absences in the content of particular documents or organizations (e.g. lack of feminist or environmental perspective). Such an absence may indicate a lack of centrality in their analysis of NAFTA, but does not necessarily indicate a lack of analysis in the organization as a whole. Other documents produced by the same organizations may have addressed those absences.

On the other hand I feel confident that, as a collection, the documents are representative of the type of economic literacy materials that Canadian organizations have produced on NAFTA. It is therefore appropriate to make comments about content that is absent or present in the collection as a whole.
4.2

An analysis of the content

The content analysis of the documents yielded twelve categories in four themes, shown below. In the following pages I will outline each of these twelve categories and give examples from the text of the documents. In some cases I have also included visual images from the documents. The analysis will generally focus on the text, but the images are helpful to see the context within which the text is presented.

In this content analysis I have drawn what seem to be clear boundaries between these categories. In fact the delineation between these categories is often quite fuzzy, and many of the categories overlap. As I describe the categories I will also describe some of the ways in which they overlap and inter-relate.

I will also outline some concerns which I have, which came to mind as I read the documents and saw these categories emerging. Many of these concerns will be taken up more thoroughly in chapter 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEXT</th>
<th>SUBTEXT</th>
<th>TECHNIQUES</th>
<th>INTENTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAFTA is Bad News</td>
<td>National Identities</td>
<td>Communication Methods</td>
<td>Means and Ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Control</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Providing Contexts</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Repercussions</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Visual Images</td>
<td>Alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Whose Interest?</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>They Said</td>
<td>Agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We Said</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Out of Control

The most powerful impression that struck me as I read through the documents was the vast number and variety of references to lack of power and loss of control.

Canada is losing its sovereignty as a nation:

The consequence of the "free trade" deals will be to reduce both the extent to which governments are able to exercise their sovereignty. ³

The government is losing control over future economic policy:

It has become painfully clear that we no longer have the power to set an industrial strategy for our own country. ⁴

Our government is also losing control over resources:

Our government's control over our water, gas, oil, hydroelectricity, our forests and oceans will be undermined. ⁵

Voters are losing power:

Increasingly, crucial economic and political decisions which affect us all will not be made by our elected governments, but by a special North American Free Trade Commission. ⁶

NAFTA transfers Canadians' remaining democratic control to distant bodies, unelected and accountable only to big business. ⁷

The provinces are losing power:

NAFTA requires federal governments to ensure its terms are implemented by the provinces. This will affect provincial practices like supply management boards, employment equity programs, environmental regulations or local sourcing rules. ⁸

We are losing control over our very lives:

This is an attack on our ability to shape our lives. ⁹

Other documents refer to losing control over our food production, culture, environmental standards, and the financial sector.

In most contexts the documents describe this power being lost to transnational
corporations (TNCs):

The FTA and NAFTA place restrictions on the extent to which and the ways in which our democratically elected governments may regulate the economy. The purpose of such restrictions is to turn ever more economic decisions over to the private sector, and thus in practice to the transnational corporations. ¹⁰

There are also some references to losing power to the United States:

NAFTA will help ensure that...the decisions and priorities of Canadian military production and defence are determined by the U.S. ¹¹

This category overlaps with Alternatives category, since many of the alternatives which are described in the documents are expressed in terms of the need for Canada to develop alternatives which allow us to take control of our economy, as well as our communities, our workplaces, and our lives.

Thoughts and Concerns: I am not denying the truth that we are losing power, but I am concerned about how the predominance of this theme impacts on the effectiveness of the documents as mobilizing tools. The feeling of powerlessness I had after reading these documents was very strong. This does not seem like the ideal emotion to be evoked if action is a desired outcome of reading the documents.

Losing Power to TNCs - CAW, p.11

Canada losing sovereignty to the U.S. - ACN-BC election brochure
Negative Repercussions

Jobs
The documents list many different negative repercussions of NAFTA. A strong theme centres around jobs: wages will go down, jobs will shift from full time secure employment to part time or insecure employment, jobs will move south, plants will close, and the power of unions will diminish. Some documents also point out that issues around employment will impact women more than men, aggravating the feminization of poverty (e.g. NAC, Woman to Woman).

I worked at the fish plant for 32 years and it closed with two weeks notice. The more unprocessed fish goes south, the more jobs we lose. Nobody's job is safe as long as we have free trade.  

Resources:
Many of the documents suggest that NAFTA encourages over consumption of resources. Some are specifically concerned that NAFTA encourages water exports.

By making it virtually impossible to regulate exports or apply conservation measures, the FTA locked Canada into an environmentally unsustainable pattern of resource consumption. NAFTA will reinforce this trend.

The NAFTA...serves to encourage both the private sector and provincial governments to explore the possibilities of exporting large quantities of water to the U.S.

Social Programs:
Another concern is around social programs, those which currently exist are threatened and new ones will be prevented by NAFTA:

The free trade deals are contributing to the process by which
Unemployment Insurance is being seriously eroded. 15

The survival of Canada’s social programs is clearly on the line unless free trade is stopped. 16

Canadian governments wishing to introduce new social programs or state monopolies must also continue to compensate foreign companies who might be adversely affected. (This was one of the main deterrents that caused the Ontario NDP government to abandon its proposed public auto insurance plan.) 17 (brackets in original text)

Other negative repercussions which the documents mention include: the erosion of the Auto Pact; lowering of social, environmental, labour and health standards; increased drug costs, and threats to small farmers because of intellectual property rights; threats to supply management programs in agriculture loss of governments’ ability to subsidize or otherwise favour particular industries. In terms of volume this is definitely the largest category. The bulk of the content of the 24 documents is dedicated to explaining the negative repercussions of NAFTA.

This category overlaps with the Out of Control category. The negative repercussions of NAFTA are described as problems in and of themselves, but in many cases there is also a
suggestion that a larger problem is that we are losing our ability to prevent that negative consequence in the future. For example, in one of their factsheets CELA and Oxfam argue that:

Under NAFTA, existing Canadian regulations on occupational health, worker safety, pollution levels, and protection of the environment will be harmonized with lower standards in the U.S. and Mexico. *This is worrisome enough. But provincial, state, and federal governments will also lose much of their power to adopt new laws in these areas* 18 (my italics)
In Whose Interest?

Many of the documents make references to how NAFTA serves corporate interests over the public interest:

This economic crisis is part of a political reorganization in which the needs and rights of the majority - women, people of colour, peoples of the First Nations, lesbians and gay men, immigrants, disabled people, children and workers - are being abandoned in favour of corporate demands. 19

NAFTA's chapter on intellectual property rights protects the "rights" of corporate owners of patents, trademarks and copyrights without recognizing corresponding obligations to broader society. 20

There are many references to the Tory government acting in the interests of big business in their negotiation of the agreement:

The Tory agenda defines 'freedom' as the freedom of 'markets' and of corporations to do as they please 21

Another theme is around the diminishing of government's ability to act in the public interest, which overlaps with the Out of Control category.

NAFTA will permanently restrict the ability of our governments - municipal, provincial and federal - to act in the best interests of Canadians. 22
The United States

I was very interested in the images and attitudes towards the U.S. in these documents. Depending on the context the attitude towards the U.S. is either one of fear or of contempt.

In the context of discussions of "harmonizing" our policies with the U.S. the attitude is generally one of contempt. Canada is described as becoming a replica of the U.S. with the implication that this is a fate worse than death.

If we stay in Free Trade and NAFTA we have no choice, we continue down the road that's making us a copy of the U.S.: a society split between very rich and very poor, full of fear and crime with almost no programs in health or education to help the majority, and cities that are turning into jungles.

At the same time, in the context of negotiations, the attitude is of fear. The U.S. is described as all-powerful. They are the "winners" in contrast to us as "losers". For example the U.S. is described as "harassing" Canadian exports through their trade laws:

U.S. harassment has been directed at firms that export steel, pork, softwood lumber, potatoes, beef, natural gas, wheat, lobsters, shakes and shingles, sugar, magnesium, beer, and Honda cars. 24

In the three years before the FTA (1986-1988), Canada faced a total of 9 harassment cases from the U.S. In the first three years since, this has increased to 15. 25
This category overlaps with the In Whose Interest? category, since the U.S. identity is linked very closely with corporations:

The corporate agenda is also the American agenda... They see NAFTA, and beyond that the EAI, as the means to regain their competitive edge in the global economy.  

Thoughts and Concerns  I am intrigued by the contrast between these images of "America as Hell" (a crime ridden jungle) and "America as the Devil" (all powerful and evil). The America as Hell image emerges from a comparison of social welfare in our countries. On the other hand the America as Devil identity emerges when the U.S. is equated with U.S. based corporate power.

I don't mean to deny the truth of these images (far from it), but it concerns me that the image of the U.S. is so universally negative. There are a few references to resistance and potential allies in the U.S, but not enough to affect the overall impression of the U.S. as the "enemy."

The documents generally ignore the complexities and contradictions of the U.S. The impression one is left with is that the U.S. is monolithically evil, and uniformly pro-NAFTA, thus ignoring potential allies that we could work with.
Canada

Images of Canada take a variety of forms in these documents. One image of Canada that comes out of these documents is of a weak country, a loser. This is plainly evident in visual images like the chess/checkers board and the mouse/elephant shown below, as well as statements like the following:

If NAFTA passes, Canadians can expect to play their role as “hewers of wood and drawers of water” for U.S. based corporations until the resources run out.

Similarly our negotiators are described as bumbling, allowing themselves to be duped, and failing to get concessions that "even Mexico" was able to negotiate:

Auditing disputes highlight the importance of having clear and predictable rules of origin - something Canadian negotiators failed to achieve in the FTA, and have fallen short of achieving in NAFTA. Under the Free Trade deal, we have to keep giving the U.S. whatever amount of our energy resources we sold them in the past -even if a crisis or shortage happens up here! NAFTA expands this straightjacket to all our natural resources, not just energy. What’s amazing is this doesn’t even apply to Mexican energy, just Canadian! The Mexicans got out of it by asking. Canada didn’t even bother. (all my italics)
Another recurrent theme in the documents suggests that Canada's identity is defined by our social programs:

Canada's public institutions and services, along with our social programs, have preserved our national identity and enriched our quality of life. 33

A strong government sector is part of the Canadian Way. 34

There are also many suggestions that our very survival is at stake as these programs are threatened by NAFTA:

With the very survival of the country at stake, we urgently call for an open debate. 35

Free Trade will Cost us Canada 36

Today we speak not of concerns but of fears for the future of Canada, indeed for its continued existence 37

Thoughts and Concerns: Overall the image of Canada which is portrayed in these documents is of a weak nation led by bumbling and/or complicit politicians, and with our very identity at stake. This concerns me because of what it may mean for people reading the documents. It seems to me that readers are likely to feel disempowered. If they identify themselves as Canadians then this image of weakness and incompetence also extends to them in some way.

I don't mean to say that people can't see themselves as distinct from their politicians, but because of the way national identities work in our society it is hard to avoid identifying with them in some way. Just as we identify with our athletes when they go to the Olympics, and with our armies when they go to war, in some way we identify with our politicians when they go to international negotiations. They are "our team" and their successes and failures reflect on us.
Mexico

Many different images relating to Mexico emerge from the documents. The government is described as corrupt, having won power through electoral fraud and systematically crushing organized resistance in unions. In terms of the negotiating skills they are sometimes described as smart, since they got some favourable concessions from the U.S. that Canada did not around energy and petrochemicals. They are also described as weak, they could not possibly hope to negotiate a favourable agreement because they have no position of strength. Several documents suggest forgiveness of Mexico's foreign debt should be part of an alternative strategy. There are some references to our jobs moving to Mexico, but also many attempts to show that Mexico will not benefit from NAFTA:

Mexican economists looking at the prospects for NAFTA in light of Mexico's recent experience with trade liberalization warn that "what U.S. and Canadian workers, Mexican workers won't gain." Instead, NAFTA is more likely to drag everyone down. 38

Mexico is described as having poor labour and environmental standards, especially the maquiladora zones on the U.S. border.

Women working in the maquiladoras (where free trade applies) face appalling conditions that include mandatory pregnancy testing, three month contracts, lack of health and safety regulations, wages as low as 55 cents per hour and continued sexual harassment on the job. 39
There are some overlaps with the Agency category. Unlike the United States, there are numerous references to resistance to NAFTA in Mexico. There are also many strategic references to creating linkages between Canadian and Mexican NGOs in struggling against the Free Trade agenda. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, leader of the Mexican left wing opposition party is quoted as opposing NAFTA and calling for united strategies:

We are running late. Another type of agenda is also being constructed, much more rapidly than we could have imagined...This other agenda is not aimed at creating a continental relationship, but rather at subordination both of our countries to our common neighbour - The United States. Our goal is to join forces with you...to build the right kind of relationship among our three nations.
Economic Context
Some documents place NAFTA in an economic context, explaining how it is set within a larger global neoliberal economic agenda which includes privatization, cuts to social programs, and shifting of power from governments to corporations.

Oblivious to the lessons of history, the Tories replaced the national policy begun by MacDonald with Reagan-Thatcher free-market parking lot theories. 41

By the early 1980s another agenda was taking shape -- something called neoliberalism...this agenda advocated a deregulated economy where business was to be left a free hand. 42

NAFTA is also set within the neoliberal economic agenda as it is expressed in the Enterprise for the Americas Initiative (EAI), which has as its ultimate goal a free trade zone including all of North, Central, and South America:

NAFTA's scope is not limited to US, Mexico and Canada. NAFTA is part of Bush's Enterprise for the Americas which is intended to create a free trade area in the entire hemisphere. 43

NAFTA is the cornerstone of the EAI strategy. 44

Historical Contexts
In setting historical contexts many documents start with the election of the Tories and review the policies that they have implemented since then. A few mention the history of GATT, which was established in 1948, and how that relates to the current NAFTA.

The objective when GATT was established in 1948 was to make rules and regulations that would create fair trade for the good of the people of the world...The Unholy Trinity - The FTA the NAFTA and the Dunkel proposal at GATT - turns us 180 degrees from those objectives. 45

One gives a detailed history of previous efforts of the U.S. to negotiate free trade with Canada in 1854, 1891, 1911, and 1935:
Canada’s first free trade agreement with the U.S. ran from 1854-66. Washington cancelled it in 1866, hoping to force the Canadian colonies to join the U.S. In mid 1866 a bill was introduced into Congress calling for the annexation of Canada. This threat from the U.S. led to negotiations in Canada for confederation. 46

Another describes the permanent de-industrialization of the Maritimes as a repercussion of "free trade" established with the interior of Canada during Confederation in the 1860s. 47
because they are depicted as powerless. This powerlessness is most graphically shown in images like the one below which show people being literally crushed by NAFTA.

No images of alternatives:
As I read through the documents I was attending mostly to the text and not to the images, but after a while I began to notice an absence of positive images of alternatives. Even in Action Dossier #39 which explicitly sets out to explore alternatives there are no visual images of these alternatives. The only concrete visual image of an alternative is the one shown on page 73 of this document. It is a package of wild rice, which the accompanying text explains is the product of a community economic development project.

Thoughts and concerns: This lack of visual images of alternatives concerns me. It seems like it will be difficult to overcome the notion that there is no alternative to NAFTA, when we ourselves have no "vision" of alternatives to show people. We have lots of words about alternatives, but no visual images to illustrate them.
They Said/We Said

A number of the documents used a "broken promises" format where government and corporate promises about the benefits of NAFTA are contrasted against what actually happened. These overlap with the Providing Contexts category in that they are a particular way to provide an historical context.

**THEY SAID** "Canadians should be confident that this agreement (NAFTA) will eventually create more jobs, better jobs. It will put more money in the pockets of Canadians." Michael Wilson, Minister of International trade, 1992

**FACT** Statistics Canada reports 434,400 jobs in the manufacturing sector were lost between 1989 and 2992. there are now more than two million Canadians without jobs. With NAFTA, thousands more jobs will head south to Mexico where wages are 60 cents per hour. 48

Some of them also include a reference to what "we" said would happen, pointing out that we were right and they were wrong:

**THEY SAID:**
More jobs. Better jobs. Or "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs" to quote Brian Mulroney

**WE SAID:**
Major job losses will occur. Working conditions will deteriorate as Canadian companies try to "compete with US giants.

**WHAT HAPPENED:**
Net Loss of 315,000 jobs in manufacturing alone by December 1990... 49
Agency

In this category I include all references to social movements which construct them as agents: people who have taken action in the past, and people who can take action in the future. These include collective actions taken by organizations as well individual actions. These are primarily actions of resistance, actions which specifically oppose NAFTA and the neoliberal agenda. There is also some overlap with the alternatives category, where actions are aimed at building positive alternatives rather than specifically opposing NAFTA.

Individual actions of resistance

The documents suggest several different types of individual actions including learning and sharing information:

- Become as knowledgeable as you can about the subject. Talk about the free trade alternatives with your family, friends, and in any organizations to which you belong.  

Others suggest political actions such as voting or writing to your MP. NAC's 1993 Voters' Guide encouraged readers to question their candidates on specific issues. The chapter on NAFTA offered the following question:

- If elected will your party oppose NAFTA and abrogate the Free Trade Agreement with the US?

Individuals are also encouraged to get involved, join a group, go to a rally.

Get involved - ACN NAFTA and the Public Sector p.12

Get more informed - Woman to Woman, p.1
Individual Actions for Alternatives

There are two instances where suggested actions focus on building alternatives. Bridgehead encourages individuals to seek out ethically sourced products, and Oxfam calls for people to "take full advantage of the democratic opportunities available to us to participate more actively in our housing co-ops, community meetings, unions, home and school associations and the formal political process." In the whole collection these are the only two concrete suggestions for individual action which are about participating in building alternatives rather than specifically resisting NAFTA.

Collective Actions of resistance

There are some references to actions that organizations have already taken:

- Mexican workers held a mass rally in Mexico City last August to express their opposition to NAFTA.
- NAC has launched a Future of Women's Work action research project.
- Citizens' coalitions against free trade and economic integration are springing up throughout the hemisphere.

Some documents also suggest things organizations should be doing to resist the NAFTA agenda. Most prevalent are calls to come together across sectors into coalitions. Many organizations also call for the need to develop and pursue alternative economic strategies. A few point out a need to develop new ways of organizing:

- To regain control we need to be imaginative, to experiment, to be prepared to see some experiments fail.

Several documents particularly challenge the labour movement to respond to the new workplace realities of increasing part-time work and homeworking.

Collective actions for alternatives

Suggestions and examples here are aimed at developing community self-reliance as an alternative, including worker co-operatives, community banking and credit unions, local
currencies, bartering systems, and gaining control of pension funds.

The seeds of an alternative, many alternatives exist in local struggles in which workers and communities have taken action to give themselves more control over their livelihoods. 58

Thoughts and Concerns It concerns me that there are so few suggestions of ways for individuals to participate in building alternatives. The only possibilities for action which individuals are offered are getting more informed, trying to influence the government, joining a group, or going to a demonstration. For people who are already convinced that NAFTA is bad but don't believe it would be possible to influence politicians to stop it, this does not offer them much to go on. They might easily end up thinking "there's nothing I can do."
Alternatives

In this category I include all the concrete suggestions of alternatives to NAFTA put forward in these documents. These fall roughly into three categories: National Interventionist Measures, and International Agreements, and Community Self Reliance.

Nationalist Interventionist Measures

These include tax reforms to shift the burden from individuals to corporations, a National Child Care Program, government support for environmental initiatives, health care reform, intensive job creation programs, expansion of public services, national students grant program, no university tuition fees, doubling of funding for university research, costing of oil and gas to reflect replacement and environmental cost, regulation of capital flows outside the country, guaranteed access to capital and adequate crop insurance for farmers, and lower interest rates.

International agreements

These alternatives include sector-by-sector trade agreements, like the Auto Pact:

Before being undermined by the FTA, it obliged auto-companies wishing to sell their vehicles in Canada to provide a fair quota of production, investment and jobs in Canada. Similar agreements could be negotiated for other industrial sectors. 59

The groups which most vocally advocate this alternative are the ACN, the Steelworkers, the CLC and the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Some groups suggest that a return to the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) would be preferable to the NAFTA, although most do not endorse this as the best alternative. Others suggest modifications to the GATT, such as a modified structure to allow for participatory democratic representation. These organizations include the ACN, the CLC, the Native Council of Canada, Steelworkers, ECEJ, National Farmers Union, CHO!CES, and the Council of Canadians.

Another proposed alternative is to set "social charters" within international trade
agreements. This would deal with social dumping (the tendency of production to move to areas with lower environmental and health standards) by setting minimum social, labour, environmental and health standards. The European Community is cited as an example, their economic pact includes a social charter to prevent the most extreme forms of "social dumping".

Other international strategies include cancellation of Mexico's debt, banning of large scale water exports, setting an "environmental charter" in trade agreements, strict controls on hazardous waste imports and exports, and an alternative intellectual property rights code which would not allow patenting of life forms and allow governments to licence the production of generic drugs to keep prices low.

Brian O'Neill of Oxfam suggests that an alternative vision of economic organization is emerging from community based groups of women, environmentalists, anti-poverty activists, and labour. At the heart of this vision is a regaining of control over our own lives through increasing community self reliance. Many of the alternatives suggested in these documents fit into this vision. These include suggestions of how to "democratize" capital, making it more responsive to the needs of the community through the strengthening of credit unions, taking control over pension funds, and creating investment funds for community and regional investment.

Others include proposals for food self-sufficiency, ensuring of local processing of natural resources like fish and logs, community health centres with democratically elected boards, sustainable community agriculture, regional currencies, bartering systems, worker co-ops., and community economic
development projects. Some of the documents describe specific projects, such as Kagisowa Manomin, a wild rice harvesting and processing cooperative business, which is building community self-reliance at Wabagoon Lake.

**Thoughts and concerns:** As I mentioned earlier, an important observation is that there are no visual representations of alternatives in the documents. The only one I found is the image (shown above) of Manomin Wild Rice. This concerns me because readers who only glance at these materials might get the impression that there are no alternatives. Many of these documents say in their text that there are alternatives to NAFTA, but someone just glancing at the materials might not realize that.

I also wonder about the use of the word "alternative" which appears frequently in the documents.

- Of course there are alternatives to the Conservative-Corporate agenda.  
- There are alternatives to free trade.
- We believe if we pull together we can find alternatives.
- These two issues contain more than 60 articles on NAFTA and the alternatives.
- Alternatives abound...the Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice has listed no fewer than 101 of them.
- There are as many alternatives as we can imagine.

"Alternative" implies that what we want is beyond our baseline reality. An alternative is something which exists in opposition to the dominant, and is itself defined by the fact that it opposes that which is dominant. Alternative music, alternative medicine, the alternative press... These are all things which exist on the periphery of our society. Toronto's "alternative" radio station CFNY even calls itself "The Edge."

When we use the word alternative to describe what we want, aren't we also positioning ourselves on the edge? The implication is that we may get some of what we want, but that our "alternatives" will never be central to the economy or society as a whole.
Many of the documents include some sort of visionary statement about the world they hope to see in the future. These are related to the alternatives category but they are generally too vague to qualify as specific alternative suggestions:

Most of these are expressed as imperatives, things that must be achieved:

- We need economic strategies that would distribute the community's resources more fairly, promote equality, create economic democracy, and plan for an environmentally sustainable future.  

- We need to trade based on traditional modes of production that benefit the maximum number of people. This is our only path to planetary survival.

- We need a government that is prepared to rethink our approach to the development of the Canadian economy.

- The Quebec of the future must be built on a liberating social agenda, which depends - necessarily and unconditionally - on deepening and expanding democracy.

Others are described as desires or demands:

- We want an international 'trade and development pact' that respects sovereignty, the need for democratic control over the economy, and the right to regulate investment and trade.

- The important thing is to fight for what we really want - a society without margins, a society where we all live in solidarity and share control of the economy to serve our needs.

- Our members, of all ages, political persuasions, and ethnic backgrounds, want Canada to survive as a nation...so that we can protect our resources, build a productive, prosperous, and humane Canadian society as well as play an independent role in world affairs.

- We demand a fair trade agreement that will improve the social and economic conditions of people, not worsen them in order to produce ever increasing profits for the TNCs and corporate elites.

- We demand an agreement that will foster democracy not limit it.
A few are expressed as things we can or will achieve:

We believe that if we pull together we can find alternatives - ways to take back control in our communities. 72

Success in these ventures will enable Canadians to get back on the road to improving quality of life for all of us, based on a caring, equitable society. 73

By choosing a system of managed trade, rather than free trade, we will be choosing to improve the economic, social, and environmental living conditions of all the peoples of North America. 74

Trade Agreements will be an important part of a just economy, one in which everyone has the opportunity to have meaningful work, adequate housing, nutrition, health care, cultural identity, control over their lives and a healthy environment. 75

This category overlaps with the Out of Control category since many of the statements call for taking back control. There is also overlap with the In Whose Interests? category, since there are calls for a society where trade benefits the majority rather than the corporate elite.

