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Putting the "Popular" into Labour Education: Obstacles and Opportunities in Theory and Practice

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Abstract

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Master of Arts, 1998
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This thesis explores the traditions of popular education and union education with special attention to issues of racism and other oppressions. Effects of modernist thought and liberalism within some popular and union education theory and practices are interrogated. While recognizing and supporting the counter-hegemonic possibilities of popular and labour education, I also argue that power differences and oppressions can go un-addressed within groups using popular education or within union settings. Suggestions for disrupting this phenomenon are explored.

Issues raised regarding popular and union education are examined in the context of the 1997 summer school of the British Columbia Hospital Employees Union. This school for 200 union activists was largely conducted in the tradition of popular education. Interviews with participants, planners and facilitators, along with examination of curriculum materials, provides a basis to explore issues of equity in a context of "popular labour education". Several programmatic suggestions are presented.
Dedication

To the members of the British Columbia Hospital Employees Union, especially those of the Equity Caucus
Acknowledgments

There are many without whom this book would have been impossible. There are many others without whom it would have been a heck of a lot easier.
(The acknowledgments of Sandra Boyton in Chocolate: The Consuming Passion)

Sandra Boyton's delightful observation about the writing process captures for me the social nature of producing a text such as a thesis. There are great many people that have provided me with very valuable assistance, directly and indirectly, in the production of this thesis (even when it made things tough).

Special thanks to Janet Fairbanks of the British Columbia Hospital Employees Union (HEU) who answered my many calls (even on her vacation), mailed me packages, faxed me information, and processed the surveys I sent to some members of the HEU. Without her very patient help this thesis simply would not be.

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Thank you to my advisor David Livingstone for encouraging me to pursue this project and for all of his valuable insight. I appreciate the reminders that this thesis should not be seen as a magna opus. I am indebted to Sherene Razack for her generous help and assistance, particularly her vigilant perspective regarding racism, from which I have benefited enormously.

In addition, the students and faculty in the department of the Sociology and Equity Studies in Education have always been a source of great learning for me and I am grateful for the many conversations, readings and courses that have shaped and continue to shape my thinking.

Finally, special appreciation to Sally Miller for her support, tremendous insight and proofreading.

Despite all of the assistance I have received in writing this thesis, any errors are, of course, mine.
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Introduction

I was trying to apply popular education approaches inside the labour movement, and the fit wasn't a simple one. Labour activists tend to gain leadership by speaking, not by reflective listening; they tend to mobilize people behind tangible goals, not to problematize the goals themselves; and they tend to emphasize the power of unity, not the painful process by which differences are put on the table in order to build a coalition (Martin, D. 1998: 124).

Crammed into a once sterile hotel conference room, the walls covered confetti-like in reams of flip chart paper, I sit impressed and excited about this gathering of union and popular educators. It's April 10th, 1997, the second day of a mini-conference on popular education in the workplace, organized by the North American Alliance for Popular and Adult Education (NAAPAE)\(^1\).

The participants of the mini-conference are asked to present barriers to implementing popular education at the workplace. For some it's the tension of being non-union consultants in a union workplace. For others, it's the tradition of top-down education (with outdated material) that is still prevalent in many locations. Issues of motivation are brought up - how to get members to worksite education when twelve hour, four day shifts are the norm. All of these bring nods of agreement and produce discussion groups. But the one barrier that draws half of the entire group into a conversation session is someone saying to the effect "I'm not allowed to do any education, I do propaganda. The leadership wants us to teach the line - not to critically reflect on union positions." Another participant remarked "There is no tradition of academic freedom in union education."

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\(^1\)From NAAPAE's *basis of unity*": "We are an alliance of organizations in solidarity with popular struggles around the world. We believe popular and adult education for democratic social change in harmony with the earth is central to the struggle for a more just and humane world. We honor and respect all regions and peoples of North America, recognizing that our differences and diversity are the source of our strength." I've been a regular volunteer with NAAPAE and assisted, in a small way, in organizing the April 9-10th meeting. While NAAPAE is a multi-lingual and trans-border organization, this meeting and the issues discussed in this paper are reflective only of English-speaking educators of North America, with a focus on Canada.
While such comments may be a bit sweeping, they certainly struck a chord with the participants and enticed me to further explore questions around the possibilities and problems of fostering a "popular labour education". Union education and popular education have both been individually studied and written about extensively. However, there is very little written about in the academic literature that is specifically focused on popular education in the labor movement.2 I suspect that there are a number of educational initiatives in unions that draw on and use the tradition of popular education, but may not name it as such or may not even know of it as a practice.

Obviously part of the problem here is what one means by "popular education". I define popular education as a theory of political/educational work and a set of practices that are intended to help practitioners and participants understand and transform relationships of power. As I explore in more detail in Chapter Two, popular education work has a number of important assumptions including the understanding that education is always a political act and is never "neutral". Participants in a popular education process seek to collectively understand oppressions that are struggled against by the members.

For the purpose of this thesis I am concerned primarily with formal union education, and specifically a progressive model of union education that exists in the

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more progressive or "ideological" and "social" unions. I find it useful here to draw on the work of union educator D'Arcy Martin who distinguishes between the political "currents" of ideological unionism, business, and social unionism. The first is connected to broad social movements, such as Marxism, and serves to provide a structure to anchor workers in the movement. The second union form is a status-quo approach that works to keep wages and benefits up for members, but is hostile to socialist and other disruptive ideas. The last, "social unionism," is a balance "between the social passion of the ideological current and the opportunistic ethos of the business current, based on the collective, enlightened self-interest of workers"(Martin 1994: 102). Given the political nature of popular education, it would seem that social (and ideological) union movements are most likely to use it.

This does not mean that the progressive unions (or any unions) are ready-made locations to incorporate popular education. The opening quotation above alludes to some of the challenges and obstacles of using popular education in a union setting. In her study of popular education approaches in the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's (SFL) Worker's Education for Skills Training Program (WEST) Stinson O'Gorman offers some insights into the problematics of merging popular and labour education. She points out that any union education program must negotiate its presence in the union. The structures and influences of the SFL, she says, must play a role in the WEST program, no matter how democratic the WEST program is. "The continuing conflict between the structure of relations demanded by a liberatory framework and the structure demanded by a trade union framework is not going to be completely reconciled in the near future"(1996: 184). Even beginning a program is tough:

Popular education programs usually begin as an effort to address a concrete need, and they focus their attention on developing a critical ability to address this need. . . [which is determined by the participants]. [This need] is often obstructed by external demands to prove that there is indeed a need and this need is worth the bother (1996: 177).
These kinds of obstacles may very well be part of the inherent realpolitik of operating in a union structure. Unions have limited resources for training and must bargain with management for release time and financial support for their trainings. Arguably, unions also limit the resources that are placed in training. Regardless, Stinson O'Gorman concludes that the WEST program succeeds in raising the consciousness of some workers and improving the position of workers within their present social relations (1996: 186).

Furthermore, popular education workshops are showing up at international labour conferences, and a number of unions are using popular education approaches in some format or another. It is possible that there exists a general move toward some type of popular education in a labour context.

I spoke with Chris Cavanagh, the current president of NAAPAE, about trends in the popular education movement(s), specifically a possible shift from organizations that identify themselves as popular education organizations to the use of popular education in social change organizations. Cavanagh argued that groups that identify themselves as popular education organizations are essentially organizing around a method (politicalized as it may be) rather than an issue or ideal. This results in having a small constituency base to support the group in challenging times. It can also be confusing to potential constituencies about where popular education organizations stand on particular issues.

If he is right, that organizations and groups that are primarily identified as popular educators have an inherent struggle in maintaining constituencies (and therefore existing), then it seems that the shift will be to the use of popular education by groups such as labour or anti-racist organizations that are already

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3 Unfortunately Stinson O'Gorman never questions the assumptions or actions of popular education and focuses exclusively on a homogenized notion of "workers" who need heightened class consciousness.

4 Telephone interview April 1, 1998
organizing politically. This sentiment is echoed by D.W. Livingstone's suggestion that "... transformative education and learning initiatives may have more likelihood of survival when they are supported directly by labor unions" (Livingstone 1998: 197). As such the use of popular education in union settings deserves to be studied more thoroughly.

My focus in this thesis is on the ways that popular education can be and is taken up and the possibilities/problematics that some of the theories and practices that emerge from it may contribute to union education and the union movement. Within this focus I have two broad goals. Both goals are in the spirit of encouraging a greater move toward what I call "popular labour education" - popular education in the union context.

The first goal is to bring forth issues, ideas and theoretical tools I (and others) see as important if there is to be a popular labour educator movement. Again, I think that unions will be turning to popular education more and more in the upcoming years. In this light I believe raising issues that may (and have) emerge(d) in different contexts in regards to labour and popular education is a constructive practice. Many of the issues and ideas I raise will not be applicable to all unions or popular educators, but I am trying to paint broad strokes here in the hopes of contributing to a wide range of potential conversations.

A focus of mine throughout this thesis is around issues of equity. This focus is based in part on my belief that there are historical and contemporary

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5"In North America there is a new interest in popular education within the labour movement, as more and more unions look for methods to move from a servicing model to an organizing model of unionism" (Nadeau 1996: 5). For example, Asian-pacific American Labor Alliance is holding a conference in the summer of 1998 that will include discussion around using popular education in their chapters.

6Livingstone observes that the popular education approach "... has paid little attention to documentation of oppositional (or counter-hegemonic) cultural forms among working people, the wider recognition of which could sustain transformative cultural action beyond the small group level" (Livingstone 1998:197).

7In part due to the worsening economic conditions of workers as well as the move, in some work contexts, to be more "participatory".
shortcomings in popular education and union education in terms of equity issues, such as racism and homophobia. Both popular education practices and union practices can place a great emphasis on group cohesion in the face of an external oppressor (be it land owners or management) at the expense of recognizing very real power differences and oppressions within groups using popular education or within union settings.