Thoughts and Concerns Although these are visionary statements, I notice that they don't actually express much hope that the visions can be achieved. Most are expressed as imperatives rather than possibilities, and some express significant doubt and despair:

The prospects for the Canadian dream, for the notion that a unique society can be made and sustained on the northern half of the continent, have never been more dismal. 76

As long as our country remains trapped in the present continental free trade regime, there will be no hope for democratization.

I don't want to suggest this despair is misguided, but it is indicative that it has made its way even into the most visionary statements of the documents. This contributes to the sense of hopelessness which the documents evoke.
As I reflect on the results of this content analysis, I see three sets of implications for our work in opposing the neoliberal agenda.

The first set of implications is around the way "we" and "they" are depicted in the documents. This relates in part to "our" identity as Canadians. The image of Canada which is being projected is of a weak country. I do not think this was intentional, nevertheless it sends a powerful message. Canadians reading these documents are not likely to feel powerful in their identity as Canadian citizens, nor are they likely to feel particularly hopeful that we as a nation will be able to do anything about NAFTA. This is particularly true when you consider the often repeated message in the Out of Control category: that NAFTA means we are losing control and power as a nation, as provinces, and as voters.

Consider also the impact of the visual images of "us" as activists. The visual images of activists in these documents are of little angry people holding up signs. Meanwhile "they," the businessmen and politicians, are shown as enormous self-satisfied men.

There is a larger message, a meta-message, which goes beyond the actual text of the documents: Canada is weak and getting weaker, the U.S. is strong and getting stronger. Activists are small and weak, while businessmen and the politicians they support are big and powerful.

As we produce documents like these we need to be conscious of (and take responsibility for) this meta-message. We still need to think about what the text says about individual issues but we also need to take a step back and ask "What does this document say as a whole?" "How will people feel after they look at it?"
We also need to find ways to send a different meta-message, one which acknowledges our strengths as well as our weaknesses, and one which shows their weaknesses as well as their strengths.

One image which begins to do this is shown opposite. It is from the Oxfam article in Action Dossier #39. The image perpetuates the idea that we are small and they are big, but it plays with it. The image shows that they can be "toppled". They have a weakness, which is their stem. Because we are small we can reach that stem. We can shake them and seeds will fall from their pockets. And with these seeds we can grow a new garden, which will blossom with beautiful flowers.

Another set of implications also relates to constructions of "us" and "them" and points to the need to deconstruct these identities.

From the documents it appears that the U.S. is a monolithic, powerful, evil force, which is universally pro-NAFTA. This ignores the complexities, dynamism, and contradictions of the United States. Similarly, images of Canada in the documents tend to underestimate the complexity and diversity of Canadian society. Together the images of the U.S. as strong and Canada as weak create a grossly oversimplified notion of power and how it is wielded in Canada and the world. At a strategic level, this means that we in Canada may end up ignoring potential allies in the United States who are also suffering under the neoliberal agenda.

I will return to these issues around constructions of identity in Chapter 5, where I will further explore how the readers are addressed/constructed and how that may impact on
their taking action.

The third set of implications I see emerging from this content analysis is around representation of alternatives and visions of the future. I find it highly significant that among the 100-200 visual images in these documents, there is only one which depicts a concrete alternative. There are lots of words about alternatives in the documents, but only one visual image that depicts an alternative.

As a movement we often express the need to develop a vision. Here in Metro Toronto for example, vision creation was one of the top priorities emerging from the annual general meeting of the Metro Network for Social Justice last year. The Social Planning Council of Metro Toronto has also said that it is dedicated to "working towards achieving a Social Vision for the 21st century." 77

There is an interesting parallel here. We are expressing a need to develop a common "vision" of an alternative society. At the same time we literally show no "vision" of the alternatives we have already identified. We literally have not expressed those alternatives in visual form, only textual form.

Clearly we need to start addressing this. It is hardly surprising that people think there are no alternatives, when we ourselves don't even "show" them in our own documents.

Another factor to consider at this point is that the documents offer virtually no suggestions as to how a person could actively participate in building those alternatives. For an individual reader the documents explain the problems with NAFTA, offer suggestions about ways to resist NAFTA, explain (in words) that there are alternatives, but then fall short. They do not go on to explain how to participate in those alternatives. Finally, we must also take into consideration the lack of optimism which is expressed in the documents. There is a sense of doubt and despair which is evoked even as the documents are describing their visions of a better society. Given that we are not offering them much in the way of hope, or positive actions to take, it's not surprising that people
think there is nothing they can do.

In chapter 6 I will return to some of these issues, and explore more fully the visions and alternatives which are expressed in the documents. Following from the desire which has been expressed for a common vision, I will look in the documents for evidence of an emerging consensus. I will explore the extent to which the different suggestions are compatible. I will also explore the possibility that we do not all agree, that we are actually pursuing pluralistic visions, rather than one common vision.
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Critiquing the documents as sites of Praxis

In the content analysis of Chapter 4 I grounded my analysis in the documents themselves. In this chapter I will critically reflect on the documents. Drawing from wisdoms and insights of Education as Praxis theorists I will apply the notion of praxis to the anti-NAFTA documents, and assess the extent to which they reflect the principles of praxis.

In chapter 6 I will look at the visions for alternatives in the documents, and what they imply for action in the movement. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 thus reflect a cycle of praxis, first grounding the analysis in the documents, then critically reflecting on the documents, and finally looking at the implications for action in the documents.

The cycle of praxis is also reflected within the structure of this chapter. In critiquing the documents as sites of praxis I will follow the three stages of praxis: grounding, reflecting then acting. First I will look at how the documents are grounded in the lives, experiences and knowledge of the readers, then at how the documents instigate critical reflection on the social and economic structures of our society, and finally at how the documents mobilize the readers for strategic action.

Throughout the chapter I will highlight implications for our practice as activists and educators.
Education as Praxis theories emphasize that the starting point for learning should always be with the learners' experience:

Radical Adult Educators need to turn from the dominant technicist formulation of restructuring and pay attention to what workers and the unemployed are actually experiencing and learning in the process of capitalist reorganization.¹

What is being advocated here is that teachers and other cultural workers learn to confirm student experiences and voices so that students are legitimated and supported as people who matter, as people who can participate in the production and acquisition of their own learning.²

Popular education starts with the experiences of the learners, and in problematizing their everyday lives shows how they reflect the social and political structures of society.³

In the context of this analysis, this would suggest that the starting point for the anti-NAFTA documents should be with their readers' experience. In the following pages I will consider three ways that the documents could do this. I will look first at how the documents link the issues around NAFTA to the readers' everyday experience, then at how they address the readers as members of communities, and finally at how they value everyday experience versus expert knowledge.

For the purposes of this analysis I am considering the "readers" to be members of the general public, or of the general membership of the NGOs in the collection. I specifically asked for documents which were aimed at that type of audience when I collected the documents. This is because my research questions are specifically focused on the effectiveness of documents in reaching/mobilizing the general public.

I acknowledge at the outset that this representation of "the reader" may not very accurate. Another, arguably more important, set of research questions can be raised
about the effectiveness of these documents in reaching the general public. How many were produced? How were they distributed? Who actually read them? My guess is that the readers included some members of the general public, but also far more of the "converted" than we like to think: people who were already plugged in, people who work at these organizations, people who were going to lead a workshop the next day and need some snappy quotes, room-mates friends and partners of the people who wrote these documents. Accurate information on distribution and readership is unfortunately beyond the scope of this project. At this point my focus is in on how to reach the general public on an intellectual rather than physical level.
Linking Issues to Everyday Experiences and Concerns

Popular Educators believe education should be based primarily on the experience of the participants. They acknowledge that sometimes there is a need to bring in information which is outside the experience of the participants, but where this need exists they emphasize the importance of drawing links between that new information and the experience of the participants.\(^5\)

For the anti-NAFTA documents, this would suggest that links should be drawn to the knowledge and experiences of the readers, and that the impacts of NAFTA should be described in relation to how they will affect the lives of the readers.

Generally this is done very poorly in the documents. The problems with NAFTA tend to be described in abstract, intellectual terms. Even when they are describing a potential impact on people it is done in an impersonal way:

Under NAFTA our health and safety standards will be harmonized with those of the U.S. and Mexico. In all likelihood this will mean a lowering of health standards and a greater risk to consumers.\(^6\)

It is difficult to interpret from such a statement exactly what the impacts will be for us in our everyday lives. What does a "lowering of health standards" actually imply? What does a "greater risk to consumers" actually mean? These are abstract concepts which are distanced from the readers by the use of words like "consumers" to describe those who will be affected.

There are a few examples in the documents where significant efforts are made to draw the links to everyday experience. One is Tomasito's Guide to the Integration of the Americas, an educators' tool included in the ECEJ Integration of the Americas educators' kit. The story of Tomasito the Tomato takes us on a tour beginning at an agribusiness plantation in Mexico, which has taken land that was formerly used by communally owned cooperative farms. The tour ends in Canada where the tomato is served to a customer in a fast food restaurant. The waitress at the restaurant used to be
employed in a food processing plant that closed down and moved to Mexico. Now she works part-time for minimum wage. Like her Mexican counterparts she cannot afford to buy the food served at the restaurant. Tomasito's story follows the Popular Education model by showing the multiple links between NAFTA and the everyday lives of people in Canada and Mexico.

Another way that the documents make links with the readers is by addressing issues that are of direct concern to them. Jobs and unemployment are issues that are probably of great personal concern to many readers and virtually all the documents refer to these issues. Many cite appalling figures since the FTA was signed: "In Ontario alone there is an estimated 500 full time jobs lost per day, and an average of one plant closing a day" and then go on to predict more under NAFTA. However only a few of the documents explicitly draw the links between job losses and the lives of ordinary Canadians.

One document which draws these links explicitly is the ACN-BC election brochure. The
main page of text for that brochure starts with a quote from Grace Bishop, a fish worker from Victoria:

I worked at the fish plant for 32 years and it closed with two weeks notice. The more unprocessed fish goes south, the more jobs we lose. Nobody’s job is safe as long as we have Free Trade.

Another is the ECEJ kit, which relates the story of the 94 workers at the Electro-Wire Ltd factory in Owen Sound. In 1989 the union was given an ultimatum: accept a reduction in real wages and a contract for just three years, or the company would move its operations to the plant in Mexico. To back up its threat, management produced a letter from a company in Mexico explaining the costs of production. The workers felt they had no choice and gave in to the company’s demands. 9

Some thoughts about the implications for action:
We need to include more stories from the perspective of ordinary Canadians. We need to describe the impacts in concrete ways, so that we can see how our daily lives will be affected.
Community/Identity

Roger Simon suggests that effective critical education should construct the learners as members of a public network that supports and sustains them in taking action. Any learner has multiple identities and communities, and through the structure and content of our educational practices we can affect which of those communities the learner is identifying with at that moment. If the community is one which is supportive of them taking action, then the learner is more likely to take responsibility to act on what he/she has learned.

This relates to the notion of grounding education within the lives of the learners, and suggests that we need to attend to the way we do this. We need to ask ourselves how we are addressing learners, if we are addressing them as members of a particular community, and if that community is supportive, if it would provide a base from which to act.

Applying Simon’s insight to the anti-NAFTA documents would suggest that the readers should be constructed as members of a community which would actively support them in opposing NAFTA.

One example would be the way some of the labour documents address the readers as union members. PSAC, NUPGE, and the CAW all suggest that readers contact their union locals to get involved. The CAW also addresses the readers as members of the broader labour movement.

Work with the Canadian Labour Congress, the Action Canada Network and the New Democratic Party to ensure an alternative vision for Canada and for our future generations.

Clearly this serves to invite the readers to join a community that would support them in taking action.
This would seem to fulfil Simon's suggestion, but I have some serious misgivings about this. In particular I am dubious about the effectiveness of the construction of unions as a "supportive community" since visual images like the one below tend to portray workers as small, weak and powerless. The ultimate effect is bound to be disempowering rather than empowering.

The most common way the readers are addressed in the document is as Canadians. They are drawn into this identity by being included in "we" in statements like:

We can get out of the free trade deal by giving the U.S. six months notice.  

12

Canada's public will have no voice in critical trade decisions - unless we're asked.  

13

Canada urgently needs to regain sovereignty over its most precious resource. We must insist that our governments prevent water diversions to the United States.  

14

In Canada, we know very well the disasters wrought by the Mulroney government since 1984.  

15 (my italics)

The documents also construct "Canadians" as a community that would support action to

Canada as a base from which to act? - ActionWorkers as a supportive community? - ACN Dossier #39, p.6

NAFTA and the Public Sector p.7
oppose NAFTA by describing the level of popular opposition:
Canadians today absolutely loath the idea of trilateral free trade. 16

The government's own poll reported that 60% of Canadians oppose signing a 3-way agreement with the U.S. and Mexico. 17

A majority of Canadians have always opposed Free Trade. 18
The readers are thus constructed as members of a community - Canadians - and this community is shown to be one that would support action to oppose NAFTA.

Once again I have misgivings. As with the unions, part of my concern centres on the image of Canada which is evoked by the documents. As I explained in Chapter 4, Canada is often portrayed as weak and incompetent in these documents.

What's amazing is this doesn't apply to Mexican energy, just Canadian! The Mexicans got out of it just by asking. Canada didn't even bother. 19

Canadians can expect to play their role as "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for U.S. based corporations until the resources run out. 20

Since the readers are constructed to think of themselves as "Canadians" as they read the documents, they will be identifying with community that opposes NAFTA, but they will also be identifying with a weak and incompetent community. Ultimately this is bound to be disempowering rather than empowering. Somehow I do not feel that this is what Roger Simon had in mind when he suggested addressing learners as members of a network that would sustain and support action.

Another part of my concern is around the construction of a "Canadian" identity in the larger context outside of these documents. Given the current aboriginal struggles for autonomy, and Quebec's struggle for sovereignty, we have to question what it means to address people as "Canadian." At this point in our history it is a somewhat vacuous political category. 21

It is often suggested that the Canadian identity is defined by our social programs and government funded cultural agencies, a notion which is supported and perpetuated in
these documents. In that context to be a Canadian is to be a taxpayer paying for these services, as well as a consumer or potentially a client using these services. This is a passive identity, defined by what we get, not what we do. As such it does not really provide the kind of active base of support which Simon's notion refers to.

It also seems likely that in addressing the readers as Canadians the documents are missing a large portion of their potential target audience. There are many people who live in Canada who do not identify themselves as "Canadians," or who feel that others do not consider them "Canadian." It is an ethnocentric term which is most commonly used to identify privileged, white, English speaking communities (e.g. the recent series of I AM Canadian advertisements for Molson Canadian beer).

This leaves us with a problem. If we are not going to address readers as Canadians, how then will we address them? Janet Conway suggests that to figure this out we need to undertake more sophisticated analysis. We need to analyze power dynamics more concretely and carefully. From there we can think about who can act and how they can act to effect change. This may lead to some new ideas about what communities and identities would provide a base from which to act, and thus suggest how we should be addressing our readers.

Some thoughts about the implications for action:
We need to be aware of how we are constructing the identity of the readers, and of the way we portray that community. We need to construct readers as members of communities that are perceived of as strong and powerful rather than weak and incompetent. This means when we construct the readers as "Canadians" or "workers" we should remember to include visual and textual images of the strengths and diversity of those communities rather than the weaknesses.

We also need to think about different ways to address the readers which would provide a more relevant base from which to act. This may mean undertaking an analysis to figure out what communities can act and how they can effect change.
Valuing Readers' vs Experts' Knowledge

Traditional education methods teach us to value the "expert" knowledge of teachers, and to thus to devalue our own knowledge as learners. In Naming the Moment Deborah Barndt suggests that this has been a major obstacle to effective political analysis for action in Canada. We have learned not to trust our own skills of analysis and depend on experts to do it for us. 25

One of the most important principles of Education as Praxis is that the learner’s experience is respected and valued.26

Popular education values and respects people as their own experts...it is based on the belief that people themselves have sufficient knowledge and that they can work out the solutions to their own problems...it equips people to define their own struggles and to make their voices heard. 27

In Education as Praxis learning is an interactive process where the teacher is not just "depositing" knowledge into the learners. The relationship between the learner and the leader is democratic, with full and equal discussion debate and decision making. 28

Applying this principle to the anti-NAFTA documents is somewhat problematic. It is not possible for learning to be an interactive process in a document where communication is necessarily one way. At face value, applying this principle to the documents suggests that they should make the voices of ordinary people heard, showing that their knowledge is valued equally with that of "experts"

In apparent contradiction to this principle, most of the anti-NAFTA documents seem to reinforce dependence on experts rather than diminish it. The voices that most often come through in these documents are those of "experts": politicians, government, journalists, economists, and union and business leaders. There are very few instances where we hear the voices of ordinary Canadians. To calculate the level of imbalance, I picked out three of the documents and tallied the number of times different types of people were quoted or paraphrased. The results are shown in Table 4.
TABLE 4 - VOICES HEARD IN THE DOCUMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONS CITED OR PARAPHRASED</th>
<th>NAFTA: NOT ANOTHER FREE TRADE AGREEMENT (ACN)</th>
<th>GIVE ME A MANDATE AND YOU WON'T RECOGNIZE THIS COUNTRY IN TEN YEARS (CAW)</th>
<th>DON'T VOTE FOR 'FREE' TRADE (ACN-BC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Leaders</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economists</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'The Tories'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulroney</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stats Canada</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ordinary&quot; people</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other &quot;experts&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A few of the documents do make an effort to include the voices of ordinary people. The educators' kit *Integration of the Americas* includes a Dramatic Reading based on the experiences of Maria and Lee, two Canadian garment workers, and Luisa and Bertha, two Mexican garment workers. Together Maria, Lee, Luisa, and Bertha explain how Canadian garment production has shifted from unionized factories to non-unionized homeworkers, and to factories in the maquiladora region of Mexico.

*As the Empire Grows* also has a two page section called "Everyday Life: Voices of Working People in Canada Mexico and USA." The section includes six entries. One is a letter from students in an English upgrading class in Toronto to workers in Mexico. Another is the testimony of Shirley Reinhardt, a member of a US citizen's group, to her Trade Representative.

As well as emphasizing the views of "experts," the documents also emphasize the importance of learning from "experts" by strongly encouraging people to get more informed. I found this to be particularly true of the Action Canada Network documents. For example in their list of *Ten Ways to Promote Alternatives* the first four emphasize...
learning, particularly from ACN publications:

1. Read the free trade publications available from the ACN and other community based groups, become as knowledgeable as you can...
2. If you haven't already obtained copies of the last two Action Dossiers, order them from the ACN
3. Invite a guest speaker to address your organization
4. Phone or visit your local MP and MPP to get their views on free trade. Take along a copy of this leaflet.

I should clarify that I am not arguing for an uncritical acceptance of "ordinary people's" knowledge. Popular educators in particular have been accused of romanticizing ordinary people's knowledge. Education as Praxis theory does not deny the value of "expert knowledge". The principle which is espoused is that there should be a balance between expert and everyday knowledge. It emerges from a critique of academic knowledge structures and political theorizing which remain in the academic sphere. It suggests that political strategizing needs to include dialectical thinking process where expert knowledge engages in reality. 29

Education as Praxis is based on an assumption that oppression occurs through hegemonic domination: consent won through ideological and cultural leadership as well as the threat of force. This means that everyday experience is not an unmediated reality. We are immersed in the systems which control our lives, to the extent that we do not always recognize how we are being oppressed. (I will return to a more thorough exploration of the notion of hegemony in chapter 6). In order for people to take action to overcome the systems which oppress them, they need to understand those systems, and how they are being played out on their own lives. They need to see how they participate in their own oppression. This understanding comes through critical reflection on their own lives.

What this means is that there is a necessary balance to be struck between affirming people's experiences as valid sources of knowledge, while also critically challenging people's acceptance of handed-down wisdom. If expert knowledge is the only knowledge which is valued, this precludes a dialectical engagement between experience and theory.
Conversely, if everyday knowledge is the only knowledge which is valued then our analysis will be weakened by the absence of crucial information.

This is a crucial point to consider in trying to apply the notions of Education as Praxis to the anti-NAFTA documents. There is an obvious need for expert knowledge since the NAFTA document is 2000 pages of legal-ese. Understanding the dynamics of NAFTA and neoliberalism cannot be considered to be self-evident in anybody's experience. How then can we achieve the appropriate balance between expert and everyday knowledge? The key seems to be to present the information that is needed in a way that is empowering, that helps people to understand and analyze that which they already know, drawing the links from their everyday experience, and showing how that experience can help to understand the larger picture.

The excerpt of Shirley Reinhardt's testimony to the US Trade Representative, in *As the Empire Grows* serves as a helpful example:

Three years ago I was just a regular factory worker who got up in the morning and went to work, fed my family, cleaned my house, went to church and didn't look too much beyond what I had to do everyday to keep things going. When I went to the grocery store and saw people buying groceries with food stamps, I looked down on them.

I worked in a General Electric factory on a computerized assembly line, making electrical switch boxes. The GE began lay-offs. Some workers from the production lines had to go for good, and I was one of them.

When I got fired my education really began. Now I know what it is like to be involuntarily unemployed. Now I know what it's like to try to avoid talking to people you run into at the grocery store.

It may sound like a long way from the unemployment line in Hamblen County Tenn. to the office of the U.S. Trade Representative. Really its not. In fact trade policy and unemployment are all tied up together.

In July, I went to Mexico on a trip sponsored by the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network (TIRN). Many of our members work in factories or in industries that have shipped off many jobs to Mexico.

Nothing I had learned had gotten me ready to see the conditions under
which workers in Mexico are forced to live. I can close my eyes and see them in my mind: 1 room houses overflowing with people, suffocating summer heat filling tiny boxes where mothers fanned their sweating babies, stagnant pools of water with scum and garbage right next to where people were living, drainpipes carrying toxic industrial waste into ditches that ran through neighbourhoods, bare feet, sick animals, horrible smells, open sores.

And yet it is a strange thing. These pictures in my mind don’t last as long as other pictures: Many of the people we met had courage and dignity I will never forget. Against huge odds they were fighting to build a life. The multinational corporations bear much responsibility for what is happening. I blame the government too. Our government should be insisting on corporate accountability. Instead it pushes a version of Free Trade that encourages low-wage competition.

This kind of story can be empowering. It is an ordinary person’s story of being laid off from a factory job, and it is told in her own voice. It shows respect for the knowledge which has come from those experiences but it also problematizes them, by showing how they reflect the larger structures of society. She says that trade policy and unemployment are all tied up together, but she also tells the story of how she came to understand this. The story is thus helpful in drawing links between larger issues and everyday experience.

Including the voices of ordinary people may help to create a sense of supportive community. By including the stories of ordinary people taking action, our documents could show in a concrete way that the readers are not alone in opposing NAFTA. More importantly, it shows that there are ordinary people just like them who are taking action.

In my mind the key is to start from a position which respects the readers. As we write materials we should try to show how what is being written is relevant to their lives.

Some thoughts about the implications for action:
As we create economic literacy materials which draw on "expert" knowledge we need to remember balance these voices with those of ordinary people. As we affirm everyday experiences, we can show respect for the readers knowledge, but this does not mean we should accept their analysis uncritically.

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Concluding thoughts

Education as Praxis theory says that education is more effective in generating strategic action for social change when it is grounded in the experience and knowledge of the readers. This section applied this notion to the anti-NAFTA documents, asking the question "How well are the documents grounded in the experiences, lives, and knowledge of the readers?" The answer is "poorly".

The issues are not well linked to the experiences perceptions, and questions of the readers. In terms of grounding in the identity and daily lives of the readers as members of communities, the documents address the readers as "Canadians" and sometimes as "workers" which are shown to be communities that would be supportive of opposition to NAFTA. At the same time visual and textual images of those communities portray them as weak, small, and powerless. Thus the net effect of addressing the readers as members of those communities is disempowering, and unlikely to lead to effective social action.
5.2

Encouraging critical reflection

In Section 5.1 I looked at how well the anti-NAFTA documents are grounded in the experiences, lives, and knowledge of the readers. Following the grounding-reflecting-acting cycle of praxis I will now look at how well they encourage critical reflection.