In discussing such issues, I make a number of critiques of the theory and practices of popular and labour education institutions. To paraphrase Chandra Talpade Mohanty, I undertake this criticism out of commitment and engagement with popular and labour educators/organizers. The efforts of such activists have been and continue to be crucial to counter/anti-hegemonic struggles. These efforts also need to be thoroughly explored because the practices of popular labour education, especially in this fledgling state, have strong ramifications for the type of work that will be taken up by others (Mohanty 1990:209). My hope is that a more wide-spread use of popular education in union settings will provide an opportunity for popular educators and labour educators to critically reflect together about the practices and theories of union and popular education.

While I do have separate sections discussing issues around unions and union education and those issues surrounding popular education I recognize that the issues are not so easily segregated. Many of the arguments I make and report are mutually applicable.

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8 I am using the term "equity" as it is understood in some social justice contexts to mean issues about and related to a variety of social oppressions, such as homophobia, sexism, ableism, and racism. While the term is not ideal (it implies a concern with being "equal" rather than a concern regarding issues of justice) it does have some common usage.

9 I use the term "institution" in referring to popular education in the broadest of senses. Popular education does have fairly identifiable customs and practices as well as a theoretical foundation. Furthermore, there is a growing industry of popular education materials and guidebooks as well as academic work (and hence tenure) related to popular education. This thesis reflects and, in some ways contributes to, the institutionalization of popular education.

10 I'm paraphrasing Mohanty's defense of her critique of multicultural education in the academy.
My second goal is to examine a union using popular education in its work and reflect on certain aspects of the process and outcome, particularly around issues of equity. My interest in popular and labour education led me to contact one of the facilitators of the NAAPAE meeting, Denise Nadeau. Denise is a popular educator worker who had done a lot of work with the BC Hospital Employees Union (HEU) in Vancouver.

Denise told me of an upcoming union experiment in using popular education in their union summer school. The trainers planned on gathering 200 union activists to examine not just external issues of power (such as corporate power) but issues such as racism, and democracy in the union and locals themselves. Her concern was how the union could move toward a grassroots organizing model. "Unless the union changes," Nadeau reflected, "this is all just an education game. . . . Whether we get thrown out after summer school remains to be seen."11

They weren't thrown out. Far from it. The question remained for me, what happened? And, more broadly, What could have happened? What could not have happened? In what ways was this summer school a site of popular labour education, in what ways was it not? In terms of the later question, I wish to emphasize that I am interested in the forms of popular education that were used in the HEU context. I am not concerned with a "pure form" of popular education.

In brief, I conclude that in a time of significant change for the HEU, the 1997 summer school provided a forum that had some successes in addressing issues such as economic restructuring and racism in the union. These successes were in part due to the popular education process used at the summer school. I also argue that the summer school, in some ways, re-produced racism in its attempts to disrupt it. I question the role of popular education in this phenomena, though I ultimately recommend that the HEU continue with a popular education model, provided that

11 personal correspondence, June 1997
a more "popular" method of program design is used, such as actively consulting with members of the Equity Caucus.

HEU's use of popular education was not and is not limited to the 1997 Summer School, but for the interest of space I was simply not able to expand my work beyond the Summer School. In fact, I can make no claims that my work around the Summer School is representative of the 200 participants, organizers and multiple locals of the HEU. What I do have is a sketch of how some participants understood and took up this experience in their work as union activists (more on this below). My focus here is primarily on the formal structure and learning that went on in the summer school. However any formal educational programs, especially ones with explicit political agendas, have the strong potential of stimulating and shaping informal learning. My hope is that by discussing the (primarily) formal and informal experiences of participants, organizers, and other activists I can contribute in a small way to the growth and work of the HEU and other unions who are turning to popular education to take on their own internal and external struggles.

In writing about power and its disruption, which is what a critical pedagogy is about, I try to keep a vigilant watch on how my position of power and privilege informs what I ask, see, claim, and claim to understand. Sherene Razack argues that while many people may be privileged in one way/space (such as being white) but subordinate in another (such as being a woman), people have a tendency to discuss, struggle, and bring forth their positions of oppression without connecting this to their privilege (Razack 1998: 14). Hence white women organize around gender

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oppression but less around white racism. Razack calls this the "race to innocence" (14).

I have tried in writing this thesis to not race to innocence by taking the position that I am marginalized by virtue of my class location (where, while I certainly have advantages in the middle-class, they are perhaps not as much as my whiteness, male gender, sexuality, and relatively able-body provide). Yet in some ways the topic of the thesis, which focuses on a union (an institution that is directly connected to issues of class) reflects a move to innocence.

As I discuss in the thesis, the union movement continues to be a white male environment, and professional popular educators, like many institutions in North America, seem often to be white. It is certainly no accident that the bulk of research done on unions is by white men - they tend to be very sympathetic audiences. It is also not too surprising that much of the workplace and popular education research has not incorporated the work of anti-racist scholars or scholars who are challenging issues of political location and assumptions around what constitutes power. Of course this isn't true in all cases and I've drawn from writers who do have a more integrative analysis.

My bias in doing this work is clearly from a (non-unionized) educator's standpoint and not that of a union worker or educator. My labour history has ranged from manual labour to being a program director at a small national literacy organization. I have about a ten year history working in the field of literacy work, most of it fairly mainstream in the liberal sense, and a bit of it on the radical side. The only union representation I've ever had has been the student union that represents me during my graduate work. I was involved once in a failed union drive and have worked in plenty of jobs that cried out for unions. I've been politically active in a number of ways over the years, from going to marches, to canvassing door to door, to co-organizing political events and groups.
Clearly my professional and personal experience demonstrate my assumptions that education has the power to promote change. I recognize that this is largely a faith that is held by those that do some form of education work. I look closer at this assumption around the power of education in the body of the thesis but mention it now as an assumption I struggle to critique.

My academic work has been motivated largely by my desire to have a chance to think more formally about different forms and ideas of social change. The opportunity to do this is certainly a tremendous privilege (and reflects my many privileges). Of course this opportunity in the academy also provides me with additional credentials in the job market. I know that I will most likely benefit most from this research. My hope, though, is that this thesis will provide a humble contribution to some of the thinking and practices of progressive labour education, namely putting the "popular" into labour education.

Methodology/Theoretical Approaches

The BC Hospital Employees Union that I write about in this thesis currently has about 44,000 members, with over 300 locals throughout British Columbia. The HEU represents long-term care workers and hospital workers, such as nurses’ aids, cooks, security guards, direct care personnel, janitors, etc. These are the lowest paid workers in the health care system. Based on their own survey of 412 members in 1995 some 83% of members are of European origin, 15% from Asian and South Pacific background, 3% of members are from First Nations background and South American, Caribbean and "other" make up 1% each (HEU 1995).¹³

In cooperation with the education staff at the HEU fifty surveys were sent out to participants of the HEU 1997 Summer School. The names were selected in a semi-random fashion. The union covers a large geographic area so geographic

¹³Given the demographics of BC some locals have fairly high percentages of people of colour and those of First Nations background and others have very few.
location was taken into account when selecting names (which was reportably done by the union as every fourth name). The union sent a cover letter with the survey explaining my project. At the bottom of the survey I requested permission to do a follow-up interview. I ultimately received ten surveys from participants, eight of whom agreed to be interviewed. These telephone interviews were loosely structured and lasted from twenty minutes to almost an hour. In a few cases I did a brief follow-up to clarify a point or to get a response based on something I had learned or heard.

Of the participants at the 1997 summer school about 30% were people of colour.\textsuperscript{14} As there was only one person of colour that agreed to be interviewed from my survey, I requested that the union send a letter to five participants of colour informing them of my project and that I may be contacting them if they wish to participate. In order to preserve anonymity I made it clear that I would not be interviewing all of the people whose names I received, even if they all agreed to be interviewed. I was ultimately able to conduct telephone interviews with two people from this list.

In the summer school there were thirteen facilitators (some of whom were part of the planning team as well). There were three people on the planning team, all of whom I interviewed. I interviewed five of these facilitators. These telephone interviews were also loosely structured and lasted from forty-five minutes to about an hour. In some cases I had multiple interviews for follow-up and to acquire historical and factual information about the union.

\textsuperscript{14}The term "people of colour" is a problematic one for a number of reasons, one important one being that it homogenizes the vast majority of the world's incredibly diverse population into a single category. However, in this paper I use the term to recognize that in a white supremacist society, women and men of colour are constructed collectively in negative opposition to whites and face in a general way collective racism. For more on "white supremacy" see hooks, b. 1992. Black Looks: race and representation Toronto: Between the Lines. For a strong piece on how one "becomes" a woman of color in the West see Alexander, J.M., Mohanty, T.C. 1997. "Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements" in Alexander, J.M. and Mohanty, T.C. (eds.) Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures New York: Routledge.
The summer school participants were divided into thirteen groups that each independently went through the same curriculum (except for evening lectures/presentations/social events). I have no exact sense of how many groups were represented in the pool of participants I spoke with, but I know that I had conversations with people in at least five different groups. These groups were organized by geographic region which, due to the demographics of British Columbia, resulted in quite a variance in group make-up. This variance, according to the facilitators I spoke with, ranged from racial identity to political alliances. For example, groups from the northern part of the province tended to be predominately white.

I soon discovered in analyzing the data that in order to preserve anonymity I would need to do much more than simply change people's names, especially in terms of HEU staff and members of the Equity Caucus. The Equity Caucus at the HEU consists of four general sub-groups that advocate on behalf of its members and provide education to union members around issues of discrimination and racism. The groups are: Lesbian and Gays, Ethnic Diversity, First Nations, and People with Disabilities. Five of the ten participants I interviewed are represented by these groups and all have been or are active in some way with the Equity Caucus. Given the relatively small number of people this represents I tend in the thesis to identify respondents as members of the Equity Caucus rather than being specific about which sub-group or groups they are or have been active in.

I also wanted to note how I present quotations from the respondents. I do not attempt to capture the complexity of dialects - my own or those that I interview. Rather I present all words in standard English spelling. I have always had strong doubts about the practice of attempting to represent spoken language with any accuracy in written form, and as I do not spend much time analyzing pauses or inflection I believe it is unnecessary to attempt it here. I do recognize that how one responds to a question, immediately or with hesitation can be informative in itself.
In addition, I often do not list the questions or comments I made during interviews. For one, I found it interrupted the flow of the text (partially because my questions were often long and rambling). Also, while there is no question that in any conversation the interaction between those in dialogue constructs and shapes meaning, I believe this happens with printed text as well as spoken text. In other words, I am (in general) not recording my input into conversations with people here, but I am also not recording my momentary reflections on the countless books I read either.

It is important to keep in mind that these interviews were exclusively done by telephone and were conducted almost a year after the event. Telephone dialogue, which potentially obscures a number of aspects of identity, must have an effect on how conversation is held. I speculate that given the context of the telephone my relative social power (as a middle class white male) was perceived somewhat differently than it would have been had the interviews been face to face. How this affected discussions around race and other forms of social difference is difficult to tell. From my perspective all of the respondents were quite forthcoming and often eager to speak with me. Perhaps the telephone helped to facilitate this.

In terms of specific questions I had about the summer school a few people needed to be reminded about the processes of a particular workshop or exercise in order to give a response. In these cases the response was usually in the form "oh yeah," followed by a fairly detailed response or simply expressing the idea "I don't remember anything special or significant about that". General impressions about the process or the summer school did not need prompting. In discussing issues of equity I tended to get the most detailed responses from those that have been the most active in the Equity Caucus.

15There is an additional bias toward speech versus silence from those that argue that a more complete form of dialogue should be recorded in academic research. How do we record the role of silence in constructing conversations?
When I use pseudonyms for the names of respondents I use last names. When we (in the academy) cite authors in an academic text we use last names (even after providing a full name citation) yet an informal style of first names is used when we get information in a verbal form. I am unaware of the origins of this tradition, but I don't wish to imply the data or information provided by respondents is less valuable than the data I gained from written texts.

In terms of additional data, I received a detailed outline of the entire summer school ("Facilitator's Notes") as well as some hand-outs, articles and 160 evaluations. I draw on these sources to a variety of degrees.

Notes on Theoretical Approaches

I raise a number of issues in the thesis regarding notions of education, racism, empowerment, participation, and the role of the individual. I draw on many theorists from a number of academic perspectives, including Marxist, feminist, postmodernists, and combinations through and across these theoretical frameworks. I am particularly interested in theories and ideas that question and interrogate issues of power, legitimacy, and knowledge.

I come to this work, as do all researchers, writers, participants, people, etc. with a complex history of perspective, location and power. I do not for a moment claim or believe that I (or anyone) have a "neutral" perspective that I bring to this project.

In this light, I reject the idea that lies at the bedrock of "liberalism" and "modernism" that all people are simply autonomous beings who, through rational processes, observe and understand objective reality and truth. Rather I draw on a great many social theorists who argue that what one "knows", and more importantly, how one comes to "know", is shaped by history, space, location,

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16I am particularly referring here to the liberalism of 18th century writers such as John Locke who continue to greatly influence the hegemony (see text) of North American culture.
language, class, body, gender, race and a host of other elements from which identity (and other social forms) are shaped or "constituted" (more on this below).

I do not accept the modernist idea that language (and other symbolic forms) reflect or describe reality. Rather I share the perspective that truth and reality are understood and constituted through language. Even if I had interviewed all 200 participants of the summer school I would need to recognize that larger social, political, and historical narratives would have to shape how participants understood and spoke about the summer school. Of course, the same is true in how I perceive these understandings.

In writing from this perspective I use the concepts "hegemony", "deconstruction" and "discourse," all important, but sometimes unfortunate, terms. The first term, hegemony, is more common then the other two, which are much maligned and I think generally misunderstood. I wish to take a moment to explain why I see these ideas and processes as important to understanding and promoting a more radical education - popular labour education.

Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony is fairly common in popular education theory. Hegemony, understood in a Gramscian way in the popular education movement (and the way I use it in this thesis), is the conscious and more importantly, the unconscious consent or acceptance of dominant modes of thinking (Gramsci 1971). Hegemony relates to dominant political, economic and social systems. In other words, it is akin to the world view and assumptions that are commonly held by members of groups and societies. For example, in North America a major hegemonic idea is that there is a "level playing field" and accomplishments are the result of individual effort. This idea is relatively recent in human thinking (a few hundred years) and in fact flies in the face of mountains of research that documents the contrary. Nonetheless, the "industrious man" remains a common story in North American culture.17
For Gramsci, and many popular educators, hegemony is conceived of as something that is fluid and struggled for in a number of ways across a number of locations. Gramsci argued that hegemony is fostered and struggled over largely through culture (for instance through media, religious institutions, schools, families etc.). In other words, what is assumed and believed to be "true" or "natural" are usually socially constructed ideas that are re/enforced through culture. Resistance to hegemony (for instance by promoting the ideas - and actions around the ideas - that there is widespread classism, sexism, racism, homophobia, etc.) is understood to be counter-hegemonic or even anti-hegemonic.

"Deconstruction", as I and many others use it, does not mean to simply take an idea (or history or argument) and take it apart until nothing is left, leaving a void of meaninglessness that needs to be "reconstructed" or rebuilt. Instead, a process of deconstruction is one of searching for different (and often suppressed) histories of meaning, power, and truth. It is a process of questioning the hegemonic. It is not a rejection of meaning, it is a quest for more meanings. Judith Butler observes:

To deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a reusage or redeployment that previously had not been authorized (Butler 1992: 15).

In deconstructing knowledge(s) one does not reject materiality but searches for it - finding it not just in economic forces or great battles or political leaders, but in the localized, specific interactions and exchanges of understanding, discourse, and power. Deconstruction provides more expansive understandings of symbols,

17I am not arguing that individuals do not work hard for success. I am simply pointing out that class, race, gender, physical ability, appearance, and other aspects (social constructions) are ignored in the dominant stories about how North American culture functions. In this context, explanations of group performance, such as relative high unemployment by blacks compared to whites, are given in terms of deficits of culture (such as non-functional families) or more explicit claims of racial or gender inferiority.
knowledge and power. It questions, but does not necessarily reject, dominant ideologies.

Finally, an important concept in these analyses is that of "discourse". Discourse is a means of understanding and expressing/creating knowledge, and therefore power. I'm particularly influenced here by the work of Michele Foucault. For Foucault power is organized in a "net like" fashion (Foucault 1980) and should be examined at the locations where it is most direct (97), in the micro-mechanisms of society (101). His focus is on how power is organized, and how it happens: "We should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity or organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc."(97).

Sherene Razack uses the work of Valerie Walkerdine to argue that if power is seen only as a constraint, something that is imposed and should be overcome, we lose sight of the many ways that "covert" power regulates us (Razack 1998: 34). None of us simply "are." We are not free subjects attempting to throw some "power" off our shoulders in a great moment of emancipation. Once again, we are complex creatures constituted (but not determined) by history, place, space, body, language, and so forth.

Two observations, one by Cynthia Kaufman, the other by John Fiske, summarize well common misunderstandings revolving around discourse. As Cynthia Kaufman observes:

It is important to note that what Foucault means by discourse is not simply language. Discourse refers rather to a meaningful totality. Thus a discourse includes social practices, material reality, and the meaningful totality these inhabit. The claim that discourse refers only to language or culture assumes a material/ideal split that Foucault's theory attempts to get us past (Kaufman 1994: footnote 27).
Furthermore, I agree with Fiske's argument that:

There is a physical reality outside of discourse, but discourse is
the only means we have of gaining access to it. It is going too far,
though only by a smidgen, to say that reality is the product of
discourse: it is more productive to say that what is accepted as
reality in any social formation is the product of discourse. . . .
The importance of never forgetting that events and objects exist
outside of discourse, despite the inaccessibility of that existence
on its own terms, is that they can always be put into discourse
differently. No event, no piece of reality, contains its own terms
of existence; equally, it cannot dictate into which discourse it
should be put (Fiske 1993:14 emphasis mine).

One point I make in this thesis is that it is a very progressive political act to
deconstruct how specific discourses have been fostered, promoted, fought over, and
acquiesced to. In some ways we do this already. When we study "work" we know
that praxis has many, many historical forms. We know this about "families," we
know this about "community," we know this, philosophically, about everything.
We don't know it historically and this is one of our fuzzy and frustrating tasks - to
never arrive but to learn. This practice of examining -deconstructing - what is
understood as natural and real is still too rare in popular education groups.

Cornell West "Urges us to remember the contingent nature of our political
claims but to make them nonetheless"(Kaufman 1994: 62). In other words, my hope
is that a popular labour education movement will challenge capitalism, racism,
homophobia, etc. by questioning how we know what we know (Razack 1998:55)
about these things and therefore open up new possibilities of resisting them.

What is to Come

In Chapter One I provide a brief look at unions and issues of equity that I
believe are related to promoting a popular labour education model, as well as a
critique of some forms of union education that I believe are a hindrance to a popular labour education model. In Chapter Two I examine some of the major tenets of popular education and present some of the major critiques of how popular education is theorized and taken up. At the conclusion of Chapter Two I offer some suggestions on how a popular labour education movement could be fostered in a general way by keeping vigilant about the issues raised in the first two chapters.

Chapter Three provides background on the BC HEU. In this chapter I trace the progress of equity issues, the changes in the education approaches of the HEU, and the changing health care system in BC. I argue that these factors, as well as the 1996 HEU convention, were strong factors that lead to a more popular education approach in the summer school. In Chapter Four I examine a few of the specific sessions in the summer school, mostly around issues of equity. I compare the philosophy and approach of the school to some of the themes that emerged in the first two chapters. In Chapter Five I ask "what happened?" and report at length reflections from the evaluations, surveys and interviews. Finally, in Chapter Six I record and echo some of the educational recommendations for HEU from the participants, planners, and trainers and myself. I close with a very short reflection on promoting popular labour education.
Chapter 1
Promoting a Union Context for Popular Education

[The Worker’s Bookshelf of the Worker’s Education Bureau will] contain no volumes on trade training nor books which gave shortcuts to material success. The reasons which will finally determine the selection of titles for the Worker’s Bookshelf will be because they enrich life, because they illumine the human experience, and because they deepen the human understanding [WEB policy, 1925](Barton 1982: 115).