According to the Ah-Hah manual, an approach to education that focuses on content may increase an individual's knowledge but this does not necessarily enable him or her to take action:

It is not a lack of knowledge or information that keeps people from taking action but rather a lack of confidence or ability in analyzing the information they already know. 32

In this section I will look at how the documents encourage the readers to critically reflect on our society, with the ultimate purpose of enabling them to take strategic action to change it. I will look specifically at how power relations are exposed, how widely held cultural assumptions are challenged, and how historical analysis is used.
Power Relations

Education as Praxis theory says that a crucial component of education is a growing awareness of the power relations which dominate and control our society. In the context of the anti-NAFTA documents this would mean an analysis of the power relations which brought NAFTA into being. It would mean exposing how these decisions are made, who is making them, and why. It would also mean analysis of how unequal power relations are perpetuated in the NAFTA itself.

The documents take considerable pains to show that powerful transnational corporations have influenced the NAFTA negotiations and that our government is acting on their behalf. For example in one document Maude Barlow, of the Council of Canadians describes the role of the BCNI (Business Council on National Issues) in determining Tory policies:

The BCNI represents business interests which control a trillion dollars in assets. It is by far the most powerful lobby group in the country and the Tories destructive policies directly reflect the BCNI corporate view of the world. The BCNI functions as the shadow cabinet of the Tory government.

The documents also take considerable pains to show the ways NAFTA changes power relations in our society. They show that the balance of power over social and economic decisions is shifted away from governments, and the public that elects them towards transnational corporations.

In one example the Canadian Peace Alliance describes how NAFTA shifts the balance of power over our economy to the U.S.:

Studying the terms of NAFTA will reveal an agenda for the military and the transnational corporations that binds the
Canadian economy more strongly to the U.S. military machine.  

Although the documents dedicate quite a bit of their content to issues around these shifts in power, the discussion is still a bit abstract. What is still unclear after reading the documents is precisely how these transnational corporations exert their influence. There is not much information or analysis on how they operate, who they are as corporations and individuals, and how they act.

One document tries to do this by pointing out that the corporations that will gain from NAFTA have made significant financial contributions to the Conservative Party:  

The [increased] cost of drugs because of this change is a major force destroying our health care system. Independent economists say it'll cost half a billion to a billion yearly. No wonder American drug companies here were the biggest contributors to the Tories last year.  

Beyond this type of general reference there are very few narrative descriptions of exactly how the decisions around NAFTA were made and precisely how the corporations influenced those decisions. (I suppose this is more because the writers don't know these details than because they consciously chose to leave them out).

Some thoughts about the implications for action:
We need to show how the transnational corporations are exerting their power. By revealing these power relations we can begin to strategize about how to overcome them.
Challenging cultural assumptions

In 1993 I was working for Greenpeace. We publicly opposed NAFTA, but I was disappointed in our effectiveness in fighting it. We were perfectly positioned, with offices in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico. Even so, we never managed to develop a comprehensive strategy. I wasn’t directly involved with the campaign, but from the sidelines it seemed that Greenpeace Mexico was reticent to put energy into it. This seemed odd, since NAFTA would be a disaster for Mexico, with companies going there to take advantage of their weaker environmental regulations. I was puzzled. In 1994 I travelled to Mexico as an election observer. While I was there I went to the Greenpeace office to get their side of the story.

I spoke with the Executive Director, and the conversation was very enlightening. Greenpeace officially opened in Mexico in 1992-3. In their first years of operation they had to establish credibility, to show that they were working for the interests of the Mexican people as well as the environment. It was an uphill battle. Because they were seen as an American organization, they were the object of mistrust and suspicion.

In 1993 NAFTA became a prominent issue and U.S. right wing populist forces were using racist and protectionist arguments to oppose NAFTA: "those dirty Mexicans are stealing our jobs." American opposition to NAFTA was seen as an effort to keep Mexico down, and Mexican opinions of American organizations opposing NAFTA were not very favourable.

Greenpeace Mexico was in a difficult position. They were opposed to NAFTA, but they had to establish some credibility with the Mexican people before they could be effective in their work. They couldn’t take on a public position against NAFTA without jeopardizing that credibility. Even on the basis of their quiet participation in anti-NAFTA coalitions, rumours were circulating that Greenpeace was funded by Ross Perot.

I was horrified and humbled. What I had failed to understand from my Canadian perspective seemed very obvious from a Mexican perspective. I realized I would have to learn to get beyond my own cultural assumptions, perceptions and experiences.

Critical Adult Educators point to the need to penetrate what David Little calls "unquestioned vital cultural tradition": a set of structures and beliefs which have evolved over time, which are taken for granted. Reflecting on, and problematizing unquestioned vital cultural tradition lies at the heart of the practice of Critical Adult Education.
The anecdote above is an example from my own life where I realized that my own cultural assumptions and perceptions were acting as a barrier to understanding the world.

Applying this notion to the content of the anti-NAFTA documents would mean challenging widely accepted cultural assumptions and ideologies which underpin the neoliberal agenda.

One such assumption is the widely accepted notion that NAFTA is inevitable, and that there is no alternative. Many of the documents directly challenge this notion by suggesting that it has been deliberately promoted by business and government.

This 'cult of inevitability' must be resisted. It is being fostered by intellectual terrorists whose goal is to convince Canadians to accept the corporate globalization agenda. 39

They say: Canada has no choice.

We Say: Baloney! We don't need more timid and negative talk from our federal government. We need vision. Those interests that want to see Free Trade extended are creating this sense of inevitability for their own gain. 40

Many of the documents challenge the corporate ideology of competitiveness which has come to dominate our society.

We have a vision that goes beyond the mean and narrow emphasis on competitiveness. 41

Business gets so much respect under NAFTA its almost like a religion...Programs that don't take a business approach, like our public health and education systems get treated like suspects in a crime. 42

A few also challenge traditional notions of how resistance should be organized. Changing Economies by Woman to Woman challenges the traditional labour notion that organizing should begin in the workplace:
The restructuring [of work] that is taking place is reinforcing our analysis that women's organizing can't be artificially divided between work and home and community. Strategies that rely on these old divisions are less and less effective. 43

In her article Women Creating Alternatives Lorraine Michael of ECEJ makes a similar call for new ways of organizing based on the increase in part-time work and homeworking. She gives the example of the Homeworkers Association of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union:

The Homeworkers Association of the ILGWU is the only example in Canada of a union-affiliated association of non-unionized workers. It is an exciting alternative created to deal with an unjust situation that the workers had no control over. 44

These examples show that the documents do challenge many widely held assumptions of our society. However they could go much further. In particular I was expecting them to go deeper in challenging the structure of capitalist economics and the fundamental assumptions upon which it is based. I expected that the women's organizations would be challenging the construction of economics which does not count women's unpaid work. I also expected the environmental groups to be challenging the construction of economics which does not count the costs of environmental damage or the regenerative capacity of natural ecosystems.

In my reading of the documents I came across only two examples which begin to fundamentally challenge capitalist economics in that way. One is in Bob Ages's article in the Action Dossier #39. This is not as basic a critique as I was expecting to find but it does go some distance in challenging the notion of "wealth" which is fundamental to current economic models:

We will remain trapped so long as we accept the common wisdom that the wealth society needs for investment, job creation, and economic development belongs in corporate hands. Wealth is not just stocks and bonds, bank deposits and cash on hand. Wealth is the purchasing power of individuals and public institutions. It is natural resources, technical expertise, job skills, and capacity for semi- or unskilled work. We just don't think of it that way. 45
The other is in the educators' kit *Integration of the Americas*. The kit includes a section on environmental issues which challenges us to rethink the notion of "capital" which underpins capitalism. They define capital as "a stock that yields a flow of services" and note that until now economists have considered capital to be only things which are humanly created. There is also another category of capital - natural capital - made up of functioning ecosystems which yield a flow of natural resources and services. In our efforts to build up humanly created capital we are damaging our ecosystems and reducing our natural capital. In order to create a sustainable economy we must start to count natural capital.44

I was surprised that this analysis was presented by ECEJ and not by an environmental organization, since I have no doubt that the environmental groups represented in the collection would agree with it. I suspect they would say they did not have room. The ECEJ kit is 48 pages long, and the section which presents this environmental critique of economics is three pages long. On the other hand the largest document by an environmental group in this collection is six pages long.

Another reason may be that in my analysis I chose to look only at documents which organizations had produced in response to NAFTA. This set the tone for the type of analysis which was presented in the documents. I suspect if I had asked for more general documents about the economy they might have provided more general critiques of the capitalist economic model.

**Some thoughts about the implications for action:**
We need to find succinct ways to challenge the assumptions which underpin capitalist economic analysis, and put forward ecological and feminist alternatives.
Historical Analysis

Education as Praxis theorists have suggested several reasons that historical analysis is an important component of critical reflection and praxis. Historical reflection can show that it is possible to change the economic and political system by attending to how it has been changing over time. Historical analysis also helps to project future developments, and think strategically about our own actions.

Many of the documents provide some historical perspective on NAFTA, but generally they do not go back much further than the election of the Conservative federal government in 1984. From there they trace the history of economic policies introduced by the Tories. They use this chronology to demonstrate that NAFTA is part of a whole set of policies that make up the neoliberal agenda: privatization of publicly owned companies and services, deregulation of services, free movement of capital, and smaller governments that serve corporate interests over public interests. They also point out the failure of the FTA to fulfill any of their promises to create jobs, protect social programs, keep cultural industries exempt, generate consumer savings, etc. Two of them do this quite systematically using a They Said We Said format.

Deborah Barndt has noted that in our society we have been taught to think in a way that takes events out of historical context. We tend to dichotomize forces and see them as static over time. Historical analysis can break down this static representation by showing multiple forces with dynamic relationships over time. This means that when we address economic issues such as NAFTA, it is important to attend to history beyond just the history of economic policies. It means attending to the dynamics of social and political forces in society which resulted in those economic policies.

The They Said We Said format does make clear who was right (us) and who was wrong (them). I wonder if it is a bit counter-productive in terms of what Barndt suggests an historical perspective can accomplish. Rather than showing a dynamic relationship of multiple forces over time, this format shows dichotomized forces, We and They. The
implicit (and sometimes explicit) extension from They Said, We Said to They Say, We Say suggests this relationship has remained static over time.

The document which goes back farthest in history is a brochure produced by Citizens Concerned About Free Trade (CCAFT). This brochure recounts a history of free trade negotiations with the U.S. going back to 1854. Briefly paraphrased the story goes like this: Canada's first free trade agreement with the U.S. ran from 1854 to 1866 when Washington cancelled it, hoping to force the Canadian colonies to join the U.S. The Canadian colonies did not join the U.S. and the threat led to negotiations for Confederation in 1867. Later, Canadian voters rejected Free Trade with the U.S. in the elections of 1891 and 1911. In 1935 Mackenzie King finally signed a reciprocal trade agreement which reduced many tariffs, and in 1948 the U.S. proposed full free trade. However, King killed that proposed agreement because he was worried about the voters' reaction. 51

I have strong criticism of the way this information is represented (text heavy, no visuals). Nevertheless I wonder if it goes further in accomplishing what Barndt suggests. This recounting of over 100 years of history gives much more of a sense of a dynamic relationship of forces. There have been different moments in our history when Canada has engaged in free trade with the U.S. to greater and lesser degrees. This is a much more fluid, less static interpretation of history than the They Said We Said format.

In his book Border Crossings Henry Giroux also calls for a critical re-reading of our history: "we need to resurrect traditions and social memories that provide a new way of reading history." 52 "History" is a social construct that needs to be subjected to critical analysis rather than unquestioning reverence.

I was particularly struck by an article in the CHOICES document that seems to fulfil this notion of rereading our history. In Free Trade and the Maritime-ization of Canada Paul Phillips describes Canadian Confederation in 1867 as the creation of a free trade zone which ultimately resulted in the permanent de-industrialization of the Maritimes. 53
Phillips reminds us that in 1867 the economy of the Maritime region was thriving, with rich manufacturing and banking sectors, and strong trading relationships throughout the Atlantic. Confederation was supposed to strengthen this economy by expanding their potential markets to the Pacific Ocean. After Confederation the Maritime region began to turn their trade relations inwards toward the continent rather than outwards towards the Atlantic. The transportation system which controlled this trade was controlled by central Canadian interests. When the depression hit in 1885-86 whole industries were shut down and eventually their markets transferred to Montreal and central Canada. Trade relations with other countries had diminished and could not sustain the region. By 1913 only two of the 13 maritime banks that had existed a decade earlier remained, and they were both now headquartered in Central Canada (the Bank of Nova Scotia and the Royal Bank).

This retelling of the story of Confederation encourages the questioning of widely held cultural assumptions about the Maritimes. The poverty of the Maritime region is something we take for granted, but Phillips story shows that the poverty of the region did not happen by chance, it was created by a particular set of circumstances which included "free trade."

The story yields a powerful comparison, since the Maritimes' peripheral position with respect to central Canada is now mirrored in Canada's peripheral position with respect to the U.S. Our transportation system is also transforming in a similar way as our rail lines, air traffic, and even our roads are shifting from east-west routes to north-south.

Our lack of historical perspective is not limited to considerations of the forces that
oppose us. We also suffer from a lack of historical perspective over our own struggles. This can lead to burn out. We are trained by society to expect instant results. As activists we tend not to see ourselves as part of a longer historical process. I became particularly aware of this when I travelled to southern Mexico last year, and noticed how they place the struggles of the moment in a historical continuum. Understanding how popular movements have succeeded in the past is critical to developing effective strategies and also gives a realistic perspective on how long it may take us to get what we are fighting for.

This lack of historical reflection on our successes and failures as social movements was reflected in the documents. I found very few references in the documents to past successes or failures of social movements that were more than a few years before the document was written. The farthest back they went was the 1988 election campaign. Maude Barlow of the Council of Canadians gave the most detailed and impassioned account of this history:

We were there, we fought every one of these anti-Canadian actions. We exposed their motivation, we argued, we demanded answers, we challenged Mulroney’s and Campbell’s undemocratic agenda at every turn...

In the summer of 1995 I went on a Caravan to Chiapas. We drove to Chiapas, in southern Mexico, to deliver food and medical aid to communities who had fled into the mountains during the army invasion earlier that year.

While I was there I met many activists fighting for land rights, democracy, and justice. I noticed that they often described their daily struggle as part of a longer historic struggle. They would end every meeting and gathering with a series of rousing chants, one of the most common was "Zapata Vive, La Lucha Sigue!" (Zapata Lives, The Struggle Continues!). Emiliano Zapata, one of Mexico’s most renowned revolutionaries, led a popular uprising in Mexico in the years from 1910-1918. The chant links current struggles to a long history of revolution and popular struggle.

I felt a bit envious. Canadian activists don’t have a history of popular struggle that we point to with pride, at least not one that we recognize. Intellectually I know that we do have a history, but emotionally I don’t feel it.
It's true we didn't "win" these battles, in the sense that we failed to prevent the Tories from pushing through their cutbacks, their deregulation, their privatization, their betrayal of Canada's sovereignty. But we forced the Tories to address issues they would have swept under the rug.

Some thoughts about the implications for action:

We need to remember that the forces we are fighting are fluid not static, and we need to anticipate opportunities to take advantage of. Unless we include a history in the materials we produce, we are perpetuating that image of staticness. We need to "rediscover" our history as activists fighting for economic justice. We need to learn from it, draw inspiration from it, and include it in our printed materials.
Some concluding thoughts

Education as Praxis theory implies that critical reflection can empower people to undertake action for social change, and that critical reflection helps to ensure that when that action is undertaken it is strategic. In this section I asked the question "How effective are the anti-NAFTA documents at instigating critical reflection?" in the context of generating effective action for social change.

I found that the documents use many of the tools which the theorists suggest as ways to instigate critical reflection. They make significant efforts to expose the power relations and structures in our society with the shift in power from governments to transnational corporations. They directly challenge some fundamental assumptions and ideologies which underpin the neoliberal agenda, including the corporate ideology of competitiveness and the corporate driven assumption that there is no alternative. They also bring in some historical analysis, reflecting on the history of social and economic policies introduced by the federal government since Mulroney was elected in 1984, and the various (unfulfilled) predictions of economic 'salvation' which they made along the way.

The documents used these tools but in each case I am unsure about the effectiveness of the way these tools have been used. They expose the shift in power from governments to transnational corporations, but the precise details about how the transnationals exert their power is unclear. I am not sure there is enough insight here about corporate power to lead to more effective strategic action.

They challenge the corporate ideology of competitiveness and the assumption that there is no alternative to NAFTA, but they do not effectively challenge the fundamental structure of capitalism. I don't think they go far enough, since we must challenge the structure of capitalism if we are going to create a sustainable alternative economic system.

They introduce some historical analysis, but in most cases it does not go back further than 1984, and the opposing forces "we" and "they" are generally presented as static and
unchanging. There is also very little reflection on our own history as activists.

Overall I would say the documents do fairly well at instigating reflection but that there are some very important gaps in what they do.
5.3

Mobilizing for Action

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 looked at how the documents are *grounded* in the experience of the readers, and then at how they draw the readers into critical *reflection*. Following the grounding-reflecting-acting cycle of praxis this section will look at how the documents mobilize the readers for strategic *action*.

This is a central goal of praxis: it is meant to lead to people taking strategic action to overcome their oppression. Thus the issues raised in sections 5.1 and 5.2 on grounding and reflecting are also related to how the documents encourage social action.

From section 5.1 we can see that starting with issues that the readers are concerned about means they will be motivated to take action. Addressing them as members of supportive communities empowers them because they do not feel alone in taking action. Valuing their own knowledge means they are more likely to feel ready and able to take action.

From section 5.2 we can see that exposing power relations empowers the readers by suggesting ways they can overcome that oppression. Challenging cultural traditions opens a space for new cultural traditions, creating a milieu for people to engage in the transformation of society. Historical reflection shows that society has not always been this way, and opens the possibility for us to see that we can change it again.

So sections 5.1 and 5.2 addressed how the documents indirectly *enable* or *empower* the readers to take action. In this section I will explore how the documents actively *mobilize* the readers.
Some preliminary reflections

In this analysis I will continue to draw on the works in Popular Education, Critical Pedagogy and Critical Adult Education, but this will be to a much more limited extent. While these works yielded many insights on how to enable action I was disappointed to find relatively few insights relevant to a discussion of how people are mobilized for action.

In discussing the goal of Critical Adult Education, David Little speaks of "creating a milieu for members of society to engage actively in the transformation of society." The Popular Education handbook Educating for a Change says "education must empower all people to act for change." Similarly in Critical Pedagogy Roger Simon is exploring issues around how to "enable an orientation within which one might accept the obligation" to tell others and act on what one has learned (my italics). In each case the implication is that action will follow automatically from critical reflection.

David Livingstone is critical of this tendency in Critical Pedagogy. He maintains that the process of critical dialogue should not only entail an impulse toward the transformation of society but also the formulation and enactment of a political agenda to do so. He notes that critical educators have been insufficiently sensitive to this fact, that they often equate the "discovery" of social reality with its transformation:

If critical pedagogy either equates theoretical understanding of social reality with its transformation or presumes that the latter follows automatically, it is reduced to a largely formal intellectual discourse - however "folksy" its central terms might be.

A similar imperative could be levelled on the anti-NAFTA documents. If the producers of the documents equate critical understanding of NAFTA with action to resist it, or assume that action will follow automatically, it is reduced to a largely formal intellectual exercise. Livingstone's critique implies that critical dialogue around NAFTA must include the formulation and enactment of a strategy to oppose it. In other words, the anti-NAFTA documents should include concrete suggestions about how to oppose NAFTA.
In fact almost all of the documents include concrete suggestions for actions. Of the 24 documents only four had no suggestions for action at all. 61

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the documents spend too much time explaining what is wrong with NAFTA and not enough time exploring what we can do about it. Suggestions for action account for a very small proportion of the total content. Generally they occupy a few lines near the end of the document. Some of the larger documents dedicate a whole page to suggestions for action, but this is still a small portion of their total content. For some it seems like the writers had so much to say about how bad NAFTA is they ran out of room, then at the end they included an action component as an afterthought (e.g. the documents by LAWG, CCAFT, and Greenpeace).

When I read through the documents for the first time I got really depressed. It seemed like the TNCs and capitalist governments were so powerful we didn't stand a chance.

After a while I realized that I was feeling this way because these corporations and governments were always the ones who were "doing things" in the documents. On the other hand "we" (social movements, NGOs and individual activists) were almost never constructed as agents. I went through the documents with a yellow highlighter and marked every time an activist, an NGO, or a social movement was constructed as an agent, every time "we" were described as doing something or potentially doing something.

When I was finished I felt much better. There was a bit of yellow on most of the documents. I didn't get depressed when I looked at them any more.

Attending to "us" as agents changed my feelings about the documents, but also about the struggle as a whole. I was more hopeful.

In the remainder of this chapter I will outline in detail the different types of actions which are suggested in the documents. Before entering into that analysis I would like to relate a few general observations about these suggestions for action, specifically with respect to how they instigate collective versus individual actions, actions for resistance versus actions for alternatives, and mediated versus non-mediated actions.
Collective vs Individual Actions

In outlining the actions suggested in the documents I have differentiated between individual and collective actions. Of the 24 documents 18 had suggestions for things individuals could do and only nine had suggestions for ways organizations and social movements could take action.

Education as Praxis theorists often emphasize that education should be a collective process leading to collective action, in part because people are stronger when they act together. Given that only nine of the documents suggest any type of collective action the collection does not fulfil this imperative. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how they could. By their nature documents are read by individuals, this type of learning is not a collective process. It seems appropriate that they are used to instigate individual action.

Actions for Resistance vs Action for Alternatives

There are many different suggestions for individual actions in the documents. Virtually all of them are actions for resistance. I found only two suggestions in the whole collection for individual actions that are intended to build economic alternatives. Both are in Action Dossier #39 Setting a People's Agenda: Free Trade Alternatives. The Bridgehead article suggests that people should seek ethically sourced products, and that we should question retailers about who profits from the sale of their products, where are they from, and who made them. The Oxfam article urges people to work with others to bring our communities together and use our collective power: we should "take full advantage of the democratic opportunities available to us to participate more actively in our housing co-ops, community meetings, unions, home and school associations, and the formal political process."

I find it significant that in the whole collection of 24 documents these are the only two suggestions of how an individual can participate in building alternatives to free trade. One is put forward by Oxfam and one by Bridgehead, which is closely affiliated with Oxfam. Based on that finding, it wouldn't be surprising if people thought there was nothing they could do, even after they read these documents.
Mediated Actions versus Non-Mediated Actions

The major difficulty for organizations in measuring the "effectiveness" of their documents in generating action is that they have no way of knowing how many people follow their suggestions. One solution is to suggest actions that the organization itself mediates. One of the documents made this type of suggestion.

In their document the Jesuit Centre asked people to write an open letter to Mexican workers describing their experiences under the FTA and their feelings about the NAFTA. This action was mediated by the Jesuit Centre in that the letters were to be sent in to their office. They would then pass them on to labour and community organizations in Mexico. I am curious about how many responses they got to these requests, which suggests a direction for further research.

Some thoughts about the implications for action:

We need to make concrete suggestions about how individuals can participate in the creation of economic alternatives as well as ways they can resist the neoliberal agenda.

Also, if we want to find ways to measure the "effectiveness" of economic literacy, one way could be to suggest actions that we mediate. That way when the reader took action we would know.
Individual Actions

Of the 24 documents 18 call for some kind of individual action falling roughly into four categories:

1) Put pressure on the federal government
2) Get involved
3) Get more informed
4) Inform others

1) Put pressure on the federal government:
These were the most common type of suggestion for individual action. The Council of Canadians, the ACN, the ACN-BC, the CAW, and NAC all produced documents specifically for the 1993 federal election campaign. They called for people to vote for a party that opposed NAFTA, and then listed the official party positions (the NDP was the only major party that opposed NAFTA). They also asked people to question their local candidates at all candidates meetings.

I suspect that these were some of the most effective documents in terms of generating a specific action: affecting how people voted. In many of the documents the suggestions for action seemed like afterthoughts, added at the last minute when the writer remembered that there had to be an action component. For these election brochures this is not the case. The documents encourage a specific action and it seems that the whole document was written in order to encourage that action.

Although it is difficult to measure how effective these documents were in affecting the outcome of the 1993 election it is true that the Tories were resoundingly voted out of office. The anti-NAFTA movement and these documents in particular can certainly take some of the credit for this. How much of the credit is difficult to know. Their effectiveness is particularly questionable since the NDP, the only major party that opposed NAFTA, also
showed very poor results in that election. It was the Liberals, who said they would renegotiate but not cancel NAFTA, that got elected into office.

In terms of their effectiveness in generating sustained political action the effectiveness of these election brochures would be quite limited. This type of mobilizing is geared to generating a single act at the polling booth, or at most a few questions at all candidates meetings.

A few organizations tried to address this limitation by putting the election within the larger context of a long term struggle, and pointing to the need for ongoing lobbying after the election:

The struggle against free trade did not start with this election and it won't end when you next go to the polls. After October 25 we must increase pressure on the new government to respect the wishes of the vast majority of Canadians.  

We've learned we can't count on politicians to do what they say, but we can make sure they know what we want, then we can watch them like hawks to make sure they do it - even after they're elected.

Some documents also included suggestions for lobbying outside the context of the election. The Greenpeace fact sheet called for letters opposing NAFTA to be sent to MPs and the Prime Minister, as did both the ACN lists. The LAWG document called for pressure to be put on the federal government to participate in observation of the Mexican federal election, this to ensure that Mexicans would be able to make a free and democratic choice about NAFTA in their election.

Thinking back to Roger Simon's suggestion around constructing people within supportive communities (section 5.2), it seems unlikely that these suggestions will lead to sustained action. These suggestions for actions would be isolated individual actions which would not place a person within supportive community that would encourage and or support further action.
It also seems somewhat unlikely that readers would believe that these suggested actions would do any good. There is tremendous cynicism about our ability to influence government actions through lobbying, or even through voting. This cynicism is acknowledged in the quote above - "we've learned we can't trust politicians to do what they say".

2) Get involved
The second most common suggestion for individual action is to get personally involved in the struggle in some way. In their documents Greenpeace, CHO!CES, CCAFT, the CAW, ACN and ECEJ all suggest going to a demo or a public event. Several documents also called for people to get involved in the anti-NAFTA struggle by joining an organization.

These suggestions fit nicely with Roger Simon's suggestion that people should be constructed as members of supportive communities. People are being encouraged to join an organization, which would clearly be a "supportive community." Going to a public event would also help show that a supportive community exists, they might even see people they know at the event so they would feel welcome in that supportive community.

Some of the documents seem to do a better job than others in facilitating this kind of action. Both ACN Ten Ways lists included the phone numbers of all the provincial social justice coalitions on the same page, this would facilitate the reader deciding to call up and find out what groups they could join in their community. The CHO!CES document included two articles on the last page inviting people to join their organizations. The articles also gave a brief history of the groups and a description of what they do. They also gave names and phone numbers of people to call to get more information. This type of personal and detailed invitation seems much more likely to succeed than the appeal at the end of the Greenpeace fact sheet "Get involved. People in communities across Canada are working against free trade. Find out who's active - then get informed and make your voice heard" This gives no impression of what it means to "get involved" nor does it provide any information about how to get involved.
3) Get informed
Out of the 24 documents ten actively urged people to get more informed. Another three suggested ways to get more information, but did not actively urge readers to get it. In the introduction to the Action Dossier #38 Tony Clarke made a specific appeal for people to read the entire 45 page document in order to "know our enemy". The ACN Action Dossiers made the strongest appeals for people to get informed, and both were written for the express purpose of increasing our knowledge in order to make us more effective in the struggle.

I am of two minds in thinking about how effective these appeals are. On the positive side, urging people to get more informed seems like it would be quite effective. It seems like something people would be quite likely to do, since it is not very threatening. After getting more informed they may be motivated to act in a more concrete way.

On the negative side, the Ah-Hah manual points out that it is not generally a lack of information that keeps people from taking action but rather a lack of confidence or ability in analyzing the information they already know. Within this context, the urgency of the suggestion that people need to be more informed might diminish their confidence to analyze or act on the information they already know. As a result they might be less willing to take action, or even talk about NAFTA, for fear of getting something wrong.

There is one document which urges people to get more informed in a way which avoids this disempowering effect to some degree. The Jesuit Centre document suggests that people should get more informed by going out and doing surveys in their community to find out how the FTA affected it. This kind of suggestion shows that information about NAFTA does not necessarily have to come from "experts", that we can find the answers ourselves, by looking at our own experiences and those of others in our communities.

A few organizations spoke of a specific need for activists to learn as much as we can about free trade and neoliberalism. This call was made most emphatically by Tony Clarke of the ACN in the introduction to the Action Dossier #38:
...a comprehensive examination of this latest free trade agreement is essential, we believe, if Canadians are to grasp the magnitude of its threat to their welfare. It's important that we have this understanding, so that the broadest and most vigorous opposition to NAFTA can be mounted in the pre-election period.  

There is a keen interest among many social justice activists to advance our knowledge on this area. In Toronto The Metro Network for Social Justice ran a post-graduate level course for activists on international political economy in the fall of '95 and will be doing so again in the fall of '96. The Jesuit Centre has also offered weekend workshops for activists who want to know more about international political economy.

4) Inform Others
The fourth most common suggestion for individual action is that we should inform other people about NAFTA. Suggestions include talking with your neighbours, family and friends; raising the issue at community or group meetings, at your church, or in your workplace; and contacting the media through letters to the editor and call-in shows.

The ACN-BC document also had a reply coupon which people could use to order a lawn sign or and anti-NAFTA button. This seems like a very good suggestion because it is very easy, just checking off a box and mailing in a coupon. The anti-NAFTA message would be expressed in a passive way with a sign or button, rather than active way where the person would have to start a conversation. The button or sign could also serve as a way to start a conversation since they might be asked about it.

Three of the documents were produced specifically for the purpose of helping the readers to do their own educational work in their communities (those produced by Woman to Woman, the Jesuit Centre and ECEJ). They provided background information, tools to generate discussion, and some suggestions about activities that groups could do.

This urging to inform others makes it particularly relevant to consider the potential disempowering effect of urging people to get more informed. If the documents serve to
decrease rather than increase readers' confidence in their own knowledge isn't this ultimately counter-productive?

**Some thoughts about the implications for action:**

It is important to encourage people to get solid information, but it is equally important to be aware of how we present that appeal. We must build rather than diminish people's confidence in critiquing NAFTA.

Also, we as activists need to learn to understand the economic arguments that are being used against us. We need to learn their jargon, and understand the assumptions on which their arguments are based. We also need to learn about how transnationals are exerting their power. And we need to think strategically about how we can build alternatives.
Collective Actions

Of the 24 documents 9 include specific suggestions for collective actions. Some of these suggestions are aimed at the movement as a whole, and others are aimed at their own sector or their own organization. These suggestions fall roughly into four categories:

1) Come together across borders
2) Come together across sectors
3) Developing and pursuing alternatives
4) Get the word out

1) Come Together across Borders
Several organizations call for organizations in the North to work with organizations in the South. The National Farmers Union calls for alliances with farmers in other countries. Oxfam calls for people of the North and South to fight the common cause of Free Trade and Structural Adjustment Programs. ECEJ calls for a radical solidarity across borders and sectors based on a collective strategy to meet the basic needs of all people.

These suggestions are put forward in the spirit of strengthening our forces by working together. With the growing mobility of capital and production, transnational companies are able to play workers in different countries and regions against each other, keeping their wages low. They are also able to play countries against each other, in order to get lower environmental and labour standards. Working together we can avoid falling into these traps.

These calls to work together across borders are echoed from the South. Two of the documents quote Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the leader of the left wing opposition in Mexico, in a speech he gave to the BC Federation of Labour calling for a joining of

UNITE, FIGHT NAFTA!

Come together across borders - ACN NAFTA & the Public Sector
progressive forces in Canada and Mexico:

Another type of agenda is also being constructed, much more rapidly than we could have imagined. This other agenda is not aimed at creating a new continental relationship, but rather at subordinating both of our two countries to our common neighbour - the United States. Our goal is to join forces with you...to build the right kind of relationship among our three nations, not the wrong one. 75

These calls for cross-border collaboration are well intentioned but I question their effectiveness because they do not go very far in terms of suggesting what the content of that collaboration would be. What is it that we should be doing together?

A few of the documents do make specific suggestions for the content of cross-border collaboration. Changing Economies, the Mujer a Mujer document, gives some examples of collaborative work over the U.S.-Mexican border, but these do not seem easily transferable to Canada since we do not share a border with Mexico.

A more workable suggestion is presented in As the Empire Grows, the Economic Integration of the Americas kit, and Open for Business. They all suggest that we as Canadians should endeavour to share our experiences of the U.S./Canada Free Trade Agreement with Mexicans, in order to warn them about what the repercussions of NAFTA may be for them. As the Empire Grows even offers to forward letters directly to labour and community organizations in Mexico.

By telling the story of the Canadian free trade fight and explaining why the majority of Canadians voted against the deal, Canadians correct the distorted picture of the benefits of free trade being painted in Mexico today. Canadians can help Mexicans decide for themselves. 76

This suggestion is workable. Nevertheless I am disappointed with this suggestion because it reflects a notion that we have to "help" Mexico. It neglects the fact that we might be able to learn something from Mexicans. They have been living with the neoliberal economic agenda for many years through structural adjustment programs and the maquiladora free trade border regions. They have also been fighting this agenda far
longer than we have. It's very likely we could gain insight from them about how to fight these policies. Instead the only concrete suggestion about how we can collaborate is that we should be telling them about the FTA.

I am curious to see the outcome of an upcoming effort to bring cross-border collaboration against neoliberal economic policies. The Zapatistas are an indigenous group in Southern Mexico which rose up in armed rebellion on January 1, 1994, the day the NAFTA was instituted. They are organizing an international gathering for humanity and against neoliberalism to take place in the summer of 1996. Activists from all over the world will be gathering in one of the poorest regions of Mexico to discuss strategies to take on the corporate agenda. It will be interesting to see how successful this Mexican-led effort to instigate cross-border collaboration will be.

Another thing I noticed as I read the was that while are many calls to work with Mexicans, there are very few calls to work with Americans. There are very few references to the existence of social justice, labour, environmental, and feminist groups opposed to NAFTA in the U.S. and even fewer suggestions that Canadian organizations should seek to work with these groups. Someone reading these documents would
probably think there was no opposition to NAFTA in the U.S. The anecdote opposite tells my own story of realization that I had a blind spot about opposition in the U.S. I worry that in our enthusiasm to work with our counterparts in the South we are disregarding an important set of allies in the North.

2) **Come together across sectors**
Many of the documents suggest that we should work together across sectors. They argue that we have a shared cause against a common enemy, and that we will be more successful if we take on this enemy together.

For many leaders and activists in these organizations their cooperation began as a marriage of convenience. But by the end of the NAFTA struggle, a consensus was emerging that the common enemy was corporate-led neoliberal globalization rather than any particular trade deal. 77

In the CCPA Monitor Ian Robinson points out that this kind of cross-sectoral collaboration has worked in the past. In the struggle against the FTA a broad based coalition came together to fight the agreement. This was the Pro-Canada Network which has now evolved into the Action Canada Network (ACN). Robinson argues that even though the coalition was not successful in stopping the NAFTA it was successful in convincing the majority of the informed electorate that the FTA was contrary to the public interest. 78 (This type of historical reflection on past successes fits well with the praxis model: reflection on past actions leading to more effective future action.)

Like calls for individuals to join groups, these calls for organizations to join coalitions reflect Simon’s call for people to be constructed within supportive networks. In this case the organization is constructed within a supportive network of other NGOs, which will support it in taking action to oppose NAFTA.

On the other hand, like the calls for cross border collaboration, they offer little in the way of content. What is there to do once the coalition is built, in the long term and the short term?
Some documents suggest strategic alliances around particular issues. Terry Pugh of the National Farmer's Union calls for farmers to build alliances with urban Canadians to develop an alternative food system. Similarly M.D. Michael Rachlis argues that health care unions, social service providers, social justice groups and consumers of health services share the same interests and should work together for health policy reform.

Two of the documents argue for building alliances between unions and community organizations. *Changing Economies* by Woman to Woman, and *Women Creating Alternatives* by Lorraine Michael of ECEJ, point to the limitations of traditional labour organizing in the workplace, given the way that work is being "restructured" away from full time union jobs towards contract work, homeworking and part-time work.

The restructuring that is taking place is reinforcing our analysis that women's organizing can't be artificially divided between work and home and community. Strategies that rely on these old divisions are less and less effective.

Both documents praise the Homeworkers Association of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. This is the only example in Canada of a union-affiliated association of non-unionized workers. As garment factories in Ontario have closed some of their production has been shifted to homeworkers. These women are often immigrants with very little English. They are paid by the piece and sometimes earn as little as $1 per hour for their work, and they receive no benefits or protections. The union paid an organizer to work with the Chinese-speaking community to reach out to women in that community who were homeworkers. The Homeworkers Association has organized social events, offered English as a second language classes at times that were convenient, and established a benefits package for their members.

These suggestions may lead to more effective social action because they encourage some critical reflection on how to organize. They challenge a widely held assumption in the labour movement that the workplace is the best place to organize people. Similarly, the calls for alliances between farmers and urban dwellers, or between health care unions and social service providers, are breaking new ground.
3) Developing and Pursuing Alternatives

Several organizations call for social movements to direct their energies to developing alternatives, including the Canadian Peace Alliance, ACN, CHO!CES, the Jesuit Centre, and the Council of Canadians.  

Beyond these broad calls to develop alternatives many of the documents recommend specific alternatives to pursue. Part of Chapter 6 will be dedicated to exploring these alternatives, so I will not write anything more about them here.

4) Get the word out

Similar to the calls for individuals to inform others, a few documents emphasized a need for organizations to help people understand how the neoliberal economic agenda is being played out. According to Ian Robinson "one of the first priorities is to expose the coercive and anti-democratic nature of neo-liberalism" 83 The Canadian Peace Alliance also puts forward a similar suggestion: "We know and need to get the word out that reliance on the arms export market [encouraged by NAFTA] is counter productive on economic grounds, as well as contributing to a more insecure world"

Some of the documents make specific suggestions about how to "get the word out." ECEJ encourages groups to "put on a dramatic presentation for your union, school, church" and to "organize a community event - show a video, invite a guest speaker, or hold an all candidates meeting on the issue" 84

The reasons why organizations should get the word out are not clearly articulated in the documents. The implication is that people need to understand free trade so that they will act to oppose it. Earlier I suggested that it is important not to assume that action will follow directly from information, and that an emphasis on learning from "experts" might discourage people from taking action. Mujer a Mujer suggests a more empowering approach when they say we need to "give women the tools to understand the connections between what's happening to them personally and the larger picture, including the complexities of the world economy within which we live and work." 85
Some thoughts about the implications for action:

With respect to Mexico, we need to move beyond broad calls for North South collaboration, and be clear what the content of this collaboration is. What is it that Canadian and Mexican organizations can do together? In particular, we need to get beyond the development model which says we will be the ones to help Mexicans. We also need to think about what we can learn from them.

With respect to the U.S. we need to be aware that the way we portray the world determines to some extent the way we perceive it. Because we portray the U.S. in a certain way (strong, evil, corporate led) we may end up perceiving it only in that way. We may forget that we have allies there as well as enemies.

We need to call organizations to come together across sectors to work together to oppose the neoliberal agenda. Organizations will be more likely to take action on these issues if they are supported by a large coalition. But, we also need to be clearer about what these coalitions are coming together to do.

As well, we need to question our assumptions about how we organize. New situations call for new strategies and may bring together new allies which have not traditionally worked together.

As well as broad guidelines for what organizations should be doing, it may be helpful to include specific suggestions for how to do these things.

We need to think about ways to "give people the tools" to understand the complexities of the economy, rather than just giving them information.
Some concluding thoughts about action

In this chapter I have critiqued the documents as sites of praxis, with the intention of evaluating their effectiveness as tools to achieve social change. Before I pull together my concluding thoughts out of this chapter I feel it is important to note that this has not really been a "fair" basis on which to compare the documents.

Basing a critique on principles of Critical Pedagogy, Popular Education, and Adult Education gives some of the documents an unfair advantage. This is because some of the documents have been produced by organizations which are explicitly committed to those principles. These include the Jesuit Centre and ECEJ (formerly Gatt-Fly). In fact those two organizations also produced Naming the Moment and Ah-Hah which were two of the theoretical works from which I drew insights for the critique.

For that reason I have tried to avoid making comparative evaluations across the range of documents, and instead focused on the documents as a body of work to critique as a whole. There are some instances where I have noted the organizations which did things "better" than others, but in doing so my intention has been to illustrate a point rather than to make evaluative judgements.

Empowering readers by identifying them with strong communities:
We need to consider how we identify the readers of our documents. We need to ensure that it is an identity that has power within the construct of the document. We can do this either by identifying them with a powerful community or by describing their community as powerful. At any rate we must avoid identifying them with a community and then showing how powerless that community is.

We must also consider how we make people feel about their own knowledge. We must build up rather than diminish their confidence in critiquing NAFTA and other neoliberal economic policies. Privileging "experts" with relevant knowledge may mean that our readers do not feel capable or knowledgeable enough to take action. We need to include
voices of ordinary people they can identify with and respect the knowledge expressed in those voices.

This relates to the discussion of visual images which emerged out of the content analysis in Chapter 4. If "we" are being portrayed visually as small and weak (little people holding placards) and then also being constructed as members of weak communities (Canada, labour unions) the ultimate effect is bound to be disempowering.

Dynamic vs Static forces:
In describing the forces that we oppose we need to consider how to portray them as dynamic rather than static forces, historically, geographically, and socially. Historically, we could achieve this by including historical references that go back more than ten years. Geographically we could show this by describing the U.S. as something which is not just a uniform mass of pro-NAFTA corporations. There are pockets of resistance in the United States and we need to make people aware of those openings. Socially we need to show that the membership of "us" and "them" is not necessarily static. One example is the middle class, which will soon start feeling the effects of neoliberal policies. The middle class is identified as "them" in many cases but they may soon be ready to join "us". Another example could be small business owners.

Actions for alternatives:
We need to consider how to offer actions for individuals that build alternatives. The documents have no visual images of alternatives, and they present no ways to participate in alternatives. It is not surprising that people think there are no alternatives.

It was suggested in several documents that the assumption that there are no alternatives is one that is being created and perpetuated by corporate interests. This research project suggests that we also need to consider our own complicity in perpetuating this assumption. In perpetuating this assumption that there are no alternatives we are participating in our own oppression.
One goal of praxis is to get people to critically reflect in order to see their own participation in their oppression. Once we see how we are participating in our own oppression this may help us to see ways to overcome that oppression. For us in this situation this may mean starting to show images of alternatives and ways to act on them - bringing our words about alternatives into visions and actions.

**Empowering organizations to take action:**

In considering our documents as sites of praxis we need to consider not only how they empower and mobilize individuals to take action, but also how they empower and mobilize organizations. Placing organizations in coalitions is one way to identify them with a supportive community. Reflecting on our past is another way to do this. We need to include references to our own history in our documents, we need to reflect on past successes and failures in order to learn from them. It also means we do not feel alone in history, that we have to win every battle now or we have lost it forever.

Most importantly we need to remember to portray ourselves as actors, as agents, so that we realize we have power. One of the first things I noticed about the documents was that they talked almost exclusively about what "they" were doing. The documents describe what "we" think about what "they" are doing, but they do not describe what we have been doing about it.

We need to remember that the way we portray ourselves determines the way we perceive ourselves as well as how others perceive us.
3. Endnotes:


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4. David Robbins, David Langille, comments on a draft of this thesis, August 96


6. GREENPEACE, *The North American Free Trade Agreement: No Fish No Forests No Future* factsheet 1993


8. WOMAN TO WOMAN, *Changing Economies* 1993 p.4

9. ECEJ *Working in the Americas* in *Economic Integration of the Americas* 1994 p.1


11. CAW, *Give me a mandate...*, 1992 p.20

12. ACN *NAFTA: Not Another Free Trade Agreement* 1996 p.6


15. WOMAN TO WOMAN, *Changing Economies*, 1993 p.1


17. JESUIT CENTRE *As the Empire Grows*, 1991 p.5

18. COUNCIL OF CANADIANS, *Campaign for Canada: Stop Free Trade* special issue of *Canadian Perspectives*, Autumn 1993 p.4
19. ACN NAFTA: Not Another Free Trade Agreement 1993  p.2
20. CELA-OXFAM, NAFTA and Democracy factsheet in NAFTA Facts Series 1993
21. Deborah Barndt, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96
22. Chris Cavanagh, comments on a draft of this thesis, July '96
23. Marnie Hayes, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96
24. Janet Conway, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96
25. Deborah Barndt Naming the Moment Toronto: Jesuit Centre 1989  p.22
27. Denise Nadeau, Counting our Victories Vancouver: Repeal the Deal 1995  p.4
29. Deborah Barndt, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96
30. David Robbins, Janet Conway, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96
31. Shirley Reinhardt of Citizens Against Temporary Services: this is an excerpt of a testimony she gave to the US Trade Representative in Atlanta Georgia, in August 1991. As reported in: JESUIT CENTRE As the Empire Grows 1991 p.3
32. GATT-Fly Ah-Hah Toronto: Between the Lines 1983  p.19
33. See Chapter 4, sections on Canada and In Whose Interest?
34. Maude Barlow (of COC) Global Competitiveness: Corporate Canada's New Theology in ACN Action Dossier #38, 1992  p.5
35. See Chapter 4, Loss of Control section
36. CANADIAN PEACE ALLIANCE, The Peace Movement and the Struggle Against NAFTA factsheet 1993
37. ACN, NAFTA: Not Another Free Trade Agreement, 1993  p.2

39. Maude Barlow (of COC) *Message from the National Chair* in COC *Canadian Perspectives*, Autumn 1993, p.3


41. CAW, *Give me a mandate...* 1992  p.18-19

42. ACN, *NAFTA: Not Another Free Trade Agreement*, 1993  p.3

43. WOMAN TO WOMAN *Changing Economies* 1993  p.10


45. Robert Ages *Creating a public economic network* in ACN *Action Dossier #39*, 1993  p.18

46. ECEJ *Trading away sustainability* in *Integration of the Americas* 1994  (the ideas are drawn from *For the Common Good*, by Herman Daly and John Cobb Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1989)

47. GATT-Fly *Ah-Hah*, Toronto: Between the Lines 1983  p.33


50. Deborah Barndt *Naming the Moment*, Toronto: Jesuit Centre 1989  p.21

51. CCAFT *The Fight for Canada Goes On* brochure 1994


54. Deborah Barndt, *Naming the Moment*, Toronto: Jesuit Centre 1989  p.21
55. CHICICES, The High Cost of Free Trade 1993 p.37; COUNCIL OF CANADIANS, Campaign for Canada special issue of Canadian Perspectives Autumn 1993 p.3. Ian Robinson (of CCPA) "Free trade" gives freedom only to capital in CCPA Monitor Vol 2 No 7 Dec'95-Jan'96 p.15

56. Maude Barlow (of COUNCIL OF CANADIANS) Campaign for Canada special issue of Canadian Perspectives Autumn 1993 p.3


58. Rick Arnold et al Educating for Change Toronto: Between the Lines 1991 p.1


60. David Livingstone, Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Power South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey 1987 p.8

61. The four documents that do not suggest actions of any kind are: Told You So! by the Confederation of Canadian Unions; Why You Should Oppose NAFTA by CUPE; NAFTA Facts, six factsheets by CELA and Oxfam; and NAFTA Factsheet: Militarism by CPA and End the Arms Race

62. Jacqui MacDonald (of BRIDGEHEAD) Fair trade in action: Bridgehead provides a model for alternative trading in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.16


64. JESUIT CENTRE As the Empire Grows 1991 p.11

65. COUNCIL OF CANADIANS Campaign for Canada special issue of Canadian Perspectives, Autumn 1993 p.5

66. ACN, NAFTA: Not Another Free Trade Agreement 1993 p.7

67. These are: ACN, Ten ways to oppose NAFTA; Ten ways to promote alternatives; Action Dossier #38; Action Dossier #39; ACN with PSAC and NUPGE NAFTA and the Public Sector; COUNCIL OF CANADIANS NAFTA Facts; ECEJ Economic Integration of the Americas; LAWG Open for Business; JESUIT CENTRE As the empire grows; GREENPEACE No Fish No Forests No Future.