In what seems almost poignantly quaint, the 1925 WEB policy reflects a commitment to labour education that is noticeable not just for its respect of the holistic person (enriching life, human understanding), but also for its lack of reference to the logistics of labour organizing. This, as did so much else, changed as the labour movement expanded in the 30s and the "need" for logistics training became more important (Barton 1982: 115).

Of course, the ebb and flow of the political aspect of unions has a rich history of its own that has been well documented in a number of places\(^\text{18}\) and I won't repeat it with any depth here. Rather, the bulk of this chapter will draw on different authors to provide a progressive critique and reflection of different issues around union education and organizing that I believe can constructively inform unions working towards a popular education model. Essentially I am saying, given the limited resources available and allocated to union education, and the relatively small amount of this education that focuses on the political issues that are the bedrock of popular education, the spaces available for popular labour education are precious. I believe these spaces can be expanded, in part by respecting the advice of those that I cite below.

I place a particular focus on issues of equity and unions, in part as I believe that any labor popular education movement that wishes to be truly "popular" (of the people) needs to recognize the very real issues of equity within unions and the concerns of the wide range of members beyond notions of class. I'm not saying this doesn't happen now, but I do cite a few authors who argue that it doesn't happen enough.

In doing these critiques I recognize that unions have both a strong and long history in working in counter-hegemonic ways. I also recognize that unions also have a long history of re/creating many of the oppressions that (some) unions are ostensibly combating. For example, union support for women and men of colour has been disappointing and inconsistent at best. The use of education in unions reflects both of these histories.

I begin with a brief sketch of some of the movements and trends in union education before I move onto a more contemporary reflection of union issues related to education.

**Historical Perspectives on Union Education**

Labour related education in North America dates back to the early 1800's. Various associations of workers and artisans performed educational work for their members in a number of different forms (Martin 1997a: 60), including the creation of "worker's clubs" whose main purpose was educational (Schied 1991: 253). Fred Schied reports that "Some artisan groups even taxed themselves to form libraries"(252).

In 1906 the Rand School of Social Sciences was formed in New York City aiming to become the centre of the American Socialist Movement (Altenbaugh 1989: 134). At least five other labour colleges were formed in the first half of the twentieth century in the US (135). For example, the Work People's College was
founded in Minnesota in 1907 (Lovett 1989: 43) and as Richard Altenbaugh reports their pedagogical practice reflected, at least in part, their politics,

Throughout its history, Work People's College rejected authoritarian pedagogy, that is, rote learning characterized by the instructor lecturing and then testing to measure student retention. Teacher-student relationships in the classroom reflected a political microcosm. The more completely the students accepted the passive and subservient role imposed on them in a traditional classroom, the more they would adapt to a stratified, bourgeois society instead of functioning as active agents for social change (Altenbaugh 1989:144).19

In Great Britain and Canada, the Workers Education Association (WEA), began offering classes to union activists in the 1920's, serving thousands of organizers in both rural and urban settings. The WEA has a rich history of not only expanding education beyond the notion of working, but of offering serious critiques of capitalism.20 The WEA had twenty-four associations in Ontario alone by the end of the 1930's (Martin 1997b). D'Arcy Martin reports that "precisely because its work was not susceptible to union discipline, like internal courses, the labour leadership was always uneasy about the WEA, and required only a few provocations around Communist sympathies to move against it"(Martin 1997b).

19This pedagogy foreshadows much of the popular education practices and the more participatory practices of some of the current union trainings, which I will be examining later in this paper. On an historical note, "Work People's College eventually closed in 1941. While the school withstood the financial hardships of the Great Depression, it fell victim to bourgeois hegemony and ideological sectarianism. . . . Second generation, English speaking Finns avoided Work People's College not only because, like virtually all children of immigrants, they wanted to escape Old World influences and to be "real" Americans, but also because they appeared to be deeply ashamed of their immigrant parents radicalism"(Altenbaugh 1989: 148). Altenbaugh makes quite a claim here about "virtually all children of immigrants" that deserves further research in general. That the hegemonic power of the US was so strong on families in at least this context is an important historical lesson for those concerned with disrupting that hegemony through formal education programs.

20However, for a strong critique of the WEA and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) training practices from the 1960s on see McIlroy 1995. McIlroy argues that radicalism in union education is quite weak and that organizations such as the TUC have been engaged in developing corporatist trade unionism. Yet, Taylor and Ward (1986: 112) provide examples of TUC workers participating in courses such as "history and unemployment" the "economics of unemployment" and other "social change" courses.
In the 1950's many unions had developed the capacity to do their own training (Martin 1997a: 60). In the 1970's Canadian unions fought for and won funding from the government to support union education. This was in part a response to government support of management education (61). This funding, which expanded and improved union education in Canada, lasted almost twenty years, until it was cut in the mid 1990's (61).

One example of growth during those twenty-plus years of funding is the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW) who created the Family Education Centre in Ontario. Of particular note is their Paid Education Leave (PEL) program. PEL has objectives that are explicitly political and embody notions of a more egalitarian society. Anti-racist and "anti-chauvinist" education are important aspects of PEL (Roth 1997: 4,12).

These North American union initiatives were undoubtedly influenced by the union movements in Europe, especially considering the European white male power base of the unions. There are, of course, also long and interesting histories of radical labour education in Europe, such as with the Liverpool Education Priority Area Project, a 1968 initiative to promote education in working class communities (Lovett, Clarke, Kilmurray 1983: 31). Another example is the 1977 Northern Ireland Community Action Research and Education (C.A.R.E) Project, an initiative that supported working class community groups, women's groups, and some trade union branches in collective struggles (69).

Generally, union education, D'Arcy Martin argues, has three areas: skills, issues, and labour studies. Skills courses focus on addressing needs unionists require to do their work as union activists; issues courses inform members of current issues in the workplace; and labour courses foster understanding of the history and political workings of the labour movement (Martin 1997a). Susan Folinsbee reports that since the 1980's the focus of union training "... has been on the mastery of basic skills for specific job tasks determined by management"
(Folinsbee, 1995: 66). This may be a bit of an over-generalization, but it is, at the least, a disturbing claim. As Martin and others observe a lot of union education relates to providing the background and skills needed to be a union representative. I discuss this more below.

In the following section I will explore some educational issues of the union movement and related issues that I believe must be understood in conjunction with any conversation about progressive union education. I'm particularly interested in the creation of spaces where popular labour education can take place. I believe that for this to happen changes will need to be made not just in union education systems, but in larger union structures.

Who Is Doing Workplace Education Anyway?

Despite all of the energy the media, corporations, unions, and academics put into discussing and debating workplace education and training, very little formal workplace education (union or otherwise) is really going on at all: In the US about 13% of employees participate in on-the-job training, most of whom are not entry level employees (Folinsbee 1995: 67); less than 5% of all workers (US) receive basic skills training (Graham 1995: 28); only 1 in 12 of front-line workers (US) receive any formal training on the job; 90% of the total training expenditures is being spent by about 0.5% of all employers; and almost twice as much is spent on coffee breaks, lunch, and other paid rest time for employees as is spent on formal training (Sarmiento, Schurman 1992: 6); in Canada most employers in the Sectoral Skills Council commit less than 1% of payroll to training (including management training)(Martin 1994: footnote 474); about 100,000 Canadians participate in union training every year (Martin 1997a: 1) which accounts for about 5% of membership every year (Martin 1994: 90).

This is not to say that 100,000 union members receiving education is not a powerful and important phenomena. The repercussions of such training certainly
go beyond those members who actually received training. Union members are expected to and do bring back new skills, insights, perspectives, and tactics to share with fellow-workers, activists, community groups, and even family members.

The fact remains, though, that formal training, including union education, is scarce in the workplace. With much of the training focusing on skills, the opportunities for a radical pedagogy are even smaller. D'Arcy Martin observes that union education's

. . . contribution to social transformation should not be exaggerated. Trade unions in Canada carry the seeds of a very different education practice from that which still dominates the formal education system. Yet most trade union educators have little specialized training for their functions, most unions lack the resources to develop and tailor curriculum materials, and the needs of most participants far outstrip the capacity of their unions (Martin 1994: 99).

The moments and spaces that do open up for progressive formal education are precious.

**Challenges Towards a More Progressive Union Movement**

Who are the workers? For any union education, let alone progressive union education, to have a direct impact on its members, it obviously must have members. Yet membership in unions - and the protections and opportunities that come with membership - has not been made available to some of the most oppressed peoples - namely immigrant women and women of colour. Except in the garment and textile industries most women of colour and immigrant women are in non-unionized workplaces (Leah 1989: 171).

There are certainly a large number of contributing factors to this phenomena (such as societal racism, employer resistance, heterosexist labour divisions, lack of language training) but unions have also faced criticisms from women of colour for,
as Ronnie Leah terms it, "its lack of effort in organizing the unorganized" (Leah 1989: 172). Leah reports that:

[Women of colour] have challenged the labour movement for their lack of attention to the special concerns and needs of immigrant women, and their discriminatory attitudes towards women of colour. They charge that "the organized labour movement has always seen the concerns of visible minority and immigrant women as secondary, compared to those of male, white workers"(172).

In this light, Carl Cuneo argues that in general, patriarchal business unionist leadership will strike for concessions but will not "enter into coalitions with community groups on issues such as racism, sexual orientation, or even free trade"(Cuneo 1993: 116). This trend is less present in the practice of social unionism.

Chandra Mohanty highlights the struggles of women of colour to collectively organize when unions traditionally focus on notions of class that reflect the interests of the male worker. This tradition fails to recognize "The fact of being women with particular racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual, and geographical histories has everything to do with our definitions and identities as workers" (Mohanty 1997: 6). Mohanty recognizes that unions have played a role in free-trade zones in "expressing the needs and demands" of poor women, but that the sexism of these unions has driven women to seek collective organizing in alternative forms - such as women's unions or feminist organizations (24). Implicit in Mohanty's observations is the hope that unions will make deliberate and expansive efforts to offer the opportunity of union membership to the communities of women of colour.

Once women and men and women of colour join unions what environment awaits them? Unfortunately the general history of unions in relation to sexism and racism is mixed at best.21 The early union movement, while supporting some wage
equity between men and women (though certainly not always), also supported the
domestication of women, such as the promotion of a "family wage" for male
workers. This cannot be excused as simply reflecting the ideology of the times since
the Knights of Labor were organizing women as early as the 1880s (White 1993: 43).
Of course, who counted as workers and actually as "persons" is part of a long and
brutal history - one that often did not find unions supporting the rights of people of
colour nor white women.

Recent union history certainly reflects improvement, but in the early 1990's a
large number of unions did not have any committees to deal with human rights
issues(225). As recently as 1986, Black workers organized the Ontario Coalition of
Black Trade Unionists (OCBTU) in response to racism in the union movement
(Leah 1993: 164). Leah further reports that in interviews with June Veecock, who at
the time of the interviews (1988-1992) was the director of human rights and race
relations for the Ontario Federation of Labour, reported that the situation in terms
of racism and the unions was "abysmal" despite growing awareness and response to
the problem (162). Veecock observed that "there are a lot of rhetorical statements
about policies, but these policies are not always translated into action on the shop
floor"(162). In another interview Veecock reflected:

21 I am focusing here on racism and sexism in the union setting as examples of how vital issues of social
justice have gone un/under addressed in the union context. Of course, in the larger society that unions
are part of, oppressions occur across a number of social locations such as sexuality, dis/ability, and
religion. For some historical perspectives see White, J. 1993. Sisters and Solidarity: women and unions
in Canada Educational Publishing; Briskin, B, McDermott P (eds.) 1993. Women Challenging Unions:
feminism, democracy and militancy University of Toronto; Nyden, P. 1983. "Evolution of Black
"Linking the Struggles: Racism, Feminism and the Union Movement" Socialist Studies 5

22 I am drawing from Kimberly Crenshaw's notion that "Black" is not a term based on exclusion and
oppression while the construction of "whiteness" historically and in the contemporary certainly is.
Given that, I agree that to treat the names of "minorities" as proper nouns can be a counter-hegemonic
act.

23 See Modibo, N.N. 1995 "I'm Not A Member, My English Is Not Enough: the participation of
'immigrant' women in Toronto Union Locals" Ph.D. thesis, Department of Sociology of Education,
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Among his recommendations to "enhance both union
atmosphere and outreach to immigrant women" is the suggestion that the "union local adopt and discuss
policy statements on the role of immigrant women members; and locals develop monitoring mechanisms
to account for the proportional representation of immigrant women in leadership positions. For
I think the underlying fact is that there is racism. . . As long as you are visibly different, the perception is you do not have an understanding, you do not have the ability, you are not one of the boys, or one of the girls, they see your contribution to that union as not being important. You are a member, you pay your dues, you have some rights and that's it. But in terms of trade union principles and what it all stands for, there seems to be some perception that people who are not white do not have an understanding of what it means to be a trade unionist (Modibo 1995: 188).

In terms of formal union education, which again only 5% of Canadian union workers receive annually, union educator D'Arcy Martin reports that "... the unionist tendency is to seek not the most oppressed in a group of workers, but those who have leverage with which something could be done to remedy injustices" (Martin 1994: 93). In realpolitik terms this may seem to make sense - as it may serve to primarily direct those who will run for office to the political courses they will need (Martin 1994: footnote 349). However the circular logic is also revealing: the "most oppressed" workers are not steered into courses because as the "most oppressed" they don't have power to change being the "most oppressed". Therefore, by virtue of being "the most oppressed" they are de facto disqualified to officially work to overcome oppression. The result of this is that few people of color and fewer women than men have real opportunities for training and political leadership within the union.

It is worth noting that the oppression and discrimination in unions often reflect the problems of the larger society (Leah 1993: 165). However, the larger society is not an institution that has declared itself an advocate of social justice as some unions do. Obviously unions emerged as a response and resistance to oppression, but unions have created and continue to, re/create oppressions

\[\text{example, reserving seats on the local executive council for immigrant women (Modibo 1995: 289)}\]. These recommendations could certainly apply to other under-represented groups, such as union members of Aboriginal descent.
(including those around class)\textsuperscript{24} and therefore cannot be somehow be "excused" for complicity in these injustices. There are also a number of unions that may dispute that "social justice" is part of their agenda at all, though Ontario Federation of Labour President, Wayne Samuelson calls the OFL "a leading voice in the movement for social change"\textsuperscript{(OFL February 1998 Women's Bulletin)}\textsuperscript{25}.

There are some success stories in this light, but these are not without struggle. For example, in Toronto, CUPE Local 79 established a Human Rights Committee but Leah reports that its creation had to come as a push from some members because, as the members reported, "the union didn't want it"\textsuperscript{(Leah 1993: 162)}.

To its strong credit, CUPE Local 79 went on to challenge racism and sexism in the workplace in its campaign to defend the jobs of Black and Asian women employed as nursing attendants in Metro Toronto Homes \textsuperscript{(Leah 1989: 181)}. In this struggle the union used strategies that can act as some guidelines for further union work in anti-racist, anti-sexist struggles. Leah reports that CUPE Local 79 "enlisted the aid of immigrant women, community and seniors' groups, as well as support from other labour bodies"\textsuperscript{(183)}. This kind of coalition building and cross-issue focus is a sign that progress can be and is being made.

Another positive sign was the Canadian Labour Congress's \textsuperscript{(CLC)}\textsuperscript{26} first-ever conference dedicated to gay and lesbian issues in October 1997. Over 300 people showed up to this historical event, where issues such as same-sex benefits,

\textsuperscript{24}This is a crucial point in this chapter - unionists should be proud of much of the history of unions; yet as my discussions on racism and other issues should make clear, unions also have organized and continue to organize in ways that are oppressive to a wide range of people.

\textsuperscript{25}While the term "social change" was used here rather than "social justice" the implication is certainly one of progressive social change. Samuelson is not calling for conservative or reactionary social change.

\textsuperscript{26}The CLC was founded in 1956 "\ldots as a merger between two previously established national groups, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and the Canadian Congress of Labour"\textsuperscript{(Seymore 1976: 55)}. The CLC is a "union of unions" that has over 100 national and international members. The CLC charters a provincial federation of labour in each province, monitors and organizes around legislation, and holds national conventions where numerous issues related to labour and union policy, among other activities are debated. Some consider these conferences the "Parliament of Canadian Labour"\textsuperscript{(55-57)}. 
harassment, and the inclusion of transgendered persons in the CLC working group on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Workers, were taken up (Gordon 1998).

However, it is also telling that almost half of the delegates to the conference were not sponsored by their unions to attend, therefore paying their own way (Gordon 1998: 19). Unions, though, are clearly not just union leadership, and the interest and commitment to such equity issues by some members is encouraging.

Issues around hiring and seniority and equity certainly continue to play out today in the union movement. Seniority is still a very sacred tenet in unions, and can serve important positive functions as well as oppressive ones. Cheryl Harris provides an example of such issues in a U.S. case, which is certainly a different context than the one Canadian unions operate in, but I feel it raises important issues nonetheless.

In 1986 the United States Supreme Court heard the case of Wygant v. Jackson Bd. of Education, where more senior white teachers were laid off before more junior Black teachers (Harris 1993: 1776). This was a union-approved layoff plan to aid in the work of remedying past discrimination in hiring. However the Michigan school board challenged this move as reverse discrimination. The Court overrode the union agreement and ordered the reinstatement of the white workers (1776).

Cheryl Harris observes that this ruling ignores the discriminatory hiring that made it impossible for Blacks to have seniority in the first place. Therefore what the Court was really protecting was not equality or opportunity, but whiteness as property: the property interests in seniority rights that were available only to whites(1776).

In this case, of course, the union had rightfully attempted to protect minority hirings and respect affirmative action needs. I believe research is needed to explore how different unions are taking up the issue "whiteness as property" (or "maleness" etc.) especially in relation to issues of seniority.
Perhaps the most recent positive sign in terms of challenging racism in Canadian unions is the release of the Canadian Labour Congress's report "Challenging Racism: Going Beyond Recommendations." This report comes from the 1994 CLC Anti-Racism Task force and include recommendations around structural changes, changes in hiring practices, education, among others. A series of forums are being organized across Canada to move the work forward. However, as Ethel LaValley, the Chair of the Task Force emphasized "It is critical that the important recommendations held in this report are implemented. This report cannot just be put on a shelf to gather dust"(OFL February 1998 Women's Bulletin).

The Problem with Skills

Another key issue that is within union policy is the attention of union education on the development of skills. The hegemonic power of a competency based skills approach to education and training should not be overlooked. This type of training assumes that the mode of production and the division of labour is the right one, workers just need to know how to get the job done right (Sarmiento, Shurman 1992: 6).

Furthermore, a skills-based approach places the burden of economic troubles off the larger structural systems of exchange and individualizes them to the pathologized "incompetent" worker (who needs help, causes trouble, etc.). The worker, in this analysis, must be the product of a horrible educational system that fails to provide the proper skills and attitudes for success in the workplace. However, as D.W. Livingstone observes, there is an increasing gap between the knowledge and skills of the employed and potential employed and their ability to use this knowledge on the job. He documents that ". . . most of us continually learn much more work-related knowledge than we ever have a chance to apply in paid workplaces"(Livingstone 1998: 10). In other words, a skills based approach, as Sue Folinsbee argues, places too much responsibility on ". . . workers' basic skills and
ensuring programs for improving a lagging economy, enhancing global competitiveness, improving productivity, and correcting the problems of a particular workplace"(Folinsbee 1995: 68).  

Folinsbee, though, is writing from her claim that the focus of union education is on job related skills. My criticism as well are focused primarily on trainings related to job related skills. Unions do, though, spend a significant amount of energy addressing the skills needed in union "bread and butter" courses, such as being a Shop Steward. These courses are certainly necessary for unions to function effectively and many incorporate issues such as harassment and sexism in the workplace.