68. There are: CUPE Why You Should Oppose NAFTA; CELA/OXFAM NAFTA Facts; CCAFT The Fight for Canada Goes On

69. GATT-Fly Ah-Hah Toronto: Between the Lines 1983 p.19
70. Tony Clarke (of ACN) **Why NAFTA must be stopped** in ACN *Action Dossier #38*, 1992 p.2

71. ACN **Ten Ways to Oppose NAFTA** factsheet 1993; ACN **Ten Ways to Promote Alternatives** factsheet 1994; ACN with PSAC and NUPGE **NAFTA and the Public Sector** 1992; ECEJ, **Economic Integration of the Americas** 1994

72. LAWG, **Open for Business** 1991; ACN, Action Dossier #38 1992 and Action Dossier #39 1993; CCPA, Monitor Vol 2 #7 Dec95-Jan96; COC, Campaign for Canada special issue of *Canadian Perspectives* Autumn 1993; ECEJ, **Economic Integration of the Americas** 1994; CPA, The Peace Movement and the Struggle against NAFTA factsheet 1993; WOMAN TO WOMAN, **Changing Economies** 1993; and JESUIT CENTRE, *As the Empire Grows* 1991

73. Terry Pugh (of NFU) **Farm policy must start with co-operation, environmental stewardship and social justice** in ACN *Action Dossier #39*, 1993 p.42

74. Brian O'Neill (of OXFAM) **Free Trade: The latest form of colonization** in ACN *Action Dossier #38*, 1992 p.11

75. CAW, **Give me a mandate and you won't recognize this country in ten years from now**, 1992 p.11; LAWG **Open for Business**, 1991 p.3;

76. LAWG **Open for Business** 1991 p.20

77. Ian Robinson, **What we need is democratic globalization** in CCPA Monitor Vol 2, No 7 Dec95-Jan96 p.15

78. Ian Robinson, **What we need is democratic globalization** in CCPA Monitor Vol 2 No 7 Dec95-Jan96 p.15

79. Terry Pugh (of NFU) **Farm Policy must start with co-operation, environmental stewardship and social justice** in ACN *Action Dossier #39*, 1993 p.42

80. WOMAN TO WOMAN **Changing Economies**, 1993 p.10


82. CANADIAN PEACE ALLIANCE **The Peace Movement and the Struggle Against NAFTA**, factsheet 1993; Tony Clarke (of ACN) **Yes We Do Have Alternatives!** in ACN *Action Dossier #39*, 1993 p.2; JESUIT CENTRE, *As the Empire Grows*, 1991 p.1,9,10; COUNCIL OF CANADIANS **Campaign for Canada** special issue of *Canadian Perspectives* Autumn 1993 p.5; John Loxley (of CHOICES) **Alternative Budgets expose the Tory agenda** in ACN *Action Dossier #39*, 1993 p.44
83. Ian Robinson *What we need is democratic globalization* in *CCPA Monitor* Vol 2 #7, Dec95-Jan96 p.15

84. ECEJ, *Economic Integration of the Americas*, 1994 User Guide

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In the content analysis of Chapter 4 I grounded my analysis in the anti-NAFTA documents themselves. In Chapter 5 I built on this grounding and reflected on the documents, critically analyzing them as sites of praxis based on Education as Praxis theories. In Chapter 6 I will consider what the documents imply about action, thereby completing the grounding-reflecting-acting cycle of praxis.

I have already addressed some implications for action emerging from the documents in Section 5.3. In that section I considered the short term implications for action, looking at what the documents suggest as strategic actions to be taken by individuals and NGOs.

At this point I want to take a step back, and consider the long term implications for action. What are the broader implications for how we should act as a society? What are the alternatives and visions for our society which are put forward in these documents? What do they say about the larger goals of NGOs that oppose the neoliberal agenda? Is there a consensus across the organizations about these goals, or are there areas of disagreement? What are the implications for our work based on these areas of agreement and/or disagreement?
The cycle of praxis is reflected somewhat differently in the structure of this chapter, where the 5 sections correspond to stages of grounding-reflecting-grounding-reflecting-acting.

Section 6.1 grounds the analysis in the documents, analyzing the visions and alternatives which are put forward in the documents, looking for points of consensus from which a unified social vision could emerge.

Section 6.2 reflects on Gramscian notions of hegemony and counter-hegemony, and considers the extent to which the documents reflect a unified counter-hegemonic project.

Section 6.3 once again seeks to ground the analysis in the documents, returning to them to consider the extent to which they represent a pluralistic rather than unified position on alternatives.

Section 6.4 reflects on pluralistic anti-hegemonic positions, and the extent to which such an anti-hegemonic position is reflected in the documents.

Section 6.5 considers the implications for action. How should the anti-NAFTA movement move forward? Should we endeavour to find a unified social vision, or should we accept a plurality of positions?
6.1

Finding unity in the documents

The search for an alternative vision has become something of a preoccupation for social activists in Canada today. Some see it as vital in order to support the internal health of our movement:

This work requires nourishment, which social vision can help to provide. ¹

Activists are grasping for some sense of a common vision and strategy to guide our work. ²

Leaders of the anti-NAFTA movement also argue that it is a strategic necessity:

Mere defence of the Canadian welfare state is no longer sufficient...it is time to elaborate and advance alternatives for a new social, economic, and political democracy. - Peter Bleyer, Executive Director - COC ³

The politics of social transformation demand that we come up with an alternative platform. - Tony Clarke, Chair - ACN ⁴

This desire for unified vision is not limited to the intellectual leadership of the movement. In September of 1995, 120 activists at the Annual General Meeting of the Toronto-based Metro Network for Social Justice voted for "Vision Creation" as their #2 priority for the coming year (#1 was economic and political literacy). ⁵ Similarly, at the Pro-Canada Network National Assembly in 1988, many of the delegates identified the lack of an alternative as a key negative factor in their public education efforts. ⁶

Although the desire for a unified vision is not new, it has taken on a new urgency in recent years. Peter Bleyer has argued that because of the rapid advance of the neoliberal free trade agenda the need is greater than ever. Others argue that because of the nature of this historical moment, we are well positioned to develop and articulate such an alternative vision. In particular, Jim Stanford of the CAW argues that the time is ripe for a ground-up reconstruction of an alternative to free market capitalism. Since unregulated
markets currently "rule the world," it is all the easier to point out their flaws and their often catastrophic effects. At the same time, with the collapse of Eastern Europe, the slate of real world socialist experimentation is wiped virtually clean. Stanford argues that this "failure" of socialism, coupled with the "failure" of capitalism may make it easier to envision an alternative economic project, without being wedded to the structures of socialism that have been attempted in practice. 7

One of my hopes in undertaking this research project was that I would be able to respond constructively to this desire for social vision. I thought that there might actually be more agreement around alternatives than we were giving ourselves credit for.

Dennis Howlett has expressed optimism that it may be possible for us to develop a unified vision through a process of articulation across the variety of proposals put forward by different sectors in the movement:

There is a clear need now to begin a process of putting the various sectoral alternatives proposals together - to see how they complement or contradict each other. In the process of integrating the various sectoral alternative proposals into a common alternative there is the possibility of moving beyond alternative policies to a new paradigm. 8

Similarly, I had hoped that through a careful analysis of the anti-NAFTA documents I would find some basic points of consensus around alternatives, some points of agreements which could serve as the foundations for the building of a larger alternative agenda. In other words, I was hoping to find the first building blocks in the construction of our unified social vision.

I have first focused my analysis in the content of the Agenda category. Agenda is one of three categories in the Means and Ends theme that emerged out of the content analysis. There are two other categories in this theme: Agency, which includes suggestions and examples of actions to be taken by organizations and individuals, and Alternatives, which includes recommendations for alternative policies. Agenda includes statements that describe the future that is desired. These are broad, visionary, descriptions of the kind of
world they want to see, like:

We have a vision of society that goes well beyond the mean and narrow emphasis on 'competitiveness' at any cost.  

Agenda differs from Alternatives, which describe specific, concrete measures that could be taken by governments, communities, and organizations, such as lowering interest rates, achieving food self-reliance, or using credit unions.

When I had done the content analysis for chapter 4 I had marked all of the visionary statements with a blue highlighter. This time I started my analysis by typing up all of these statements. There were a total of 73 visionary statements, made by 29 of the 46 organizations in the collection.

I read through them carefully. Then using a word processor I searched for key words which seemed to appear with some frequency, such as equity, equality, justice, fairness, control, sustainability, environmental stewardship, employment, jobs, community, sovereignty, living conditions, quality of life, power, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance. I grouped these key words into themes and looked for the most common ones.

I found several themes which are fairly common. The theme of equity, and equitable distribution of resources, appears in 10 of the visionary statements; justice and fairness appear in 11; sustainability and environmental stewardship appear in 15; job security and full employment appear in 11.

The most predominant theme relates to control and sovereignty, appearing in a total of 20 statements. Eight statements call for national sovereignty, and 15 call for control (3 call for both).

Given that this theme of sovereignty and control is the most predominant, it seems to be a good candidate to serve as the foundation of a unified social vision. This notion is supported by Tony Clarke, who writes in the introduction to Action Dossier #39 about how the theme of control unifies the articles in that document:
Our intention is to outline some of the elements that could go into a democratic program for the rebuilding of Canada's economy. We have mainly drawn on the insights and proposals of people who represent the variety of sectors that comprise the Action Canada Network. **One of the sub-themes that runs throughout this edition is the desire to take democratic control** over Canada's economic and social future. Clarke has added a qualifier to the notion of sovereignty and control, describing a desire for "democratic" control. Based on this suggestion I brought the three key words, control, democracy, and sovereignty, together under one theme for the purposes of my analysis. A total of 32 of the 73 visionary statements in the Agenda category refer to a desire for control, democracy, or sovereignty. These include statements by 16 out of the 29 organizations which had expressed visionary statements (there are 46 organizations in the collection but only 29 had made statements which fit in the Agenda category). "Democratic control" is thus the most pervasive theme in the Agenda category.

Of course, this theme is a bit vague. It doesn't amount to much to say that we are going come together in a unified struggle for "democratic control". In order to get a clearer understanding of what exactly might be meant by a unified struggle for democratic control I did a more qualitative analysis of the Agenda statements which used those three terms.

In clarifying what is meant by the desire for "democratic control," one fundamental question is around control over what? It's not surprising that most of the statements refer to a desire for control over the economy:

- Regaining control of our economy and the development of our society is not only desirable. If we all work together, it's also possible.

- The important thing is to fight for what we really want - a society without margins, a society where we all live in solidarity and share control of the economy to serve our needs.

These are anti-NAFTA documents so an emphasis on control over the economy would be expected. Nevertheless, the notion of control goes much further than just the economy. There are also statements expressing a desire for a broader sense of control: over Canada's social future, over investments, over defence policy, over our communities.
Some bring the notion of control down to a personal level as well, calling for more control over our livelihoods, and over our lives:

The seeds of an alternative, many alternatives, exist in local struggles in which workers and communities have taken action to give themselves more control over their livelihoods. 13

At the heart of this vision is the desire to gain control over our lives. 14

Similarly, many of the calls for "sovereignty" are referring to national sovereignty over economic issues like trade and investment:

We want an international 'trade and development pact' that respects sovereignty. 15

Managed trade deals would be designed in such a way as to respect national sovereignty. 16

Other calls are for a broader sense of national sovereignty: "the ability to make our own decisions about economic, social and cultural development" 17 and "a Canada that can determine its own social, environmental and economic principles."18 There is also a desire expressed for national sovereignty over resources:

Canada urgently needs to regain sovereignty over its most precious resource [water].19

The desire for democratic control is thus primarily a desire for economic control, but extends to issues around culture, social policy, defence, resources, and the environment. It is also a desire for control at many levels: over our lives, livelihoods, workplaces, and communities.

Another fundamental question in clarifying the notion of "democratic control" is around who is to have control. There is a broad agreement in these statements that control should not be in the hands of big business:

But of course there are alternatives to the Conservative-Corporate Agenda. Workable alternatives. Alternatives that will take power away from the corporations and restore it to the people. 20
The transnationals will remain a powerful global force for a long time. They will probably always be major players in our economy. But we must have a national government that will ensure that their productive capabilities are harnessed in ways that will benefit Canadian society as a whole.  

It is interesting to note here that these statements refer to limiting the "power" of corporations. When I was doing key word searches, I had considered including the word "power" in the control/sovereignty theme since it was another word with a similar meaning. I found six instances of the word power or powerful. In each case, power was used in the context of governments or multinationals. It was not used to describe something that "we" wanted, rather it was something that "they" had:

* In power for almost a decade the Tories and Big Business have shown they cannot manage or 'provide the goods.' 
* We must limit - rather than expand - the power of the multinationals.

This points to the necessity to draw a distinction between power and control. In practice I can see two main differences which might explain their different usages in the documents.

First, a desire for power seems to imply a desire for power over others. A desire for control could refer to control over others, but it can also refer to a desire for control over one's own life. I think this explains why the documents do not describe a desire for power. The desire for democratic control that is being expressed is for control over our own lives, livelihoods, communities, and economies. This is not a desire for control over others, only over those things which influence our own lives.

Second, "power" implies the ability to affect others, but not necessarily in the way that is desired. On the other hand the meaning of "control" includes a sense of restraint and guidance. You can have power without being in control, but you can't have control unless you have power. Power can be used irresponsibly, whereas control is more conscientious. Using the word power to describe big business and big government suggests that they are not entirely "in control". Their actions are having impacts beyond that which they intend,
but they do not care. That the documents express a desire for democratic "control," rather than "power," implies that there is an intention to use that control conscientiously.

Returning to the question of who is to be in control: most of the visionary statements referring to "control" are calling for that control to be held by "the people," "Canadians," "workers," "citizens," or simply "us". A few call for control to be held by communities and regions. On the other hand, the statements referring to "sovereignty" are calling for control to be held by the Canadian government. So there are desires expressed for control at many different levels: national governments, regions, communities, and individual citizens. These seem to be conflicting desires.

It is helpful to recall at this point that Clarke qualifies the notion of control by referring specifically to a desire for "democratic" control. Six of the visionary statements also refer explicitly to the need for democratic control, including statements by the Canadian Peace Alliance, Solidarite populaire Quebec, the CAW, as well as the ACN:

We want an international 'trade and development pact' that respects sovereignty, the need for democratic control over the economy, and the right to regulate investment and trade. 24

If we want to take democratic control over the rebuilding of Canada's economy and society for the 21st century, stopping NAFTA and scrapping the FTA are essential pre-conditions. 25

Revitalizing the economy requires democratic control over economic development by citizens, workers, communities, and regions. Solidarite populaire Quebec. 26

Similarly, the notion of sovereignty is also paired with democracy in one of the statements:

Help Canada survive as a sovereign and democratic country by making your vote count. Mark and X for a party that is committed to the cancellation of NAFTA and the FTA. 27

This qualification seems to help to resolve the apparent conflict between the desire for control by "the people" on the one hand, and for control by national governments on the
other. The addition of the notion of democracy implies that even when control is in the hands of national governments, there is to be a real accountability to the people.

Of course democracy can also mean many different things. In order to fully understand what "democratic control" means in these statements, we must explore how the word democracy is used.

In some of the statements the word democracy seems to refer to something which emerges specifically from democratically controlled governments:

The only democratic alternative to NAFTA is to ensure that all three national governments retain all their powers to adopt laws and programs that protect the environment. 28

Managed trade would be trade managed by democratically elected governments in the interests of all citizens. 29

In others there is a sense that the goal is to go beyond mainstream notions of democracy as electoral politics. Some suggest that the goal is to deepen democracy by offering democratic participation, thereby strengthening ordinary people and the organizations that represent their interests:

In Canada we need organizing strategies that challenge corporate domination and build the strength of ordinary Canadians... A unique challenge will be to fight for alternatives that offer the same promise of social justice, democratic participation, and environmental sustainability to Mexican and American communities. 30

The Quebec of the future must be built on a liberating social agenda, which depends - necessarily and unconditionally - on deepening and expanding democracy... People's organizations, community based organizations and trade unions must assume their rightful place as the representatives of the interests of the majority. 31

Others suggest that what is desired is an expansion of democracy to include such things as "capital," which do not traditionally fall under the purview of democracy.

We are talking about "democratizing" capital - reducing its unilateral power and making it more responsive to the needs of our communities. 32

There are also suggestions that democracy is something that can happen internationally
as well as within nations and communities:

Like national market economies, a global market economy could also be governed by social democratic principles...from a social democratic perspective. 33

The statement above suggests a kind of social democratic international government, but there is also a suggestion that international democracy can use a participatory framework:

We pledge to replace GATT with an alternative International Trade Organization (ITO) designed with a participatory and democratic structure ensuring transparent, accountable and equitable decision making... 34

From this analysis a more detailed picture is emerging of what democratic control might mean. These visionary statements suggest the following criteria.

Democratic control means strengthening the traditional democratic structures of nation states, particularly in other countries like Mexico where these systems are very weak.

Democratic control means there is real accountability between governments and the people they serve.

Democratic control means deepening democracy, bringing participatory democratic structures to different structures, from workplaces and communities to international trade organizations.

Democratic control means expanding democracy, bringing different aspects of our lives under democratic control which have not traditionally been subject to that kind of control.

Democratic control operates at many levels: our homes, workplaces, communities, and countries.
Democratic control is primarily economic control, but extends to all issues that affect our lives profoundly, including culture, social policy, defence, resources, and the environment.

Democratic control means having control over our own lives, and those things which impact on them. It is not about control over other people's lives.

Democratic control means those who have power act responsibly, because they are accountable, not irresponsibly, because they don't care.

When I embarked on this analysis I was looking for points of agreement across the documents which could serve as the foundation for a unified vision of alternatives. The notion of democratic control which has emerged from this analysis of the Agenda category seems to be such a point of agreement. However, until this point my analysis has focused only on the 72 visionary statements in the Agenda category. Before a definitive statement can be made about broad agreement on this point, it is necessary to also look at the concrete alternatives that are put forward in the documents.

We can say that there is agreement around a desire for democratic control in the broad visionary statements. However, unless the concrete suggestions for alternatives are consistent with this notion, it is not possible to say that the documents as a whole reflect a consensus around this vision.

I now turn my analysis to the Alternatives category, to see if the concrete alternative suggestions in the documents are consistent with the desire for democratic control, as it is articulated above.

The alternatives in the documents fall roughly into three groupings: Community Self Reliance, National Interventionist Measures, and International Agreements. I will look at each of these groupings in turn.
1) Community Self Reliance
Among the Alternatives in the Community Self Reliance grouping, many are described as bringing control to the community.

Several of the Alternatives describe ways to bring capital under community control. Brian O'Neill of Oxfam calls for the improved use of credit unions and pension funds, as well as community based enterprises, fair trade, regional currencies, and bartering, as ways to gain control of, and access to, capital. Similarly Peggy Nash of the CAW calls for measures to ensure that Canadian money is invested in Canada, and that it is responsive to the needs of the community, measures such as: 1) forcing financial institutions to invest a portion of their funds into a National Renewal Fund 2) decreasing the amount of pension funds that can be invested outside Canada 3) establishing new mechanisms to raise funds, e.g. Canadian Development Bonds.

Other Alternatives describe ways to bring resources under community control. These include: 1) local processing of resources 2) community based forestry 3) allowing local governments to extract maximum value from local resources by regulating foreign ownership and restricting exports 4) community based control of resources in the interest of environmental health.

Other examples include Community Health Centres, which are offered as an alternative which would bring health care under community control through democratically elected boards. The Alternative Budget is given as an example of a community controlled budgeting process, where democratic decision making is used to develop the budget proposals. Community enterprises like Kagisowa Manomin, a wild rice harvesting and processing co-operative, are given as examples of ways communities can claim some control over their economic future. Similarly, worker buyouts of companies are described as ways employees can take control of their workplaces.
2) National Interventionist Measures
A few of the Alternatives in this category explicitly refer to control. There are calls for interventionist government to regain control of capital flows. Agricultural research is to be publicly controlled. Governments are to retain powers to protect the environment. Money creation is to be controlled by the Bank of Canada (as opposed to the commercial banks who now control it).

Other Alternatives in this category include tax reforms, expanded social services, subsidies for research and development, preferential procurement policies, job creation programs, lower interest rates, cuts to military spending, restrictions on exports, shifts of government accounts to credit unions, strengthened supply management programs, transportation policies encouraging regional development, policies forcing multinational companies to offer to sell closing plants to local purchasers, and restrictions on the proportion of pension funds that can be invested outside the country.

There is a very broad array of suggestions in this category, and very little in the way of common ground. Nevertheless, inasmuch as all the alternatives in this category refer to government interventions, they all relate to our democratically elected government exerting control. Thus they are consistent with a desire for democratic control.

3) International Agreements
Alternatives in this category describe international agreements which would be better than NAFTA. These international agreements relate to such topics as the environment, intellectual property rights, managed trade, human rights and labour standards. Many of them refer to controls and powers that would be maintained by national governments under these "better" international agreements. For example Canada would retain the power to protect the environment, regulate technological development, conserve resources, restrict imports, set standards, impose standards on Canadian companies outside our borders, encourage environmental protection, and restrict foreign investment. These alternatives also all relate to our democratically elected government exerting control. Thus they are also all consistent with a desire for democratic control.
Democratic control as the focus of a new social vision

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, my hope in undertaking this analysis was to identify some points of agreement across the range of organizations in the collection. I wanted to find points of consensus which could serve as the building blocks in the construction of a new social vision.

An analysis of the documents has revealed an emerging consensus around a desire for democratic control, strengthening of our current democratic structures as well as deepening and expanding that democracy. This means building in real accountability, as well as transparency and participatory structures. It means bringing democracy to all levels: workplaces, communities, nations, and international structures. It means having control over our economies as well as all other issues which affect our lives profoundly, including the environment, culture and social policy.

Reflecting back on the content analysis of Chapter 4, I noted there that the most powerful impression that struck me as I read through the documents was the vast number and variety of references to our lack of power, and loss of control. NAFTA is described as a problem because Canada will lose sovereignty as a nation, the Canadian government will lose power over economic policy, over our resources, over food production, culture, environmental standards, and the financial sector. This power is shifting to the U.S. and to transnational corporations, neither of which are accountable to the Canadian public. Voters will thus lose democratic control over policy decisions in those areas.

Given that a major theme in describing the problems with NAFTA focuses on loss of control it seems appropriate that a major theme in describing the alternatives and visions would be around (re) gaining that control.

Based on a grounding in a reading of the anti-NAFTA documents, I suggest that this notion of democratic control would serve as a focal point in the construction of a unified social vision. Moving to the next stage of praxis, in the next section I will draw on some theoretical reflections to support this position.
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UMI
The search for a unified vision is not a new quest in the history of social movements. Theoretical discussions of the need for a unified vision bringing workers and social movements together can be traced back to Lenin, and later to Antonio Gramsci.

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian journalist, a Marxist, and leader of the Italian communist party. He was jailed by Mussolini in 1926. In his prison cell he reflected on why it was that Italian workers and peasants supported the dictator, and in so doing, acted against their own class interests.

He argued that the power of dominant forces in a capitalist democracy is maintained not by force, but by a process he called hegemony: popular consent won through political and ideological persuasion. We are socialized by the cultural institutions of our society: the education system, the media, religion, the political system, and the media. This socialization leads most of us to accept our economic and political systems as "the way things are", as the natural order of things. We end up internalizing the dominant ideology.50

Gramsci was a Marxist writing in the 1920s and 30s, so in his formulation he was constructing Capitalism as the hegemonic force. In the 1990s we can similarly argue that Neoliberalism, our new version of capitalism, is a hegemonic force in our society. Our society is organized in such a way that it most benefits a small group of wealthy elites. In most "developed" countries they exert their domination not through military force, but through a kind of ideological persuasion. As a result of the popular media, advertising, the education system, and other cultural media we are convinced that "free market democracy" is the only way to organize an economy. We accept that the market is the
best way to organize the distribution of basic necessities like food, housing, employment, and clothing as well as "luxuries" like culture. We accept that free market competition is the best way to create efficiency. We accept that crucial decisions about the welfare of our citizens are made on the basis of debts, deficits, and credit ratings. This kind of ideological and cultural domination falls well within Gramsci's characterization of hegemony.

According to Gramsci the only way to create a social transformation under hegemonic domination, where culture is power, is to fight back with culture. Thus Gramsci envisioned a counter-cultural or counter-hegemonic project created by people who had come together to oppose "the way things are". Because under hegemony people internalize the ideology which dominates them, counter-hegemony requires the transformation of popular consciousness, of people's ways of thinking and feeling.

Gramsci argues that the working class can only become a counter-hegemonic force by taking into account the interests of other classes and social forces. Thus, in order to achieve the counter-hegemonic project Gramsci anticipated the formation of an "historic bloc": an alignment of the working classes and the popular democratic movements. This alignment would bring together the workers' struggle to reorganize the economic aspects of our society, with the struggles of social movements to reorganize social and political aspects of our society. This union of workers and social movements could forge a new "historic bloc," becoming a powerful counter-hegemonic force. 51

Applying Gramsci's notions to our current situation, we have seen in the 1980s and 1990s what could be described as a modern day emergence of Gramsci's "historic bloc." The coalitions which have formed, particularly around the anti-Free Trade and anti-NAFTA struggles, are a convergence of working classes and popular democratic struggles opposing neoliberalism as it is being expressed in those free trade agreements.

Labour and social movement coalitions are not new, but in the past decade these coalitions have adopted new processes of communication and decision making which have
shown significant improvement on traditional hierarchical alliance structures. In particular Peter Bleyer has made this observation with respect to the ACN. Bleyer suggests that these improvements in process have brought us closer to the establishment of an "historic bloc" by opening the way to a gradual reconstruction of a collective identification. He argues that it is around this new collective identification that the new "historic bloc" must be built.  

Also implicit in Gramsci's notion of counter-hegemony is the construction of an alternative hegemony, a "better" hegemony, which is to replace the existing hegemony. Within Gramsci's Marxist ideals this alternative hegemony is understood to be Socialism.

Today, it would be difficult to argue that our alternative hegemony is socialism. Many social movements, even those which make up the anti-NAFTA struggle, would not describe themselves as "socialist". With the recent collapse of the socialist states of Eastern Europe, and the swing to the right of "socialist" parties in power (witness the Ontario NDP) it is clear that the "left" is no longer actively working towards an ideal of socialism. What then is our version of the counter-hegemonic project?

In the last section I suggested that the struggle for democratic control could serve as a focal point in the construction of a new unified social vision. This could also be characterized as the new counter-hegemonic project. In the next few pages I will outline theoretical support for this position.

Coalitions: a catalyst to move beyond reformism
Some theorists have critiqued what is essentially a reformist tendency in both labour and social movements. This tendency is evident in the anti-NAFTA documents, where the bulk of the alternatives put forward are reformist in nature (e.g. expanding social services, lowering interest rates, setting protectionist tariffs). Because these reformist demands do not fundamentally challenge the power of the corporate elite, these social movements are being criticized for not taking up a counter-hegemonic position.  

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Dennis Howlett argues that by working in broad based coalitions, the possibility exists to move beyond these reformist demands. He argues that broad based coalitions have been productive, but that there is now a clear need to begin the process of putting sectoral alternatives together to see where they complement and contradict each other. It is in this process of integrating the various sectoral alternative proposals into one common alternative, that we can move beyond reformist alternative policies towards a new paradigm - a fundamental social/political/and economic transformation, which we could characterize as a counter-hegemonic project. 54

Similarly, Adkin and Alpaugh argue that both the labour movement and the new social movements can move beyond reformist demands. They argue that it is precisely in the convergence of these two sectors, and more precisely in their engaging in debates about alternatives for economic and institutional restructuring, that these movements can become counter-hegemonic forces. It is only in such a convergence, and in engagement in debates about alternatives, that they can move beyond demands that can be accommodated within the current economic and political system.

Adkin and Alpaugh further argue that the convergence of social movements and unions will occur around economic issues such as NAFTA, which provide fertile terrain for counter-hegemonic struggle. The struggles of the two sectors must intersect in the economic sphere, and in this convergence there is the potential that they will each move beyond reformist positions, to take up the fundamental transformation of our society which is the counter-hegemonic project. 55

In summary, these theorists are suggesting that the formation of labour/social movements coalitions, and the discussion of alternatives within those coalitions, can act as a catalyst to move both movements beyond reformist positions to truly counter-hegemonic positions.

Adkin and Alpaugh go even further, and suggest that the counter-hegemonic project which will emerge out of this convergence will be a kind of radical democracy. 56
Radical Democracy as the Counter Hegemonic Project

Other theorists have also specifically predicted that the convergence of labour and social movements would result in a call to strengthen democracy, and that this would form the new counter-hegemonic project.

A prominent example is Chantal Mouffe, who calls for the integration of the demands of different sectors of the new social movements. According to Mouffe everything depends on the Left's ability to set up a truly counter-hegemonic project which would integrate current struggles into an overall transformation. Mouffe acknowledges that in their present state many of the demands of different oppressed groups are antithetical to each other, and says that their convergence can only result from a political process of hegemonic "articulation" where equivalences are drawn between the struggles of the different movements. This articulation leads to the common recognition by the different groups, including women, workers, blacks, gays, and environmentalists, that they have a common concern. Ultimately the objective of Mouffe's counter-hegemonic project is the attainment of a radical democracy which encourages an increase in self-determination and self-government for individuals and citizens. 57

Counter Hegemony in the anti-NAFTA documents

Looking at the documents it is clear they reflect the process laid out by the theorists above. The struggles of the labour movement and social movements have indeed intersected in the economic sphere. For the most part they have taken essentially reformist positions, but they have also engaged in discussions of alternatives together. These debates are exemplified by the articles in Action Dossier #39, a document dedicated to exploring alternatives, including contributions from both social movement and labour groups.

In these discussions of alternatives one underlying theme has been articulated, that of the desire for democratic control. Based on Howlett's and Adkin and Alpaugh's and Mouffe's formulations it seems appropriate to postulate that the struggle for democratic control is the new counter-hegemonic project emerging from the new "historic bloc" of the anti-
NAFTA coalitions.

Democratic Control as the new counter hegemonic project
My hope in undertaking this analysis was that I would identify some points of consensus which could serve as the building blocks for a new social vision. Based on the theoretical formulations I have outlined, such a unified social vision could also be described as the Gramscian counter-hegemonic project.

The strongest theme which emerged from the visions and alternatives put forward in the anti-NAFTA documents focused on democratic control. Based on the works of Chantal Mouffe, as well as Adkin and Alpaugh, there is also theoretical support for this theme as the counter-hegemonic project.

Even beyond this theoretical support and the evidence in the documents I am convinced that the struggle for control is one that can bring together many different sectors in our society. I would go so far as to say that this theme could act as a catalyst to bring together both "right" and "left" wing groups. Populist right wing groups are reacting to a loss of control and power. Their reactions to this loss of control and power are very different from groups on the left. They are reacting in protectionist ways, often blaming those who have less power than they do. Nevertheless, it seems that the primary motivating factor for some is a sense of loss of control.

A counter-hegemonic project which called for true democratic control over our communities, workplaces, cities and nations would probably have great appeal on both sides of the political spectrum.
6.3
Finding plurality in the documents

Although my hope was to identify some points of consensus, my fear when I undertook this analysis was that there would be no consensus, that there would be a plurality of alternative visions with no significant common ground. For that reason I was very glad to find the unifying theme of democratic control.

Nevertheless, it would not be accurate to say that there was an overwhelming feeling of unity in the documents. Notions of control, sovereignty and democracy were mentioned in many of the documents, but not all of them. Of the 72 visionary statements which I included in the Agenda category, only 32 related to that theme, representing only 16 of the 46 organizations in the collection. Even in those documents which did express a desire for democratic control, there were a wide variety of mechanisms suggested by which to attain that control, many of which would not be compatible.

Although many of the alternatives put forward in the documents are consistent with a notion of democratic control, it must be said that the alternatives put forward in the documents are characterized much more by plurality than unity. That there is no one alternative to NAFTA is something that the documents openly declare:

There is no single alternative to the FTA or to the NAFTA...there are as many alternatives as we can imagine. 58

Alternatives abound. 59

The seeds of an alternative, many alternatives, exist in local struggles. 60

The different alternatives to NAFTA in the documents include a wide range and scope: restricting water exports to the U.S.
cancelling Mexico's foreign debt
federal funding of universities, with no tuition fees
agricultural supply management to protect Canadian farmers
cuts in military spending
worker buyouts of companies
establishing fair trade with third world countries
community based forestry
import and export restrictions
retraining laid off workers for jobs in expanding sectors
full employment strategies
community health centres
worker co-ops
expansion of social services
a national day care program
repatriating the debt through Canadian Development Bonds
cancelling NAFTA and the FTA, and going back to the GATT
keeping the NAFTA, but adding a social charter
establish new managed trade agreements like the Auto Pact

Each of these suggestions would deal with a part of the problems of NAFTA, each is part of a solution, but in no case would they be sufficient to solve the whole problem.

One could argue that the thing to do is to implement all of these alternatives, but in some cases it doesn’t seem that these alternatives would be very compatible. Federal funding of post secondary education would probably not be very compatible with increased community control of education. Federal resource conservation plans might not be very compatible with increased community control of resources. Proposals to protect industrial jobs through managed trade might not be very compatible with environmentalists calls for decreased pollution and increased energy conservation.

None of these are mutually exclusive, but there is a sense that they are moving in two different directions. There is a tension between increased community control and increased government control that would probably be difficult to balance in a real-world application of all these alternatives.
Democratic control: by whom? of what?

At the heart of these contradictions lies a lack of clarity in the notion of democratic control. It is undeniable that there is a common theme across many of the documents that there is a desire for more democratic control. The documents give a clear sense that they want control to be in the hands of people who are democratically responsible to the public. However, beyond that the notion is not very well defined. The question remains: who is to be in control of what and how? There is a common sense that transnational corporations should not be in control:

We must limit - rather than expand - the power of multinationals. 61

But of course there are alternatives...alternatives that will take power away from the corporations and restore it to the people. 62

Who is to have this control instead? On one side there are suggestions that this control should be in the hands of communities:

We believe that if we pull together we can find alternatives - ways to take back control in our communities. 63

People's organizations, community based organization and trade unions must assume their rightful place as the representatives of the interests of the majority. 64

On the other side there are many suggestions that we need to strengthen our national governments in order to reign in the transnationals:

The transnationals will remain a powerful global force for a long time. They will probably always be major players in our economy. But we must have a national government that will ensure that their productive capabilities are harnessed in ways that will benefit Canadian society as a whole. 65

The only democratic alternative to NAFTA is to ensure that all three national governments retain all their powers to adopt laws and programs that protect the environment. 66

These suggestions would put control at the national level. The intention is to strengthen nation states, or at least return them to the level of power they held before the effects of globalization started to take hold.
Given this tension, and apparent contradiction, between increased control at the community level and at the federal government level, it is interesting to note that there are also several suggestions for measures that the federal government should take to strengthen local communities. These include such measures as transportation policies to support regional development, government procurement policies to guarantee a market for locally owned businesses, restricting exports to ensure processing jobs stay in communities, "buy local" campaigns to support locally grown foods and promote self-sufficiency. In a seeming contradiction these measures require federal government interventions to put control in the hands of local communities. Essentially, to hand over control, to give up power.

Perhaps this is because in our society, where communities have become so weak, it is difficult for us to imagine ways for us to strengthen them. On the other hand it is easy for us to imagine ways to have a stronger government. The easy way out is to suggest ways for federal governments to strengthen communities.

There are a few suggestions of ways for communities to strengthen themselves without government support: bartering systems, housing co-ops, community associations, and credit unions. However, most of the alternatives supporting stronger communities require some kind of government intervention. It could be argued that stronger communities and stronger nation states are not necessarily contradictory. There are different types of power and control that could be held at each of these levels.

The answer to these dilemmas may lie in taking a pluralistic view. There is no one alternative to NAFTA, rather there are many alternatives. There is no one way of experiencing democratic control, there are many different types of control and power in our society, and our goal should be to make them all democratic.

In the next section I will outline some theoretical reflections which support this position of plurality.
The Gramscian notion of counter-hegemony implies a unified vision of a new hegemony, a "good" hegemony which is to replace the "bad" hegemony of capitalism (now neoliberal capitalism).

In looking at the documents it is clear that there is some support for a unified vision of an alternative built around democratic control. Nevertheless this is outweighed by evidence that there is no consensus, that there are many different alternatives put forward in the documents and these are not all compatible. The counter-hegemonic vision may be in the early stages of development but is certainly not yet fully articulated. Given this state of affairs I have found some comfort in the suggestion of some theorists that the search for unity is unnecessary and possibly counter-productive. They argue against the need for a counter-hegemony, rejecting the notion that we should have a new hegemony with which to replace the old hegemony. They suggest instead that social movements should engage in an essentially "anti-hegemonic" project. One which rejects all hegemonies, be they "good" or "bad".

Post structuralists: hegemony as totalizing narrative
Morally, some have taken issue with the notion of counter-hegemony on the basis that any hegemony is fascist or totalitarian. In Gramsci's notion of counter-hegemony a coalition of social interests would erode the legitimacy of the ruling class interests, while winning legitimacy for their own political and social processes and structures. The new counter-hegemony would replace the old one, but this leaves unchanged the process of hegemony, simply manufacturing a new consent, presumably one which is more just and equitable.⁶⁷

For some post-structuralists the counter-hegemonic quest for a shared vision, for a unified strategy, and for a unified historic bloc are seen as "totalizing" political moves that carry a
potentially authoritarian sub-text. In a society with multiple oppressions whose vision will end up being characterized as the unified vision?

These post-structuralist social movement theorists eschew the notion of a unified counter-hegemonic project in favour of a radical autonomy of movements. They do not accept the assumption that the struggle against the existing hegemony must be a struggle for an alternative vision. Such post-modern movement politics can be called counter-hegemonic only in the sense that they oppose and strive to destabilize the current hegemony, their position is more accurately described as "anti-hegemonic" in the sense that they oppose all hegemonies.

Learning to accept multiplicity: there are no equivalences
Where post-structuralists argue against counter-hegemony on a moral basis, Warren Magnusson puts forward a more pragmatic anti-hegemonic position. His position is that there is no common struggle that ties us all together, there is no single issue, no one form of politics that can be adequate to our situation.

Magnusson argues that we have to abandon the polarities of capitalism and socialism, and learn to operate politically in a multiplicity of political spheres. This means learning to accept our own multiplicity, recognizing for instance that we are environmentalists concerned about the survival of life on earth and yet also ordinary people engaged in the immediate business of trying to make a decent living. Recognizing this multiplicity can help us to live with the tension between good environmental practice and immediate comfort. There is a temptation to think that there must be some master code or "monologic" that tells us what to do when faced with such conflicts. In fact there may be no such equivalences - no way of relating our need for living well now to our duty to maintain the diversity of life on earth.

Magnusson rejects the argument that we can construct "equivalences" across the range of social movement causes, and that these equivalences come together under the rubric of a
struggle for radical democracy. He asks in what sense is a campaign against rape or the campaign for the preservation of the ancient rainforest a campaign for democracy.

The truth is we are fighting for many things, we are living for an eternity and for the here and now, we are struggling against patriarchy and capitalist domination.

New processes of leadership and knowledge making

Another school of "anti-hegemonic" thought has emerged from the work of popular educators dian marinova, Chris Cavanagh, and Deborah Barndt. For these theorists anti-hegemony suggests a struggle for new processes of leadership and knowledge making that would not be hegemonic. That is, they would not reproduce current relations of power, the interdependent relation of domination and subordination which is implicit in the notion of hegemony. For them the concept of anti-hegemony suggests the possibility of new relations of power, which we do not yet have the language to describe. It refuses the binary construction of either-or thinking, and moves us beyond it to a "both-and-more" thinking. It creates a space for dreaming which gives us glimpses of what we are working for in the way that we try to work now. It involves vision, not of the utopian sort, but a vision of what could be grounded in a sense of what is. This less binary, more fluid metaphorical framework is sympathetic with post-modernism's critique of the lust for absolutes.

Fragmentation as a strategic advantage

Beyond moral, philosophical and pragmatic arguments, there are also strategic arguments for an anti-hegemonic project. It has been argued that there is an advantage to not having a unified position. The forces that oppose us are hegemonic, they dominate through moral and ideological leadership, and although we oppose that hegemony we are also participants in that hegemony. It is impossible to determine all of the ideas, ideologies, behaviours and strategies that spring from that hegemonic routine. The very fact that we desire a unified social vision may simply be a response to the question of the ruling class "So, what's your alternative?" If social movements establish a set agenda of what we are trying to accomplish, certain aspects of that counter-hegemonic project will
undoubtedly reflect the goals of the hegemony we are trying to overcome. Accepting a
degree of uncertainty in our work may be one way of subverting the mechanisms of
hegemony within our very movements. 73

Paul Patton also makes a strategic argument for anti-hegemony. He argues that it is not
necessary to have a unified vision in order to achieve significant change. He notes that
social movements have independently achieved significant advances without the benefit of
a unified social vision. Such changes are worthwhile in themselves but they may also
contribute in various ways to the breaking down of larger processes of institutional
oppression. It is never easy to predict where the fault lines of a given conjuncture lie, or
from where might come the lines of flight that destabilize an entire social system.
Marxism has been notoriously unsuccessful in predicting the potential for global
effectiveness of such things as the student movement or anti-war protests. For all these
reasons we should perhaps argue not for moving beyond the fragments towards the global
politics of a new alliance but for multiplying the fragmentary effects of such local
campaigns. 74

Anti-Hegemony in the anti-NAFTA movement

I started this chapter with a quote:

This work requires nourishment, which social vision can help to provide. 75

In the context of a quest for a unified struggle this makes sense, but at this point I am
ready to take issue with the statement. It occurs to me that in my experience as an
activist I have found it very difficult to mobilize people to work for something. It is much
easier to mobilize people to act against something. In our society anger is a stronger
motivator than hope.

On that basis I have found the anti-hegemonic position to be very comforting. Given my
finding that the alternatives in the documents are more characterized by plurality than
unity, it may be that they represent what is fundamentally an anti-hegemonic project
rather than a counter-hegemonic project.

Perhaps it is okay if we don't all agree on what we are working towards. Maybe it's enough to agree on what we oppose. In opposing the hegemony of neoliberalism, we can take up an anti-hegemonic position, and free ourselves of the responsibility of articulating a new counter-hegemony to replace it.

In an anti-hegemonic project there can be many different alternatives. We can struggle for many different autonomous for many different movements, respecting each other but not having to find the one issue which unifies us all.

Anti-hegemony also encourages us to embark on a struggle for new ways of being which we have not yet articulated. We can work for new processes of leadership, new ways of organizing which do not reproduce current relations of power, new ways of being which we have not yet articulated. The anti-hegemonic position frees us to set out on the road away from where we are now, without knowing where we are going to end up, but being pretty sure of the road signs which will lead us there.
6.5

What to do next?

In the first half of this chapter I addressed the counter-hegemonic search for a unified social vision. I expressed my personal hope that I would find in the documents some points of agreement that would serve as the building blocks for a new social vision. Social activists and theorists alike have proclaimed their desire for such a vision. They have expressed good reasons for this desire.

Without a social vision we are left in a defensive position, defending the structures of the Canadian welfare state, even though this is a structure which many of us are not entirely devoted to. It represents a health care system which focuses on curing illness instead of promoting health, a welfare system which is dehumanizing, and an education system teaches us to "fit in" thus serving as part of the process of hegemonic domination.

The lack of an alternative social vision has also been identified as a key factor in the failure of the anti-Free Trade struggle.

In my analysis of the anti-NAFTA documents I found that there was an underlying common theme: a desire for democratic control which implies a strengthening of our current democratic structures as well as deepening and expanding that democracy. Democratic control means building in real accountability, as well as transparency and participatory structures. It means bringing democracy to all levels: workplaces, communities, nations, and international structures. It means having control over our economies as well as all other issues which affect our lives profoundly, including the environment, culture and social policy.

This notion of democratic control emerged from an analysis of the visionary statements in the Agenda category, and is consistent with many of the concrete alternatives put forward
in the documents. This evidence suggests that the quest for democratic control could serve as a unifying theme for an alternative social vision.

Reflecting on Gramsci's theories, as well as the ideas of more recent social movement theorists, I found support for the notion that a unified vision or counter-hegemony would emerge from a coalition of labour and social movement groups and that this would take the form of a struggle for a strengthened, radical democracy.

Now I have seemingly contradicted this conclusion. In the second half of this chapter I have embraced an anti-hegemonic position, which supports a pluralism of struggles and alternative visions.

I described the scope and variety of alternatives put forward in the documents, and explored the contradictions inherent in the notion of democratic control. There can be multiple and incompatible interpretations of what this means about who is controlling what. Most notably there is a tension between community control and control by the nation state.

The pluralistic anti-hegemonic position rejects all hegemonies. It seeks to disrupt current structures of power and domination, but does not seek to replace it with a "better" system. This position is supported by moral arguments that under any unified social vision there may be an authoritarian subtext. In an anti-hegemonic project we are encouraged to explore new processes of leadership which do not reproduce current relations of power and oppression.

There are strategic arguments to support the anti-hegemonic position, which suggest that we may be more effective acting as fragmented movements without a unified social vision. If we do not articulate what we are trying to achieve we may present less of a "target" to our opponents. Also, by attacking our enemies on multiple fronts it increases the likelihood that we will strike the one weakness which will bring the whole system down.
There is also a suggestion that the search for a unified vision may be futile. And that the notion of democratic control is inadequate to articulate the equivalences of our struggles.

Having delineated the unifying theme democratic control, and explored the theoretical support for taking it up as a unified counter-hegemonic position, am I now ready to abandon it, embrace the anti-hegemonic position, and argue against taking up a unified struggle? I must admit to a certain level of confusion at this moment.

I am tempted by the simplicity of the anti-hegemonic position. In mathematics a troublesome problem can take pages to solve, until one day someone discovers an elegant three line solution. I wonder if the anti-hegemonic position is our version of the three line solution. Instead of spending years working in coalitions and committees to work out the common aspects of our alternative vision, it may simply be enough to agree on what we oppose. Instead of working to articulate how all our diverse struggles can be brought under one common theme, we can simply recognize that there are no universal equivalences. We are struggling for many things in many ways.

I am tempted by the simplicity of this position, but just as the word temptation implies, I also have a sinking feeling that it would be wrong to give in to that temptation. It sounds like taking the easy way out. While I see the truth of the anti-hegemonic arguments, I also see value in the counter-hegemonic position.

In the end I am not sure how to reconcile this problem. I will consider the problem step by step.

1) **Should we be working in coalitions?**

Yes. Even if we accept the anti-hegemonic position and agree that we are not seeking to establish a unified social vision, this does not mean we should give up working in coalitions. It doesn't even mean we should give up having discussions and debates about alternatives.
In fact, anti-hegemonic theorists argue that we need to have discussions about alternatives across a broad range of sectors. Recall Adkin and Alpaugh's position, that it is only through such coalitions that we can hope to get beyond reformist positions. By engaging in debates and discussions about alternatives we challenge each other and bring out the creativity to be imaginative. We need to move beyond our traditional ways of thinking which we have developed in our own independent sectors. Working in coalitions seems to be an ideal way to do this.

2) The importance of process over product
If we are not seeking a common unified social vision what are we to do in these coalitions? Dennis Howlett has suggested that it is the processes involved in working together in coalitions that are more important than the products. We must engage in a democratic process of shaping alternative proposals, and this process is more important than the outcome. Emphasizing the process underscores for the participants that achieving social transformation is itself a process, and not something that occurs suddenly through seizing state power. 76

The position that we can work towards the goal of democratic control by creating it in our own work echoes Deborah Barndt's anti-hegemonic position that we must move into the future while being fully grounded in the present. We cannot fully articulate the new ways of being that we are working towards, but we can see glimpses of what we are working towards in the way we try to work together now. We are seeking a vision of what could be grounded in a sense of what is. 77

3) Fragmentation as a strategic advantage
The implication of what I have just said is that we should keep on working together, but it is also clear that there may be a strategic advantage to maintaining the diversity of our individual struggles.

Paul Patton points out that the structural weaknesses of the neoliberal system we are trying to overcome may be small and hard to see. Small advances of individual struggles
are important in and of themselves, but we can also not predict when one small advance in one struggle might destabilize the whole system. 78 There may also be strength in diversity in that we are harder to attack if we have not articulated where we are going.

4) Pragmatic reality: activists want a unified social vision
Despite the strategic and theoretical position that a unified social vision is unnecessary and possibly dangerous we must also face up to the reality of our situation. The plain truth of the matter is that activists have expressed a strong desire to have a unified social vision.

This sentiment goes well beyond the writing of the social activists I quoted at the beginning of this chapter. I attended the AGM of the Toronto-based Metro Network for Social Justice last fall. Vision creation was voted the number one priority for the coalition by the 120 activists who were present. This desire for a social vision is not new. In 1988 the delegates at the Pro-Canada Network National Assembly in 1988 identified their lack of an alternative social vision as a key factor in the failure of their public education campaign against the FTA.

It may be that this desire for a social vision is merely a response to the tactics of the hegemonic forces who ask us "what is your alternative?" By expressing this desire we may merely be falling in to their trap. Nevertheless it must be acknowledged that these feelings are real.

Conclusion: We need to work for plurality and unity
Sometimes I get the sense that we are thinking too hard. When we try to articulate alternatives we feel like we have to work it all out to the last detail. This has resulted in such projects as the Alternative Budget and the REVIVE Canada Plan, 79 which carefully lay out a well thought out plan of what we would do if we were in power. We feel like we need to produce these detailed plans in order to gain credibility, in order for
people to take us seriously.