However as important as these courses are, they too are not devoid of political and social issues, whether such issues are addressed in any particular Shop Steward training or not. In part these courses represent an assumption that the workings of capitalism and the relations between management and workers is the right one. Such courses can reinforce the idea, as David Hakken observes, that "a union's success or failure rests on skills in industrial relations and management techniques"(Hakken 1993: 116).

Workplace and union education (like most formal education in North America) is tied up with larger neo-liberal assumptions around what education is and how it is understood to work. I will discuss this in more detail in the section on popular education. In the introduction I briefly criticised the notion of the

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27 Livingstone debunks knowledge-deficit theories and the cure of more education to address society-wide underemployment and unstable employment: "In fact, impressive cumulative gains in educational attainment levels have been unable to prevent the periodic reoccurrence of serious unemployment crises"(Livingstone 1998:3). Rather, in an age of ever increasing knowledge and artificial credential employment requirements (the "credential society") it is the economy that must be re-organized (Livingstone 1998).

28 I do believe that the apprenticeship model can act to disrupt some of the hegemonic educational relations in workplace settings. Nancy Jackson argues that "Apprenticeship is the only model of comprehensive work learning which in the past has effectively served to protect the interest of the workers. It has done so by tying a method of skill acquisition to a system of jurisdiction over the conduct of work on the job"(Jackson 1991: 24).
autonomous subject. What is worth mentioning now (and again and again) is that within a system based on liberalism, most western educational philosophies falsely assume that students (citizens, actors, friends) are free and independent subjects, devoid of the context of history, place, community and even sometimes body. In liberalism people are assumed to be rational subjects that make free choices to pursue their interests. In this philosophy students are given new information and skills in order to make correct and reasoned "free" choices resulting in greater competition and benefit for society.

There is, of course, extensive research and literature attacking such notions, from Marxist, feminist, postmodernist, and poststructuralist perspectives. Education programs and schools are as much in the business of passing on acceptable knowledge and skills29 as they are in the business of constructing social identities. People do not all have free and open choices that are made in a politically, economically, culturally neutral zone. For now my point is that a skills based approach in education is both sustained by and aids in sustaining the hegemonic and capitalist notions of autonomous free individuals.

Within this context, calls for "outcome-based education" emerge so that there can be a system of education that has a "payment by results" (John Fields) of competencies on pre-determined criteria (Alexander, Martin 1995: 84). It's no accident that the "back to basics" and pro-phonics movement is led by the political Right. Alexander and Martin argue that:

The competency movement today is to be seen in the context of the so-called 'new world order' and the international division of labour implicit within it, which conflate democracy with the venality of the 'free' market. As such, the competency movement is an ideological instrument for creating hegemonic consent to the globalised de-skilling

29 "Educational policy statements by corporate executives and organized labour leaders alike now generally presume that the development of western societies since the 19th century has seen the continued extension of public schooling simply because the economic and social well being of the societies require a more highly schooled and skilled labour force"(Livingstone 1987: 128).
of not only industrial and agricultural workers but also teachers and adult educators (94).

Skill, though, is not something that is simply gained or lost, "on demand", or "off demand". Skill is, as Thomas Dunk reminds us, a social construct. Dunk argues that what passes for skill in any specific time and place is the product of "complex phenomenological, social, economic, and political process" (Dunk 1996: 101). Historically, in the west, the concept of "skill" has been constructed around notions of masculinity and whiteness (106-112). Dunk documents that

Ideas about what constitutes skilled labour influences ideas about the identity of workers; in turn, ideas about skill are refracted through the racial/ethnic and gender identity of those performing tasks(120).

White labour has a history of struggling to exclude and limit non-white and in higher paying jobs, non-female labour. The social acquisition of "whiteness" itself for foreigners was in part related to a worker's position in a hierarchical labour division(109). Evidence of skill at work could make one move from "foreigner" to "white"(109). In terms of gender, Dunk observes that women's paid (and unpaid) productive activities in the workplace are often understood as reflecting "natural" abilities and therefore are not understood as skills (105).

It is not surprising then, as workers who are not male and white enter the work force in greater numbers that "skill deficits" emerge as a cry from employers, governments, and unions. Cultural bias can be hidden in notions of "character traits" and "skill" hides issues of identity and racism(120). How subjects are constructed as "skilled" is an important history that needs more attention.

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30I don't wish to imply that this racist and gendered act is outside of the forces of capitalism and the dynamics of underemployment inherent in its functioning. What is interesting here is how notions of whiteness and maleness get expressed and serve to reinforce and re/create these dynamics.
A focus on training for skills therefore ignores crucial issues around how work is organized in terms of all workers and their relation to the means of production; it pathologizes the worker as a source for low productivity, workplace accidents, and poor quality service and materials; and it hides the construction of heterosexual white males as the default "skilled worker".

Expanding the World of the "Worker"

What do we mean when we use the term "worker"? While the term has historical roots in relation to fostering unity amongst (certain) laborers it can also serve to form a homogenous identity. I see a parallel here with the observations George Dei has made regarding schools:

Schools themselves construct students in identity politics by claiming all in their jurisdiction as "students." This closure of identities ignores genders, race and class, thus creating an erasure of sexism, racism and classism (Dei, 1996: 31-32).

While issues of class are not so easily erased in a union setting, the emphasis on "workers" can have the homogenized identity effect that Dei criticizes. This homogenization creates a tension of an us/them split - to challenge union solidarity, such as by challenging sexism in the union, is to challenge solidarity.31

Furthermore, the term "worker" may contribute towards a binary split between the employed and the unemployed.32 Chandra Mohanty cites the importance of not creating "artificial separation(s)" between notions of "workers" and "homemaker" in the process of organizing groups such as homeworkers, and by inference, workers in general (Mohanty 1997:26). Many unions have acted in

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31 In Chapter Two I explore issues around promoting unity while taking on issues of difference, and this issue also appears in the HEU summer school.

32 I am indebted to Laura Mitchell and Sue Vanstone for discussions around "workers" and "skill".
solidarity with the unemployed and need to support and expand that work by using terms that reflect that those that are unemployed are "workers" as well, many of whom share common interests with the union movement. In fact, the idea of "skilled workers" serves to place domestic labour as non-work, creates a skilled/unskilled binary split, and fosters highly arbitrary notions of a meritocracy both in the "workplace" and in the larger society.

Judy Kalman and Ken Losey Fraser raise a similar issues when they suggest that in providing educational resources in the workplace, such a literacy programs, union educators should pursue a holistic perspective about participants. Kalman and Fraser conducted a study on a workplace literacy program designed to "create a learning situation that would encourage high student involvement and an active role in the learning process"(Kalman, Fraser 1992: 1). However, even though the program was intended to be based on student experience and knowledge, it assumed that work experience was of the main concern to the participants.

While work is surely a major activity of many adults, it cannot be assumed that all that they do is work, or that work is the only meaningful thing that occurs in their lives. In fact, many adults might prefer to think about anything but work (108-109 my emphasis).

This insight is far reaching, as most union education is, understandably, organized around issues of work. That people occupy a number of social locations in their lives, beyond that of participants in a workplace, is an important point to recognize in a popular labour education setting.33

Reflections on Risk

My final point is not so much of a criticism as a reflection, on the personal risks of participating in some types of programs. The issue of risk is a complex one,

33A more holistic notion of workers was present, for example, at the HEU 1997 summer school. See Martin, 1995 for further examples of union educating taking holistic approaches to education.
and I discuss it further in Chapter Two. Here I wish to highlight David Hakken's observations on the personal disruption that can accompany participating in courses that are designed to challenge ways of thinking. In his research (in Britain) some participants in critical labour education programs went through dramatic personal change, which has broad implications for their lives, and the understanding of the risks and effects of such critical programs:

My research demonstrates the need for workers' education to acknowledge the cultural context within which the working class is compelled to act. For example, the worker/student may as much be expelled from the working-class by his or her former mates as enticed through "perks" in the middle class. (1993: 137)34

This observation puts insight into the notion that individuals "sell-out" their various lower class positions. How and why people are stigmatized/embraced by various groups regarding their credentials and other forms of cultural capital is a question far beyond the scope of this paper. However, Hakken reminds us that popular and labour educators must always ask "Who is risking here and how much?" I discuss this further in the next chapter, especially around issues of "safe space".

In summary, while union education has a long history of working in counter-hegemonic ways, it also has a long history of re/creating many of the oppressions that unions ostensibly are combating. Participation in formal union education is not in fact that common in the unions, and most programs available

34For example, Hakken cites one trade union organizer who had been through a major course and his attempt to return to his old job as a train driver (engineer): "For six months I went back to my old job; I was determined to stick it, to fit back in. I finally decided to pack it in - 'what's the use?' The problem was my mates. At work, they didn't treat me the same; put me apart, like. In the pub, with people from my housing estate, it was 'Mr. This' or 'Mr. That'; they used to bleedin' stand up when I came over to their table. They treated me like I was different, because I was 'educated'"(Hakken 1993: 122).

This is not to say, of course, that such treatment changes the fundamental relationships that one has to the means of production. It does, though, demonstrate issues around "cultural capital".
are skills-based. These skills-based programs lend themselves to a tacit support of the economic and political system and reinforce very problematic liberal assumptions around education. The placement and participation of women and men of colour in unions, union executives, and union education programs, while growing, still has a long way to go. Progressive programs, such as Paid Education Leave, are the exception more than the rule, though there are unquestionably movements towards new and innovative educational projects in the union movement.

It is perhaps this last point that makes the work of the BC HEU particularly interesting. One element of this interest is the embracing of an explicit political agenda and a pedagogy that recognizes and reflects this political agenda, namely popular education. Yet popular education, in both theory and practice, has dangerous trends in its history as well as great success and potential for counter-hegemonic work.
Chapter 2
Practices and Problems in Popular Education

Popular Education, Background and Theory

The word "popular" in popular education comes from the work of critical education that focuses on working among poor and otherwise oppressed peoples. Raymond Morrow argues that ". . . the very term popular has so many distinctive connotations that in English the Spanish Term should be written in Italics" (Morrow 1990:52). One distinction is that the term "popular" in Latin America connotes peasant and folk cultures and in the industrialized west the term "popular culture" often connotes mass media and industrialization (52). While it is true that the term carries new meanings in new languages, so do the practices. All things change and I do not wish to promote the idea of a "pure" or "true" way of "popular education".