I don't think we need to be that thorough. The Common Sense Revolution is a social vision which the public has taken up with alacrity, but it is not a plan which has been worked out in great detail. The Common Sense Revolution document sets out some broad strokes about how it wants to reorganize society. That was enough for the Ontario public.

Perhaps we should follow their example. Perhaps we should set out some broad strokes of our social vision, agree on the values we want to see in our society, but not work out the fine details of the mechanisms we would use to achieve that society. In this way we can work for unity while accepting plurality.

We can work for unity by agreeing on the basic values which are to be expressed in our society. The notion of democratic control can serve as an important foundation to build this unified vision of values. The quest for democratic control represents a quest for accountability, transparency, and participatory decision making structures. It represents a struggle to have these values represented in all levels of decision making: in our workplaces and communities, as well as nationally and internationally. It is also a struggle to have these values present in decision making processes around our economies as well as all other issues which affect our lives profoundly, including the environment, culture and social policy.

We can also work with plurality by accepting that there may be many different mechanisms by which those values can to be realized. There is no one alternative, there are many alternatives. But every alternative is an effort to achieve those values.

As I draw to the end of this chapter I wonder if this may be what Deborah Barndt meant when she called for "both-and-more" thinking. I have been struggling to choose between unity and plurality, when the answer is that we can have both, and more.
Endnotes


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6. Dennis Howlett *Social Movement Coalitions* in *Canadian Dimensions* Nov-Dec 1989 p.45


9. CAW *Give me a mandate*... 1992 p.19

10. Tony Clarke (of ACN) *Yes, We DO have alternatives* in ACN *Action Dossier #39* 1993 p.2

11. Bob White (of the CLC) *A prescription for a country where people come before profits* in ACN *Action Dossier #39*, 1993 p.6

12. Jean Swanson (of ELP) *Social programs that do more than clean up capitalism's mess* in ACN *Action Dossier #39*, 1993 p.29

13. JESUIT CENTRE, *As the Empire Grows* 1991 p.9


15. CAW, *Give me a mandate*... 1992 p.19
16. Leo Gerrard (of the STEELWORKERS) Canada must trade but our trade should be managed, not free in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.13

17. COC- Manitoba, The NAFTA: still more of the same in CHOICES The High Cost of Free Trade 1993 p.7

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20. Bob White, (of the CLC) A prescription for a country where people come before profits in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.4


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25. Tony Clarke (of ACN) Yes, We DO Have Alternatives! in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.2


27. ACN-BC, Federal Election 1993 brochure 1993

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29. Leo Gerrard (of the STEELWORKERS) Canada’s Trade should be managed, not Free in ACN Action Dossier #39 1993 p.13

30. LAWG Open for Business 1991 p.2

31. SOLIDARITE POPULAIRE QUEBEC Building the Quebec of the future in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.45

32. Peggy Nash (CAW) Canadian money should be invested in Canada in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.54


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34. John Dillon (of ECEJ) Joining the struggle for global alternatives in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.7

35. Brian O'Neill (of OXFAM) An economy without the transnationals?, in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.59

36. Peggy Nash (of CAW) Canadian Money Should be Invested in Canada in ACN Action Dossier #39 1993 p.54

37. Michelle Swenarchuk (of CELA) We must move toward a sustainable economy in ACN Action Dossier #39 1993 p.35

38. Michelle Swenarchuk (of CELA) We must move toward a sustainable economy in ACN Action Dossier #39 1993 p.35

39. ECEJ 8 Principle of a Fair Trade Agreement in Economic Integration of the Americas 1994

40. CELA-OXFAM Resources factsheet in NAFTA Facts Series 1993

41. Hendrik Hersft NAFTA and our Forests in CHO!CES The High Cost of Free Trade 1993 p.26

42. Michael Rachlis Health care reform: Its all in the delivery in ACN Action Dossier #39 1993 p.31

43. John Loxley (of CHO!CES) CHO!CES shows us different ways to slice up the budget pie in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.44

44. JESUIT CENTRE As the Empire Grows 1991 p.9

45. Laurel Sefton MacDowell Workers in the Boardroom in ACN Action Dossier #39 1993 p.57


47. Kevin Arsenault (of NFU) Agribusiness' global food system is not sustainable in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.34

48. CELA-OXFAM NAFTA and Democracy factsheet in NAFTA Facts Series 1993

49. CCPA, Taking control of the deficit, in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.49

Cyberspace: Jefferson Gramsci and the Electronic Commons

51. Roger Simon, Gramsci's Political Thought London: Lawrence and Wishart 1982 p.23


53. This reformist orientation has been reinforced by government funding of social movement groups, where dependence on this money can be a barrier to joining a cross sectoral coalition working for fundamental social transformation. Thus we see a part of the hegemonic system in action.


58. John Dillon (of ECEJ) 51 Alternatives to NAFTA in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.8

59. ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.60

60. JESUIT CENTRE As the Empire Grows 1991 p.9

61. CAW Give me a mandate... 1992 p.19

62. Bob White (of the CLC) A prescription for a country where people come before profits in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.4

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66. CELA-OXFAM NAFTA and Democracy factsheet in the NAFTA Facts Series 1993


70. Warren Magnusson, Decentring the State, or Looking for Politics in William Carroll (ed) Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice Toronto: Garamond, 1992 pp.78-79

71. Chris Cavanagh, Butterflies Dreaming: Critical Biography as Critical Education M.E.S. Major Paper, York University, 1995 p.72


75. Rick Arnold et al Educating for a Change Toronto: Between the Lines 1991 p.25

76. Dennis Howlett Social Movement Coalitions: New Possibilities for Social Change in Canadian Dimensions Nov-Dec 1989 p.45

77. Deborah Barndt Mapping Tomasita's Journey unpublished paper 1994 p.15


79. The Alternative Budget is an annual project of CHO!CES and the CCPA and outline an alternative federal budget, REVIVE Canada was a plan to achieve full employment, produced by NUPGE

80. The campaign platform of the Ontario Conservative Party, which won a majority government in 1995.
Part Three: Conclusions

Acting on these reflections

Part Three is the conclusion of this thesis, but it is not the end.

Part One started by grounding the research, then Part Two journeyed up, into the air of reflection. Now Part Three brings the research back to the ground. It takes the results of the analysis in Part Two and explores how they can apply to the real world.

In the cycle of praxis Part Three isn't just a the place where the research has landed, it is also a springboard. It launches the research into the action stage. It suggests ways to change how we function. It outlines some work that still needs to be done. It points to concrete actions which can be taken.

Part Three is the end of this document, but it is just the beginning of the acting stage in the cycle of praxis.
Praxis, Anti-neoliberalism, Canadian NGOs and Me

Chapter 7 considers how the reflections in Part Two point to action can be applied in the real world. It explores key questions for further thought, and points to some concrete action steps.

The first section considers the implications for other researchers endeavouring to do research as praxis, and includes an assessment of this research as a site of praxis. I have included some concrete suggestions based on this experience, as well as some personal reflections on the process.

Second, the implications for the Canadian NGO community are explored. This section explores how the principles of praxis can inform our work, both in the production of documents, and in the larger context of the anti-neoliberal agenda. In writing this section I have drawn heavily on the insights of the eight readers of my preliminary draft. I asked specifically for input on the major implications for our work as activists and educators. Based on that feedback, I have synthesized the major findings of Part Two, and explored their strategic significance for the movement.

Lastly, I will explore some of the implications for my own practice as an activist.
This research project: an assessment

Questions of validity
Issues of validity offer particular problems for research which is embedded within a program of social change, since traditional "objective" methods of measuring validity cannot be applied. Patti Lather offers four criteria of validity by which to evaluate research as praxis. ¹

First, Lather suggests that if the results of their research are to be credible, researchers should use research designs which allow counterpatterns as well as convergences to emerge. Triangulation establishes data trustworthiness by using multiple data sources, methods, and theoretical schemes to confirm the results.

In this case the research has used multiple data sources: 24 different anti-NAFTA documents produced by a broad range of NGOs over the span of six years. It has used multiple methods: content analysis, critique, and theoretical reflections. It has used several different theoretical frameworks including Critical Pedagogy, Critical Adult Education, and Popular Education. In applying these theoretical notions there was a convergence of interpretations of the data. On the other hand, in applying the notions of hegemony, counter-hegemony and anti-hegemony, a counterpattern emerged, which suggested that the documents reflected both a unity and a plurality of agendas.

Second, Lather offers construct validity. She suggests that research should operate within a conscious context of theory building.

A systematized reflexivity which reveals how a priori theory has been changed by the logic of the data becomes essential in establishing construct validity in ways that contribute to the growth of illuminating and change enhancing social theory. ²

I have interacted reflexively with the theory of praxis in many ways in this thesis. I have consciously tried to use praxis as a framework to produce my own document, as well as in critiquing the documents I am analyzing. Also, the relationship between the documents and the theory has not been one way. I have critiqued the documents as sites of praxis,

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but I have also used the documents as points of departure from which to reflect on how those principles can be put into practice. Similarly I have considered how concepts of hegemony, counter-hegemony and anti-hegemony are reflected in the documents, and I have also tried to consider how they have played out in my own research process.

Third, Lather suggests that face validity needs to be considered. According to Lather, research with face validity provides a click of recognition, a "yes, of course" rather than a "yes but" experience. It is operationalized by recycling descriptions, analysis and conclusions back through a subsample of the respondents.

In this research project there are no "respondents," since the object of research is a set of documents. Nevertheless I have tried to achieve this by submitting a preliminary draft of this thesis to a group of ten social activists and educators. I integrated the responses of these readers into the final draft. Unfortunately, the preliminary draft which I distributed included only Chapters 1 to 5. Time did not allow for me to distribute Chapters 6 and 7, nor was I able to redistribute the new versions of Chapter 1 to 5 to the original readers for a second review.

The last measure that Lather offers is catalytic validity: the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes the participants. Here I define as participants myself, the group of volunteer readers of the earlier draft, and at a broader level, anyone who will read this document in the future.

In my mind this is the most important measure of validity for this research. I am more concerned about having a positive effect on the movement than I am about being "right." The two are obviously inter-related, but my analysis doesn't have to always be right in order to start people thinking about the issues that I have raised.

From the group of readers I received generally positive feedback, and lots of encouragement to "get this information out to the broader community."
For myself I have found this experience to be very challenging but also very empowering. I see many ways that I can integrate what I have learned into my own practice as an activist. I am enthusiastic about continuing work with the Economic and Political Literacy work group of the MNSJ, especially as we move forward on plans to set up a Centre for Popular Economics.

At this point, I cannot know what the reaction will be among the broader community of readers. You, as a reader, are one of the people who can make this judgement. I leave the question of validity in your hands.

**Some thoughts and concrete suggestions for other researchers**

I particularly enjoyed the process of collecting, discussing and integrating the feedback of the readers, and as a researcher I highly recommend it.

There was a certain cost involved in this process since it meant producing ten copies of a 140 page document. I had wanted the process to be as enjoyable as possible for the readers, so I formatted the document nicely, included lots of pictures from the original documents, put on a coloured cover, and had the document cerlox bound. This added time and financial costs to the project.

Nevertheless it made me feel much better about the work I was doing. It meant that when I had discussions with people about my thesis and they said "your research sounds really interesting, I'd love to read it," I had a "product" I could pull out and show people.

When I distributed the document to the readers I asked them to give me their comments on sticky-notes, rather than on the document itself. This was because the documents had been costly to produce, and I wanted to be able to get them back from the readers. That way I would be able to give out the same document again rather than producing more.

This had a big positive side effect. For researchers who are considering following a similar process I highly recommend the use of sticky-notes.
When I started revising I took everyone's comments and put them all together on one master copy of the document. Then, as I revised the original I was just looking at one copy, not flipping through ten copies. The effect was like having a conversation with the readers: "when I said this, David said that, but Janet added this comment, and then Marnie reminded me about this other thing." (This was especially comforting in the final weeks, as I sat alone in my office day after day. It made writing seem like a social event.)

It was especially satisfying to read through this master copy and find a page that was covered with sticky notes that said "good point" "yes!" and "this is a key finding." Of course, some pages were also covered in longer notes taking issue with what I said. This was very helpful in pointing out the places where I needed to flesh out the argument, or rethink my analysis.

It occurs to me that another result of this process is that I have now constructed myself within a "supportive community." Going back to Roger Simon's notion, which I applied to the documents in Chapter 5, he suggests that effective critical education should construct the learners as members of a public network that supports and sustains them in taking action.³ They will then be more likely to take up the responsibility to share what they have learned and to act on it.

I can now see how Simon's suggestion actually plays out in real life. In my case the group of volunteer readers is now a community, a "supportive community" who will actively encourage me to share what I have learned. Several of them have already suggested that I should try to publish a version of this document. They have also been helpful in suggesting other forums by which to get the information out. And, because I-know-that-they-know that I have done this work, I do feel a responsibility to get this information out. I can imagine that if these people were not encouraging me, I might think about publishing, but probably never actually pursue it.
Canadian NGO opposition to neoliberalism

In this section, I will explore the implications of this research for our practice in the Canadian NGO community. I will focus on three themes which have emerged from the analysis in Part Two.

First, I will explore the self-defeating and/or self-destructive tendencies of the documents, and how we can amend our practices to deal with these tendencies.

Second, I will try to deal with an unresolved tension in the analysis: between the imperative to respect peoples' experience on one side, and to provide more information and deeper analysis on the other.

Third, I will address the desire which has been expressed in our movements for an alternative vision. I will consider what the theoretical analysis suggests about how (and if) we could/should satisfy this desire.

1) Getting over shoot-self-in-foot-ism
A recurring theme which has emerged in the analysis of the documents has been their propensity for what Chris Cavanagh has called shoot-self-in-foot-ism: a self-destructive tendency which unconsciously perpetuates the very power relations we struggle to oppose.¹

This is most clearly evident in the way the documents construct and depict identities. The documents construct a collective identity of "us" as Canadians and sometimes workers, but then use visual images which depict those communities as small, weak, and powerless. At the same time "they" are constructed as the Tories, big business, and the United States, and visual images depict them as big, strong, and powerful.

Similarly, the documents construct "them" as agents. Much of the content of the
documents is dedicated to describing what "they" are doing, and how it will result in "us" losing power and control. Conversely "we" are rarely shown as agents, things happen to us, but we are rarely described as making things happen.

These oversimplified notions of "us" and "them" contribute to shoot-self-in-foot-ism. They present a limited analysis of power dynamics in our society. Depictions of corporate power, and how it is wielded, are oversimplified. Similarly, the portrayal of the U.S. as a monolithic force ignores the complexities, dynamism and contradictions of that society. It presents no possibility of dissent, and thus ignores potential strategic allies. The They Said We Said format used in some of the documents suggests that the relationship between these forces has remained static over time, and thus presents little possibility for change. This oversimplified presentation of power relations is problematic because it impedes the kind of sophisticated political analysis which will be necessary if we are to develop effective strategies to oppose those power relations.

Shoot-self-in-foot-ism is also evident in the way the documents address alternatives. The documents are explicitly responding to what is described as the There-Is-No-Alternative (TINA) syndrome. They challenge this attitude by describing a multitude of policy alternatives. However, these textual descriptions are not accompanied by visual images. Instead, the visual images in the documents are dedicated to showing the problems with NAFTA, and (less frequently) the resistance to it. Only one is an illustration of a positive alternative.

It is also possible that the very use of the word "alternatives" contributes to shoot-self-in-foot-ism. In its common usage this word refers to something which is defined by its opposition to that which is dominant, e.g. alternative music, alternative press. The use of the word in this context may be perpetuating a sense that our "alternatives" are destined to be peripheral to the dominant system of neoliberal capitalism. They will co-exist with rather than replace that dominant system.

How can we understand this self destructive tendency? The Gramscian notion of
hegemony presents a useful framework. According to Gramsci, hegemonic domination occurs through cultural and ideological leadership. We are socialized by the cultural institutions of our society: the media, schools, religion, and the political system. Through this socialization we internalize the dominant ideology, we accept it as "the way things are." As a result we end up participating in the systems which are dominating us. Our own actions perpetuate those systems, often in ways that we are unaware of.

Gramsci developed this notion in Italy in the 1920s. He used it to explain why members of the working class were supporting Mussolini's fascist forces, thereby acting against their own class interests. In Chapter 6 I explored how the concept of hegemony is helpful in understanding the domination of neoliberal capitalism in our society. Neoliberal hegemony can help us understand why McDonalds has sold billions of Big Macs, even though they hold virtually no nutritional value. It can also help us understand why welfare recipients in Ontario voted for Mike Harris, even though he promised to cut their cheques.

Hegemony is subtle and ubiquitous. From the day we are born we are immersed in it. No one is immune to hegemonic domination, even those who oppose it are subject to its effects. This means that we who oppose the hegemonic domination of neoliberal capitalism are also influenced by it. And because hegemony is a process where ideology is internalized, we are not always going to be aware of how it is influencing our behaviour. We can be perpetuating hegemonic domination even as we are trying to oppose it.

Thus, when the anti-NAFTA documents present oversimplified notions of power relations, neglect to show images of alternatives, and represent "us" as small and weak, we can understand this to be an unconscious reflection of the hegemonic ideology.

How can we overcome shoot-self-in-foot-ism? The analysis of Part Two points to some concrete actions we can take, as well as some areas for further reflection and analysis.
Suggestions for Action

1) Stop shooting at our own feet: We are wounding ourselves accidentally by portraying ourselves as weak and powerless. We can stop doing this by identifying our strengths and portraying those instead. In practical terms this means that if we are constructing ourselves and our readers as Canadians or as workers we need to portray the strengths of those communities.

2) Point the gun at them instead: If we are shooting at ourselves, the obvious solution is to point the gun somewhere else, preferably at our opponents. This means we should start portraying their weaknesses instead of our own. If we are constructing them as Americans, big business, and the Tories we need to identify the weaknesses of those communities/identities and show them in our documents.

Areas for Further Reflection

1) Figure out precisely where to aim:
To hit the target we have to know who we are supposed to be shooting at, and where their weaknesses are. This means deconstructing our notions of "them" and doing careful political analysis of how their power is expressed. This would include a thorough analysis of corporate rule, understanding how TNCs operate, and identifying who controls them (companies and individuals). This analysis would also have to extend to governments, political parties, the media, which are important elements of the hegemonic machinery. 5

2) Find a place to stand that's not in the line of fire
The problem may not be with our aim but with where we are standing. It may be that we are shooting ourselves in the foot because we are standing in the wrong place (one of the targets). Maybe we are shooting in the right direction, we just need to get our feet out of the way.

What I mean by this is that our problem may be centred, not in the actions we are taking, but in the identity from which we are acting. "Canadian" and "worker" identities are problematic beyond their representations in the anti-NAFTA documents. "Canadian" is a
rather vacuous political identity (given indigenous struggles for autonomy and Quebec's struggle for sovereignty) and "worker" becomes less and less relevant as fewer of us hold full time jobs.

To deal with this, we need to figure out better ways to construct our identities, new places to stand, which would serve as a place from which to act. We can do this by analyzing the dynamics of power more concretely and carefully and from there thinking about who can act, and how they can act, to effect change. I'm not sure exactly what this means, but some possibilities for some new identities might be: credit union members (who can influence how their money is invested), pension holders (who could struggle to get control of their pension funds), small businesses and the self-employed (who could move their accounts to credit unions), and people who buy groceries (who could organize local food buying clubs).

3) Figure out how this stupid gun works:
The gun keeps going off by accident, so we need to learn how it works. We need to learn how to control it. For producers of public education documents this means we need to understand how the hegemonic domination of neoliberalism is being played out in our own actions as we produce those documents. We have to engage in critical reflection on our experiences and behaviour, and explore how we are embedded in the hegemonic discourse.

We could do this collectively by engaging in our own "remedial" popular education workshops and popular theatre, techniques which are often powerful tools in enabling people to examine their own behaviour/participation in systems of oppression.

It may not be always possible to do this kind of collective analysis, but we could at least build a rigorous self-reflexivity into the writing process. Each writer could establish a set of questions to ask themselves as they produce a document, better yet they could get someone else to read the document and answer the questions.
4) Become weapons "experts"

We might figure out how this particular gun works, but if we get a new model next month we might end up with the same problem. By this I mean that shoot-self-in-foot-ism has broader implications for our practice as activists. Since we are unconsciously reproducing hegemonic ideology in our documents, we are probably doing it in a hundred other contexts as well. If we focus only on improving our practice in this one area we are missing the point. There may be a larger problem: we may be unconsciously reproducing the hegemonic ideology in the way we run our meetings, in the way we organize rallies and marches, in the way we manage our workplaces... This points to the necessity to examine our practice more broadly and systematically.

5) Maybe this problem calls for some more imaginative thinking:

We could try getting some bullet proof boots, taking the bullets out, or just putting the gun down. Maybe we just need to fix the ---ing safety. Or how about giving the gun to someone who knows how to shoot. Maybe we should be using a different weapon, one which we can control. Or maybe we could take over the gun factories, and then make sure that all guns are made with better safety mechanisms. We could load the gun with blanks, or organize a bullet boycott. We could ask ourselves: What's this war all about anyways? Why am I holding this gun? Who put it in my hands?

I'm not sure what any of these suggestions actually means, but the process of figuring it out might be very informative, and even fun. I have a feeling that our creativity may be one of our most important allies, and that we don't use it enough.
2) Resolving the Tension between Expert Knowledge and Everyday Experience

Many of my readers pointed to an unresolved tension in my analysis, between the need for more information and analysis on one side, and on the other side, the need to respect peoples' own experience as a source of knowledge.

In Chapter 5 I said:

We need to include more stories from the perspective of ordinary Canadians. We need to describe the impacts in concrete ways, so that we can see how our daily lives will be affected.

As we create economic literacy materials which draw on "expert" knowledge we need to remember to also include the voices of ordinary people, and to show that their own experiences and knowledge are valuable.

The urgency of the suggestion that people need to be more informed might diminish their confidence to analyze the information they already know. As a result they might be less willing to take action, or even talk about NAFTA, for fear of getting something wrong.

I also said:

We need to show how the transnational corporations are exerting their power. By revealing these power structures we can begin to strategize about how to overcome them.

As activists we need to learn to understand the economic arguments that are being used against us. We need to learn their jargon, and understand the assumptions on which their arguments are based. We also need to learn about how transnationals are exerting their power. And we need to think strategically about how we can build alternatives.

We need to remember that the forces we are fighting are fluid not static, so that we can anticipate opportunities to take advantage of. Unless we include a historical perspective in the materials we produce we are perpetuating that image of static forces.

There is an apparent contradiction between these two sets of recommendations. One suggests that dependence on expert knowledge shows disrespect for people's ability to
understand their own situation. The other suggests that we need to generate more expert knowledge: more historical analysis, more information about corporations and how their power is exerted.

This tension is not one which is limited to the analysis of this particular thesis. Popular Educators in particular have been accused of romanticizing ordinary people’s experience. This comes from a critique of statements like this one:

Popular education values and respects people as their own experts... it is based on the belief that people themselves have sufficient knowledge and that they can work out the solutions of their own problems.  

Of course, the NAFTA document is 2000 pages of legal-ese. To understand it there is a clear need for experts. We cannot all read the document or hope to understand what it means. To suggest that people’s experience is an adequate basis from which to understand NAFTA seems ridiculously naive.

This is not actually a fair criticism of praxis theory, but to understand why we need to return to its basic principles. Praxis suggests that people can understand the world based on their own experience (in fact that it is possible that they can only understand the world on that basis) but it does not say that people do understand the world.

In fact, praxis is based on the assumption that people do not understand the world. Praxis assumes that people are oppressed by systems, that people are embedded in those systems, and that people unknowingly participate in those systems. It is this very ignorance which praxis endeavours to correct through collective analysis and critical reflection.

Nevertheless, the tension remains between what seem to be contradictory sets of recommendations. In Chapter 5 I tried to deal with this to some extent. I suggested that the key is to provide balance. There is an obvious need for expert knowledge, but it needs to be balanced with the voices of ordinary people. This is not an entirely satisfying answer to the problem. Providing balance cannot resolve a tension between two forces, it
merely evens out the score.

It is helpful at this point to refer back to Education as Praxis theory. The core pedagogical message from the Education as Praxis literatures is around the agency of the learners. In traditional education the learners absorb information. In praxis the learners act, and are empowered to act.

The centrality of agency is reflected in each stage of the cycle of praxis. Praxis is grounded in a position which respects the learners as agents in the learning process. Knowledge is not deposited into the learners, it is created by and with the learners. Praxis begins with the actions and experiences of the learners, and encourages critical reflection on those actions to see how they are linked to a wider context. This critical reflection is an active process, whereby learners come to a greater understanding the systems which dominate their lives. This includes insight into the way that they themselves are participating in those systems. Thus learners come to understand their own agency in the world. Strategic reflection on this new knowledge enables them to see how their own actions can effect change in the world.

As we produce public education documents, this notion of agency points to a way to resolve, or perhaps transcend this tension. It suggests a basis on which we can respect everyday experience, as well as provide important information and analysis.

**Concrete suggestions for Action:**
As we produce public education documents we need to take into consideration how our documents support and/or diminish the agency of the readers.

When we provide information we need to do it in a way which recognizes and respects the agency of the readers. We need to offer information, not for its own sake, but as a tool. A tool with which to understand the world, and how to act. This means providing information that isn’t just about why it is important to act (e.g. NAFTA will cause unemployment so write to your M.P.). Instead, it means providing information about how
to act, and how those actions will have an impact (e.g. putting your money in a credit union will mean you can have more control over it and it stays in your community).

Some areas for further reflection

1) How can we foster a "culture of resistance"?
Providing tools is one thing, but we also need to foster a culture where people will take up those tools. This could mean identifying cultures which support resistance. We need to identify and/or construct communities or identities wherein people are supported, where they will accept the responsibility to act.

It also suggests that we need to build a culture around our own resistance, we need to have dinners, and parties, and poetry readings. We need to create an intellectual and cultural life that is not defined simply by task oriented meetings.

2) Parallels between "democratic control" and "agency"
The analysis of Chapter 6 suggests some common ground between the notion of agency and the visionary agendas which are expressed in the anti-NAFTA documents. The desire for democratic control which is put forward in many of the documents could also be described as a desire for agency. Where democratic control is about "building the strength of ordinary Canadians," agency is about strengthening people's ability to organize and change society.

Inasmuch as the desire for democratic control may be interpreted as a desire for agency, Education as Praxis theory may be relevant to the broader movement in suggesting ways in which that democratic control can be achieved. For example, where the documents argue that ordinary people should have control over the economy, praxis suggests a way to do this: by discovering our agency in the economy. Through critical reflection, learners come to a greater understanding the systems which dominate their lives. This includes insight into the way that they themselves are participating in those systems. Understanding their agency in the economy will then enable them to see how they can gain some control over it.
This points to the need for economic literacy work, such as that which is being done by the Metro Network for Social Justice. In economic literacy the principles of praxis are brought to an analysis of economic and political issues.

While there are many similarities, the notions of agency and democratic control are not interchangeable. The notion of praxis includes a democratic relationship between the teacher and the learner where there is mutual accountability. The notion of democratic control in the documents also addresses accountability, but this is about building real accountability between governments and the people. There is a distinction to be drawn here since praxis suggests mutual accountability, where democratic control speaks only about government accountability to the people.

It is possible that notion of democratic control would be strengthened by including this notion of two-way accountability. Clearly our governments need to be accountable to the people, but we also need to build a sense of civic responsibility, or citizenship, which is implied in the notion of mutual accountability between people and government.

3) Historical timelines and collective knowledge making
One of the primary principles of praxis is that knowledge needs to be constructed collectively. We can come to a greater understanding of the systems which control our lives through a collective questioning of common wisdom. This is facilitated by the sharing of multiple experiences.

I discarded this principle at the outset of my analysis, not that I questioned its validity, I just couldn't see how it could apply to the documents. I am now questioning whether or not I was right to discard that principle. I am questioning it because I can see that collective knowledge making is one way to resolve the tension between the desire to affirm people's experience as a source of knowledge, and deepen analysis at the same time.

One example is the use of "historical timelines." This is an exercise which I have seen used in workshops by the Metro Network for Social Justice and the Moment Project. A
group of people comes together to discuss an issue, and collectively piece together the history of dynamic forces and events which have preceded this issue and brought us to this moment. This collective process of reconstructing and rediscovering history can deepen analysis, by showing the dynamic interplay of forces, including the impacts of social movements on government policies. This combines an affirmation of people’s knowledge with a process of generating new knowledge. It is a very popular exercise, and receives almost universal approval at workshop evaluations. 12

As I reconsider how documents could be sites of collective knowledge, it occurs to me that this thesis is an example. To a limited degree it has been a collective process of knowledge making between myself, my thesis committee, and the eight volunteer readers. It also occurs to me that I have been involved in another collective process to produce a document: The Economic Literacy Primer of the Metro Network. This was the product of a group of ten people who struggled to produce a document which reflected their thinking on a variety of issues: the Social Policy Review, immigration policy, the Common Sense Revolution. These are examples of how documents can be sites of collective knowledge making in their production.

Documents can also be tools to produce collective knowledge. Reader surveys are mostly a symbolic gesture fundraisers like to use for ‘donor involvement.’ Because they are not “statistically valid” they are generally discarded as sources of information. But, this does not mean we should not explore ways to use them. They could be used to produce and share collective knowledge.
3) The Quest for Vision

One of my goals in undertaking this research was to address what I have described as a desire for Common Vision. This is not a simple desire. In fact this is not just one desire, it is many desires for many things, which I have lumped together into one category.

It includes a desire to be proactive rather than reactive: a yearning to be able to offer a positive alternative, instead of always fighting against things; a desire to work actively for something, instead of defending things as they are taken from us; a sense that unless we develop an alternative agenda, we will be doomed to always react to their agenda; and a desire to know where we are heading, in order to be able to figure out how to get there.

Another aspect is the desire to be realistic, as opposed to flaky: a desire for policy alternatives which acknowledge the debt, and are based in a concrete evaluation of our current economic and political crisis; a desire for alternatives that are possible, where it is easy to see how to get there from where we are now; and a sense that offering this kind of concrete alternative will give us greater public credibility and popularity.

There is also a desire for a set of alternatives which is comprehensive, which can be offered as an alternative to the developed systems of the welfare state and free-market capitalism.

There is also a desire for this vision to be unified and inclusive. This is true especially in coalitions, where there is an emphasis on finding common ground and coming to consensus:

...this points to the need for a process that will facilitate the naming collective visions and values that will inform the work of the coalition...developing a program that is reflective of the coalition and to which all can commit. 13

These are all different desires. They overlap and inter-relate in many ways in different
contexts, but they all share a common theme: a desire to know where we are going.

To date, this desire for Vision has been difficult to satisfy. I think this is, in part, because we have not understood it is made up of so many different desires. We are trying to satisfy them all at the same time. We want a visionary agenda but we are not satisfied if it does not seem realistic. We want to start building alternatives now, but we also want to have a comprehensive plan.

In Chapter 6 I explored how this desire for vision is expressed in the documents. I looked at the content of the Agenda and Alternatives categories, which emerged from the content analysis of Chapter 4.

As I consider the larger implications of this thesis for this Quest for Vision, it occurs to me that it is necessary to question how I came up with those categories.

There is an important distinction to be made between the desire for a long term visionary agenda, the desire for concrete alternatives, and the desire to take immediate action. Part of the problem has to do with semantics, and the multiple usages of these words. Setting a "visionary agenda" is a major task which none of the opposition has come close to achieving. It is very different from proposing a "strategic agenda" of actions to resist the current "neoliberal agenda."

However, the problem is not just one of semantics. The action/alternatives/agenda categories which I drew out of the content analysis attempt to separate these notions, but it is not always easy to see boundaries between them. As I coded the documents the distinctions between these categories were not always clear to me.

For example, Actions and Alternatives are not separated by a distinct boundary. An alternative policy, such as tax reform, could be seen as a suggestion for an action to be taken, but it is an action for "them" to take instead of "us". When I was first coding the documents I wasn't sure what categories were going to emerge, so I coded some things
like tax reform as actions. Later, I decided that the category Actions should include instances where "we" were constructed as active, or potentially active, as opposed to "them." I did this because I wanted to highlight "our" agency. Now I see that this may be a place where my own analysis has unconsciously reflected the oversimplified notions of "us" and "them."

I also found the distinction between Actions and Agendas tenuous at times. One example is the following statement:

To develop new strategies we have to step back much of what we take for granted in our economy -- which work is public, which is private, which is for men or for women, how our wage system is constructed, what role we want for the state in the future, an how and where our national economies and politics should inter-link.\(^5\)

This is a suggestion for Action (develop new strategies, step back from things we take for granted), but there is also an implicit expression of an Agenda.

It does not fit in my Agenda category because it is about process rather than outcomes.

In my construction of categories an Agenda is a goal, and an Action is a way to get there.

The Agenda category suggests a static structure whereas Action is a dynamic process.

This precludes an Agenda which is about dynamic processes, where the way we get there is more important than where we end up.

The most problematic distinction was between Alternatives and Agendas. I constructed the Agenda category as "big" statements about how society should be constructed. The Alternatives category was constructed as concrete options, things to do instead of NAFTA.

We want an international 'trade and development pact' that respects sovereignty, the need for democratic control over the economy, and the right to regulate investment and trade, rather than leaving our international economic relations in the hands of Big Business. \(^6\)

I put this in the Agenda category because it describes principles ("respect for sovereignty" and "democratic control") by which to govern something big: international trade.

But how "big" does a statement have to be to qualify as an agenda?

Our vision is of a high quality, accessible post-secondary education system,
while the Tory vision is of a privately-funded system of assembly line education designed to churn out yuppies for the corporate managerial ranks and marketing platoons. 17

Is a high quality accessible post-secondary system an Alternative to the "Tory" privately funded version, or are accessibility and high quality expressions of an Agenda? I had a similar problem with this statement:

The REVIVE Canada program is a medium-term investment program based on alleviating the difficulties faced by our 2.4 million unemployed workers. The program's objective is to get the unemployment rate down to the traditional "full employment" level of 4%. 18

I put the REVIVE plan itself into the Alternatives category, but the statement describes full employment as the goal of the plan. Does that make full employment an Agenda? My personal inclination would be to say no, full employment is not "visionary." On the other hand, that would be imposing my own values, so in the end I included this call for full employment in the Agenda category as well as the Alternatives category.

I am beginning to wonder if I have just "shot myself in the foot". Even though I was trying to "let the documents speak to me" I constructed categories that set limits on how I interpreted them. The dominant constructions of "us" and "them" determined what I defined as an Action and what was an Alternative. In so doing I have perpetuated the notion that "we" and the government are separate entities. It also suggests that Actions "we" take are not Alternatives.

Similarly, my construction of the Agenda category sets limits on what is considered a goals. It suggests that we seek "outcomes." That there will be a moment in the future when we will be "finished." It discounts the notion that how we get there is more important than where we end up.

Of course these are not just my categories. They have come out of the discourse in which I am embedded. Words like action, agenda and alternatives are used all the time in our movement, to describe the very concepts I built these categories around.
So, if I have shot myself in the foot, I can blame the hegemonic system for putting the gun in my hand.

As I deconstruct and interrogate my own categories I see the need for us to do some serious reflection and analysis of the desire for Vision. What is being expressed in this desire? What are these desires and why do we want them? In pursuing this desire are we shooting ourselves in the foot? Are we simply responding to the TINA (there is no alternative) syndrome of the dominant forces who taunt us with questions like "What's your alternative?"

If we deconstruct this desire, we may find ways to satisfy each part of it individually rather than trying to satisfy it all at once. We may also gain some insight into which aspects of this desire are results of the hegemonic discourse playing out in the movement.

Based on these provisos, I am now ready to return to the Quest for Vision. When I picture this quest in my mind, it seems like we are looking for something. We don't know where to look. We don't know quite what it is we are looking for, but we know it's different from what we've already got. Because we don't know what it looks like, its pretty hard to find, or even know when we've found it. It seems like we are standing around, looking into the distance, saying to each other: "Where is it? What does it look like? I can't see it... Show me...."

I see a few concrete suggestions and areas for reflection emerging from the research on how to satisfy this desire, how to address this lack of "vision."

**Suggestions for action and reflection**

1) Draw some pictures

In Chapter 4 I noted that in all of the 205 visual images in the documents, only one was of an alternative (although, based on my recent re-evaluation of what might qualify as an Alternative I might have to add a few more). Based on this finding, it is possible that
what we are experiencing is not actually a desire for a "visionary agenda." It may simply be a desire for visual images. After all, we are a very visually oriented society.

Part of the problem is that the alternatives are difficult to show visually. How can you draw a picture of "democratic control"? I am sympathetic to this problem, but why is democratic control any more difficult to depict than the un-democratic control of NAFTA? The documents are full of metaphorical images of power relations, using toilets, chess boards, and elephants stepping on mice to show them. Why can't we be equally imaginative in describing the power relations we want to see instead?

2) Or maybe we need to try making a video
When we use the word "vision," we use it as a noun. We speak of naming a vision, creating a vision, or shaping a vision. My own Agenda category was similarly constructed in terms of goals and outcomes, not processes. This suggests that we think of the Vision is an object or a structure, something that is static.

Maybe we need to reframe the discussion, think about processes rather than structures. Engage in a process of envisioning. Focus on creating a vision, rather than creating a vision. Start focusing on the verbs instead of the nouns.

If what we really want is a process, and we have been looking for a structure, this may explain why we have had problems finding it. It may also explain why we have had problems depicting our Vision. We are trying to take a photograph, or draw a picture, of something that you can only see when its moving. This suggests that to show our Vision we should try making a video or a film.

3) Are we looking for one thing when we need several different things?
If you're hungry and you want some soup you could spend a long time looking for a soup-making machine when what you actually need is a pot, some potatoes and carrots and onions, a stove, electricity to run the stove, some water, a bowl, and a spoon.
This relates to the discussion of plurality in Chapter 6. The documents affirm repeatedly that there is not just one alternative, there are multiple alternatives. Similarly anti-hegemonic theorists like Warren Magnusson suggest that there is no overarching struggle, no single issue, no one form of politics that can be adequate to our situation.

This points to the danger in the Quest for Vision: it suggests that there is only one. If there are many alternatives, can there not also be many different visions, many different agendas? A healthy planet, community control of capital, full employment, accessible post-secondary education... These could all work together to make a really good soup.

4) Maybe this problem calls for more imaginative thinking too. Now that I've played with this analogy a bit I can see some other suggestions emerging. For instance, I've never actually managed to do it, but they say the trick with those 3D posters is to focus your eyes on a point about three feet beyond the poster. In the same way, as we look for our Vision maybe we need to focus on something further away in order to see what we are aiming for.

This suggests looking to the experiences of other countries and communities. If we look to other peoples and places for insight on what our vision looks like, we may suddenly recognize how it could be expressed here.

On the other hand our Vision might be right in front of us and we are not seeing it. It could be like that optical illusion of the old woman/young woman or the two faces/goblet. The trick with those illusions is to change what you think of as the background and what is the image. Once you change the way we you are looking at the picture, it's suddenly there.

This suggests that we should try looking at our society in a different way: focusing on what we normally think of as the background, instead of what's normally the foreground. We might find that our vision is right in front of us, but we have been looking at the wrong place.
Maybe something is blocking our vision, we need to stand up, move to a different viewpoint. Maybe we need to move closer, or maybe it's really big and we need to get further away from it to see it. Maybe we need to get some glasses, take off the blindfold, look up... look way up, or turn the lights on. Maybe we can't see the forest for the trees.

Maybe our big brother has sent you on a treasure hunt, but there's nothing at the end (and he's using our toys while we're gone).

Maybe we think we've seen it in the distance and we've started running towards it, but when we get there we'll realize we've gone a long way in the wrong direction.

Or maybe we are never going to be able to see what we are looking for. Maybe we cannot know if there is a better system to replace the one we have now. Maybe we have to keep going, even though we don't know where we are going to end up.

Maybe this is going to require a leap of faith.
As I sit down to write this final piece, the piece about my journey from here, I'm trying to picture my life, to dream about my life, in the coming months and years.

I'm wondering how my life has been changed, how it is different because of what I have learned.

And so I'm also trying to picture that other life, the life I would be having, if I had not done what I have done.

I remember now that there was a time when I didn't think about praxis, or hegemony, or agency.

These concepts, which now fill my mind, which organize my thoughts, which are central to my life, were not always in my vocabulary.

When I get up from this desk, and turn off my computer, and turn off the lights, and close the door, I will be leaving armed with new tools, tools which help me to understand the world.

And so, as I think, and dream, about my journey from here, I'm trying to picture myself using these tools. I'm trying to picture myself not shooting myself in the foot. I've learned a new respect for the damage guns can do, And I'm going to try holding mine very carefully.

...dreaming gives us glimpses of what we're working for in the way that we try to work together now.

It involves vision, not of a utopian sort, but a vision of what could be, grounded in a sense of what is

Deborah Barndt
(I don't have a gun by the way,  
I am speaking metaphorically)

And so,  
I am picturing myself engaging in critical reflections  
which allow me to understand the neoliberal hegemony  
and to see my own agency  
in that hegemony.

I see myself taking a course in the fall  
A course on Exposing Corporate Rule,  
and I am envisioning myself going out for beer after class  
and engaging in collective dialogue  
about the way that corporate rule affects our lives.

I imagine myself analyzing my own actions  
and seeing how they support neoliberal hegemony.  
I see myself closing my bank account  
and moving it to a credit union.

Of course  
I already know about my bank account  
I know it supports the neoliberal hegemony.  
And through it  
I know that I support the neoliberal hegemony.

What I'm trying to see,  
what I'm trying to envision  
is me, coming to an understanding of the other ways  
the unconscious ways  
that I support the neoliberal hegemony  
(which I cannot name, because I am, as yet, unaware of them).

And so a thought occurs to me:  
Isn't it possible  
that just as I unconsciously support hegemony  
I may be undermining that hegemony  
in ways that I am equally unaware of?

Of course  
I already know that I am an activist  
I know that I consciously work to undermine hegemony  
But now I wonder  
If there are other ways  
(ways that I cannot name, because I am, as yet, unaware of them)  
that I unconsciously undermine neoliberal hegemony.
And so now,
I'm trying to picture myself,

envision myself,
see myself,
coming to understand the other ways,
the unconscious ways,
that I undermine the neoliberal hegemony
(that I cannot name because I am, as yet, unaware of them).

And I think I see a glimpse,
a glimpse of the answer,
a glimpse of the vision.

It's not a utopian vision,
it's a vision of what could be,
grounded in a sense of what is.

But I can't quite see it
I can't quite make it out
I'm not even sure it's there.

And so,
As I come to the end of this final piece,
the piece about my journey from here,
I'm envisioning my life,
in the coming years.

And in that vision,
I can't quite see it,
But it looks like I'm taking a leap of faith.

Beth Jones
September 1996
Endnotes


4. Thanks to Chris Cavanagh for the term shoot-self-in-foot-ism, which he used in his comments on a draft of this thesis. I have taken the idea and built on it throughout this section.

5. Janet Conway, Lee Cormier, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96

6. Janet Conway, comments on a draft of this thesis, Aug '96

7. Chris Cavanagh, comments on a draft of this thesis, July '96

8. Denise Nadeau *Counting Our Victories* Vancouver: Repeal the Deal 1995 p.4

9. Angela Miles, comments on a draft of this thesis, July '96

10. David Robbins, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96

11. Janet Conway, comments on a draft of this thesis, August '96

12. Deborah Barndt, comments on a draft of this thesis, Aug '96

13. MNSJ *An Economic and Political Literacy Primer* 1996

14. Angela Miles, comments on a draft of this thesis, July '96

15. WOMAN TO WOMAN *Changing Economies* 1993 p.9

16. CAW *Give me a mandate...* 1992 p.19

17. Catherine Remus (of CFS) *NAFTA Threatens our Public Education System* in *ACN Action Dossier #38*, 1992 p.34

18. NUPGE *Towards Full Employment* in *ACN Action Dossier #39*, 1993 p.20

19. MNSJ, *An Economic Literacy Primer* 1996


22. see Sections 6.3 and 6.4

23. Warren Magnusson Decentring the State, or Looking for Politics in William Carroll (ed) Organizing Dissent Toronto: Garamond: 1992 p.79
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STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMS

The name given to a set of "free market" economic policies imposed on debtor nations by the World Bank and the IMF as a condition for receiving continued financial assistance. SAPs typically involve removal of trade and exchange controls, deregulation of prices of goods and services, privatization of public enterprises and indiscriminate export promotion. 4

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Price management by agricultural marketing boards to provide farmers with a stable market and fair price for their products. They also set standards for quality of food. (e.g. the Canadian Wheat Board) 5

TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS (TNCs)

 Corporations which operate in more than one country. Many TNCs are large and powerful. The 100 largest transnational corporations have a turnover which exceeds the GDP of more than half the world's nations. 6

WORLD BANK

One of the two international financial institutions of the United Nations. The World Bank is responsible for long term investments, aimed at "development." The IMF and the World Bank are also called the Bretton Woods institutions. They have traditionally imposed Structural Adjustment Policies on Third World countries as conditions for loans.

1. ECEJ Economic Integration of the Americas 1994
2. ECEJ Economic Integration of the Americas 1994
4. ECEJ, Economic Integration of the Americas 1994
5. Terry Pugh Farm policy must stress cooperation and social justice in ACN Action Dossier #39, 1993 p.43
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Ten Reasons to Oppose NAFTA/Ten Ways to Oppose NAFTA 1993, factsheets

Ten Ways to Promote Alternatives 1994, one page factsheet

NAFTA: Not Another Free Trade Agreement: Some plain talk and real information about a very scary deal 1993, 7 page paper

NAFTA & the Public Sector, Ottawa, 1992, 12 pages (with PSAC and NUPGE)

NAFTA Exposed! Action Dossier No 38 Dec 1992, 44 pages, collection of 25 articles by independent individuals and authors from 16 organizations:
Action Canada Network
Action Canada Network (PEI)
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
Canadian Confederation of the Arts
Canadian Environmental Law Association
Canadian Federation of Students
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Peace Alliance
Canadian Union of Public Employees
Caucus of Canadians
Ecumenical Coalition of Economic Justice
Health Sciences Association of BC
National Action Committee on the Status of Women
National Farmers Union
Oxfam Canada
School of Social Work (UBC)

Setting a People's Agenda: Free Trade Alternatives Action Dossier No 39, Autumn 1993, 60 pages, 30 articles by individuals and authors from 18 organizations:
BC Daycare Action Coalition, Bridgehead
Canadian Auto Workers
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
Canadian Environmental Law Association
Canadian Federation of Students
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Peace Alliance
CHO!CES
Ecumenical Coalition of Economic Justice
End Legislated Poverty
National Farmers Union
National Federation of Nurses' Unions
National Union of Public and General Employees
Native Council of Canada
Oxfam
Solidarite Populaire du Quebec
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Federal Election 1993: This time make your vote count for Canada: Don't Vote for Free Trade 1993, 2 page fold-out brochure

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"Give me a mandate and you won't recognize this country in ten years" 1992, 22 page pamphlet

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Free trade's shackles; "Free trade" gives freedom only to capital by Ian Robinson; and Mexican Crisis exposes free trade's flaws by John Dillon, 3 stories in CCPA Monitor, Vol 2 No 7, Dec'95/Jan'96

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NAFTA Facts: A Series of Information Sheets about the Effects of NAFTA 1993, six two page fact sheets

CANADIAN PEACE ALLIANCE

The Peace Movement and the Struggle Against NAFTA 1993, two page fact sheet

CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

The North American Free Trade Agreement: Why You Should Say No! 1993, package of four one page factsheets

CHOICES

The High Cost of Free Trade: How NAFTA will Hurt Manitobans, 37 pages, 1993, a collection of 22 articles by independent individuals and authors from 13 organizations:

CHOICES
Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg
Canadian Auto Workers
Community Unemployed Help Centre
Council of Canadians (Manitoba Chapter)
Defenders of Nopiming
Manitoba Coalition against Racism and Apartheid
Manitoba Federation of Labour
Manitoba Medicare Alert Coalition
Manitobans Against the Assiniboine Diversion
National Farmers Union
Winnipeg Water Protection Group

CITIZENS CONCERNED ABOUT FREE TRADE

The Fight for Canada Goes On 1994, one page brochure
CONFEDERATION OF CANADIAN UNIONS
Told You So: A tally of what was said, what happened and who was right about the free trade folly, plus a list of bets now for the Mexico round by Laurell Ritchie, in This Magazine (Free Trade Pullout), August 1991, 7 page pull out

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Economic Integration of the Americas: An Education and Action Kit January 1994, kit includes 23 articles, factsheets and learning tools.

END THE ARMS RACE and CANADIAN PEACE ALLIANCE
NAFTA Fact Sheet: Militarism 1993, two page fact sheet

GREENPEACE
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