Popular education work has been done for a long time in a number of locations. In this chapter I am interested in looking at ways that the concept has been taken up in the North American context and the possibilities/problematics that some of the theories and practices that emerge from it may contribute to the union movement. I recognize that I cannot begin to capture the diversity of practice as well as the theory imbedded in the practices of popular education in North America.

After providing a brief overview of major trends and tenets in popular education theory, I highlight key critiques in the following areas: narrow notions of power; the troubles with "story-telling", issues around "experience", and concerns with "empowerment". I draw on a number of theorists who raise concerns about the limits and dangers of popular education, such as how it can homogenize difference and silence issues of racism within groups. Using various theorists as a base I make general recommendations that I think would be constructive to
consider when implementing a popular education program in union and other settings.

Theories of Popular Education

Popular education in its contemporary form is often traced back to the work of Paulo Freire and his programs in Brazil in the 1960's. Freire worked with peasants, using literacy programs to challenge the dominant world view of the elite. Freire's work in Brazil focused on the need for land reform. He argued that transformative education was based on a dialogue between action and reflection. In this process, which Freire called "conscientization," the students reflected on their problems (such as the need for land) and then analyzed what would need to happen to change the situation. In reading the Word, Freire argued, one learns to read the World (and vice-versa).

Freire strongly argued the point that I mentioned in the introduction, that education is always a political act and can never be "neutral." His criticism of "Banking Education" is well known in academic and adult education circles.

For this brief summary of some of the major tenets of Popular Education I am focusing on Freire due to his tremendous influence in the field. This is a bit unfair to him as he has been taken up in numerous ways to the point of him citing Marx's famous response to French "Marxists" who invoked Marx's name in ways he rejected: "Well, then, all I know is that I'm no Marxist" (Freire 1994: 88). However, this summary should serve to provide a general overview to be able to place in context the critiques that follow.

Freire argued that banking education is a reflection of how societies act to oppress people in many ways. He identified the following characteristics of banking education:

- The teacher teaches and the students are taught
- The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing
- The teacher thinks and the students are thought about
- The teacher talks and the students listen - meekly
- The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined
- The teacher chooses and enforces his [sic] choice, and the students comply
- The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher
- The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it
- The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his [sic] own professional authority, which he [sic] sets in opposition to the freedom of the students
- The teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects. [Freire, 1970: 59]
Freire's belief that the "revolutionary educator" must become a partner in the education process with his or her students is part of the backbone of the process of popular education. Freire emphasized this theme in his later writings as well:

To criticize the arrogance, the authoritarianism of intellectuals of Left or Right, who are both basically reactionary in an identical way... to criticize the behavior of university people who claim to be able to 'conscientize' rural and urban workers without having to be 'conscientized' by them as well... this I have always done. Of this I speak, and of almost nothing else, in Pedagogy of the Oppressed. And of this I speak now, with the same insistence, in Pedagogy of Hope (Freire 1994: 79).

Freire's theoretical tenets force popular educators to undertake a methodology that is deliberate about giving voice to all participants. This methodological practice, which is characterized by group discussions, role-playing, drawing, music, games, etc., is intended to bring forth and recognize multiple ways of creating and sharing knowledge of all participants.

However, in the tradition of popular education, the participatory process is only a means toward decoding social oppression and forming a counter-hegemonic strategy. This distinction is too often lost on a number of educators who are influenced by Freire. Given his association with literacy programs, a number of literacy organizations have adopted Freire's participatory approaches to adult education instruction, but failed to pursue a critical analysis of power within this process. While usually not invoking his name, this same phenomena has become more common in the last decade or so in workplace sites.

However, Paula Allman observes that contrary to a widely held belief Freire explicitly rejected the notion that teachers are "facilitators". Freire argued that "Teachers maintain a certain level of authority through the depth and breadth of knowledge of the subject matter that they teach" (quoted in Allman, et al 1998: 10)

37 See Mayo, Peter (1994) for a discussion on the abuse of Freire's ideas by literacy programs.

38 For example, giving workers a "voice" is becoming a common management practice in training and in very limited ways in the workplace itself. Toronto labour educator, Jorge Garcia Orgales, reported to me that the educational materials and participatory approaches that are being produced by
Popular educators, as I described in the introduction, also draw on the work of Antonio Gramsci. Along with his theory of hegemony Gramsci's idea of the "organic intellectual" is an important one. The concept of the "organic intellectual" in popular education is more expansive than the class-based notions of Gramsci. Gramsci argued that organic intellectuals are those (workers) who, rooted in the daily life of working people (understanding and coming from the culture) can develop critical consciousness of a collective and political level (Boggs 1993: 159). Critical "intellectuals" then, are not separate and outside of the "masses" in a vanguard way, but emerge from the masses themselves. In popular education the idea of organic intellectuals extends beyond class oppression to an understanding that people that face oppressions develop critical understandings of those oppressions in unique and crucial ways.

management consultants are in fact "excellent" - they get people involved, they recognize different learning styles, and they can be fun (Interview, April 28th, 1997). No company, Orgales and I concurred, is going to use such practices to seriously increase employee criticism of the company, or of the assumptions of the material relations between workers, management, or of the contradictions of the pursuit of economic growth. Orgales pointed out that "participation" in many ways had been co-opted by management. Popular labour educators need to explore what kinds of participation practices lead to what kind of actions, understandings, etc. This kind of work can be done in cooperation between union and popular education workers.

I too draw on Gramsci's work in my understanding of popular education. I agree, though, with Stuart Hall who notes:

I do not claim that, in any simple way, Gramsci 'has the answers' or 'holds the key' to our present troubles. I do believe that we must 'think' our problems in a Gramscian way - which is different. . . We can't pluck this 'Sardinian' from his specific and unique political formation, beam him down at the end of the 20th century, and ask him to solve our problems for us: especially because the whole thrust of his thinking was to refuse this easy transfer of generalizations from one conjuncture, nation or epoch to another. Hall, S. 1991. "Postscript: Gramsci and Us" in Roger Simon's Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction 2nd Edition, London: Lawrence and Wishart

However, the expansive understanding in popular education of Gramsci's class-focused theory is not to say that popular education theory and/or practice has completely escaped the worst of modernism, such as reductionism, simplistic binary power analysis, and imperialist, colonial actions. After I briefly explore some of the general trends in popular education practices I will present critiques of popular education theory and practice along such lines. I will follow this, though, with an attempt to take the strong points of popular education (such as notions of social justice emerging from those that face oppression) and search for ways that critical education and labour organizing can better fit together.

**Trends in Popular Education**

In 1964 the coup in Brazil resulted in Freire's exile, but popular education continued to blossom. Freire continued his work in Chile until the coup in the early 1970's. Freirian-influenced popular education began to be used in a number of struggles, in Nicaragua after the revolution, in Mexico, in South Africa (such as with the "People's Education" movement) and in the 1970's it began to emerge in the United States and Canada.

In the Canadian context popular educators were very influenced by the work in Central America, with some Canadians working and doing educational work in

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41I do not wish to imply that popular education only "works" with people in very similar subject positions (social, political, economic, etc. identities). Critical dialogue can and does take place across many social locations. However, what is understood and how it is understood cannot be separated from one's subject position.

42One interesting example of the popular education work in South Africa is the work of the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education (CACE). As an example, they held a series of "Talking Gender" workshops in 1990. These workshops explored gender oppression and the use of popular education as tool to challenge sexism and racism. From these workshops a popular education handbook "On Our Feet: Taking Steps to Challenge Women's Oppression" was produced. An excerpt: "Women's oppression takes different forms in different societies at different times, and we need to look at the ways issues of class, race and gender interact with each other in any particular society or situation. For example, in South Africa a "maid" and a "madam" may both be oppressed as women in many ways which seem similar. But the "madam" benefits from the "maid's" position as a black worker, and also her oppression as a woman which is part of why she is caught in low-paid domestic work. Having a domestic worker frees the "madam" from many of the aspect of her oppression as a woman - she can get a better education or do a well-paid job, and so be more independent in her life" (Mackenzie 1993: 24).
Central America (Arnold et al. 1985, Arnold et al. 1991). For example, in 1984, three Canadian popular educators were invited to a ten day popular education workshop in Mexico and in 1985 two popular educators from Mexico came to Canada to hold workshops and trainings (Arnold et al. 1985). It is worth noting here that what literature there is from that time reflects a predominately white group of Canadian educators. Freire's influence also began to show-up in some union programs, such as with the use of "generative themes" in union trainings (see below for "generative themes").

In the current context, there are a number of forms and situations in which popular education is used. There are trainers/facilitators who will use popular educational approaches in community organizing, public awareness, etc. around a wide range of topics and themes. Professional popular educators are also hired as consultants to aid organizations in conducting workshops around power issues as well as simply staff retreats.

While statistics on union and workplace education are fairly easy to compile, it is quite difficult to gauge the extent or form of popular education work in North America. For one, popular education is a fairly fluid practice that gets taken up in a number of different ways across numerous locations. It is difficult to know what is going on. Much of the work may not be associated with institutions or may be done by groups around particular themes, such as environmental issues or racism.

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43 Sherene Razack observes "Although some questions have been asked about the exporting of Freirian pedagogy from the First World back to the Third World, in the guise of 'helping' the Third World achieve its social goals, there have been few critical analyses of, for example, white middle-class educators (primarily men) leading subordinate groups to which they do not belong into critical pedagogy" (Razack 1998: 44).

44 Wendy Fisher writes about her experiences in popular education and participatory action research groups where the bulk of the participants were "white able-bodied people, claiming to collectively represent 'the peoples' voice in Canada's multi-racial society..." (Fisher 1998: 13). The importance of this problem should not be under-estimated. However, it's worth noting that Fisher points out "This image may not accurately reflect the composition of many groups engaged in education for social change in the Canadian context..." (13). In other words, it's tough to know what's going on.
Its worth noting, though, that some prominent Ontario organizations that have identified themselves as practitioners of popular education have been facing tough times. In 1997 the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice in Ontario closed. Among other things, this centre ran "Naming the Moment" popular education workshops and published the newsletter, "The Moment" to promote social justice causes. Also in 1997 the Doris Marshall Institute (DMI), a ten year old popular education group, centered in Toronto, effectively closed. While the individuals who made up DMI still do some popular education work, the collective work and the organization of DMI has ended. The North American Alliance for Popular and Adult Education (NAAPAE), which has its administrative office in Toronto, continues to be run entirely on volunteer labour and is in constant jeopardy of closing.

There are and were, of course, very specific day-to-day issues, such as funding which have greatly effected the work of a number of progressive organizations, including the popular education groups listed above. DMI once had a federal grant for $100,000 approved that the minister would not sign. The perception of Cavanagh was that the minister felt that DMI was too "political"45. The Jesuit Centre upset some constituents by addressing the issues facing gay youth in Catholic Schools in its newsletter.

However, as I noted in the introduction, there may be a shift occurring away from institutions that are organized around popular education methodology and a move toward incorporating popular education in the work that is already being done by community groups, social justice organizations, and unions. If this is true, it is all the more important to provide the best models of popular education that we can, and this requires critiques of the practices of popular education.

45Chris Cavanagh Telephone interview April 1, 1998
Critiques of Popular Education

As with any movement associated with social justice there are certainly critiques from mainstream and right-wing theorists who question the basis of popular education critiques on the economic system, racism, sexism, homophobia and other oppressions. For the purpose of this paper, though, I am focusing on progressive responses to popular education theory and practice.

Popular education is often based on a collection of people facilitated in sharing experiences and finding common ground to address their collective oppressions. Yet, as a number of authors observe, the ramifications of this practice can be very problematic. I will center this section on a number of authors who make overlapping critiques on a wide range of themes largely directed at the tendencies of much popular education theory and practice to remain rooted too heavily in liberalism. These criticisms reflect tensions in the popular education movement, primarily as represented in the literature. I don't wish to imply that I, or anyone, can know how day-to-day practices of popular education (or anything for that matter) occur across different locations. Certainly there are popular educators who are not susceptible to the bulk of the criticisms that follow. However, the observations that follow are crucial, I believe, to any successful popular labour education effort.

Narrow Notions of Power

It is common in popular education theory to speak of the teacher learning from the students (see "Banking Education" above) but the limits of the teachers' knowledge often go unexamined. Elizabeth Ellsworth argues that the critical pedagogy literature fails,
generic human that underlies classical liberal thought (Ellsworth 1989: 110).

Of course, there never is a neutral "generic" human category. There is, though, the "mythic nom" of white, heterosexual, middle-class, male (110). This is reflected in the relative lack of analysis in popular education theory on how issues of power-difference among the participants affect oppression. There are, as Kathleen Rockhill observes, some things "we truly do not know" (Rockhill 1991: 8) and can never know. We are not positioned to know how culture, violence, racism, sexism, ableism, and classism work across various social locations (8)46. Popular educators must be as explicit as possible regarding their symbolic and material power over various participants in any group.

That there is always a difference in power relations in any group is often brushed aside in popular education theory47. The focus in popular education groups is on external power dynamics that assume a homogeneous and power-free collection of people (Razack 1993a: 61; Rockhill 1991: 2, Fischer 1997: 13). Women of colour in a group may face racism from the whites and all the women may face sexism from the men. Homogenizing terms such as "women" or "peasants" fails to account for the many complex ways that individuals and groups are socially placed. Unfortunately, how power within the group (and the power that is represented there) effects the oppression of its members "rarely receives the same priority as getting on with the 'larger' issues that 'oppress us'"(Fischer 1997: 13).48

46It's worth noting that how we "know" what we know cannot be separated or completely transformed from the social construction of our identities. "Knowledge," as Foucault observed, is power disguised as truth. What does it mean to "know"?

47In some ways the 1997 HEU Summer School avoided this mistake - see subsequent chapters.

48I find that the more recent literature, such as Nadeau (1996), who was a planner and trainer at the HEU 1997 Summer School, is more likely to take on issues of group power difference in constructive manners. Fisher argues that in some cases in the literature the focus on power differences in the group is in terms of how it will affect the workshop and not on how power differences affect the "underlying structure" of popular education (Fisher 1997: 12 footnote # 20). For example, Fisher cites Arnold et al in Educating for a Change (page 15) where the reader is warned that "A failure to have this awareness [of power] will ensure failure of the workshop" (12, #20). Fisher's point is an excellent one, though
This is not to say that power dynamics within a group always deserves equal or greater priority than external issues - those are questions that need to be answered by context and should never be considered static. What is important here is that there are certainly contexts where the power dynamics of a group do warrant greater attention than even the "larger" issues.49

The Troubles with "Story-telling" and "Experience"

One way that power is homogenized in groups is through an uncritical focus on "experience" and story-telling as a way to express and process this experience. Story-telling is a common and powerful instrument in popular education work. Story-telling honors the history and experiences of diverse groups. It can act as a means of resistance to dominant narratives - such as racism and classism. However, as Sherene Razack points out, in some streams of popular education work, story-telling can have ramifications that run counter to good critiques of power.

Razack argues that in the work to bring forth the experiences and voices of the oppressed, popular educators too often fall into the trap of assuming an "us/them" mentality. On the good side, there is popular knowledge and on the bad side, there is an official knowledge. She references Richard Zuniga in observing that this process becomes "...a firm rejection of empiricism, positivism and science and a warm embrace of emotions, stories, narratives, nature, spontaneity." (Razack 1993a: 61) This perspective is a rejection of the main story - not a challenge to it. Stories then become difficult to critique because they are assumed to be suppressed knowledge. To critique is to challenge solidarity. It is forgotten that stories not only represent reality, but help to make reality. (Razack 1993a: 61; Razack 1998: 45).

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49Who declares that it is otherwise? I suspect those in the dominant positions of the group are those that may push to look "outside" - such as the historical issue of some white feminists who, in their strong work to tackle patriarchy - re/created racist practices. A "race to innocence" may be a race to look elsewhere.
When and how we tell stories and when and how we hear stories affects others. It affects how they think about the world, themselves, and others. The risks of sharing "experience" are very different depending on one's social location (Razack 1993b: 51). Citing Trihn Minh-ha's work, Razack observes that certain members of groups, such as women of colour in a mixed-race group, may be condemned to speak as representatives of the Other to the dominant group (Razack 1998:52). This is done in the spirit of "participation," a term that does not usually recognize the tactics of silence. If one can only be heard as the Other, silence is not only participation, it is resistance and struggle.

It becomes too easy to forget that even in our groups working for social change we have power differences. "Most important of all, no one is off the hook since we can all claim to stand as oppressor and oppressed in relation to someone else" (Razack 1993a: 63).

On a positive note, such sentiments are becoming more evident in recent literature, such as from Allman et al.:

50 Ellsworth reports on the limits of dialogue in her class based on critical pedagogy theory.

Things were not being said for a number of reasons. These included fear of being misunderstood and/or disclosing too much and becoming too vulnerable; memories of bad experiences in other contexts of speaking out; resentment that other oppressions (sexism, heterosexism, fat oppression, classism, anti-Semitism) were being marginalized in the name of addressing racism - and guilt for feeling such resentment; confusion about levels of trust and commitment surrounding those who were allies to another group's struggles; resentment by some students of color for feeling that they were expected to disclose 'more' and once again take the burden of doing the pedagogic work of educating White students/professors about the consequences of White middle class privilege; and resentment by White students for feeling that they had to prove they were not the enemy (Ellsworth 1989:316).

51 Regarding another issue of participation, it is widely reported and understood that learners report higher retention and greater satisfaction with education that involves their input and respects their experiences. Imel and Kerka (as reported in Folinsbee 1995) cite the trend in Canadian and US publications of promoting participatory approaches as well as provincial and state policies insisting on planning teams (Folinsbee 1995, 67). Top-down "banking education" has, of course, a long history of critiques, but the increase of participatory literacy and basic skills approaches that has gained more prominence in the 1990s has, I suspect, more to do with the goal of high performance than providing true worker voice and democracy in the workplace. Daniel Marshall argues that the assumption of management is "... empowered work teams + technology + flexibility = higher quality and productivity" (Marshall 1992: 42). Worker "empowerment" remains a means toward the end of profit. Quality remains quality of product, quality of growth, quality of stock value, not quality of work experience.
The Freirian approach to learning is not simply experiential learning, nor a therapy session characterized by the outpouring of experience. Besides, one's knowledge can signify collusion in oppression. Sexism, racism and homophobia, for instance, can be "common-sense" understandings based on "knowledge" and "experience" which, as Freire warns, should not be celebrated uncritically (Allman et al. 1998: 11).

Writings such as these may reflect a positive change in popular education practices towards a greater understanding of the issues raised by writers such as Razack and Ellsworth. However, though a bit dated, Ellsworth documents that this recognition is still too rare in the literature (Ellsworth 1989: 298).

Expanding the Notion of "Experience"

Another step is to question what is meant by "experience" in the first place. It is becoming more of a common tenet in feminist and postmodern theory to question how it is that individuals "have" experience and instead pay closer attention to how subjects are constituted by experience (Scott 1992:26). As Cynthia Kaufman reminds us "Marxism has successfully shown that the notion of the individual as an autonomous self-willed agent is an ideological construction" (Kaufman 1994: 67). The exploration of experience is powerful and necessary, but experience itself (and its role in creating individuals as subjects) must be unpacked.

52 For example Stinson O'Gorman states that popular education offers a "safe place" that participants can enter into "critical dialogue" on "common experiences" (Stinson O'Gorman 1996: 170). Despite the many strengths of Arnold et al. (1991) the authors include in their "assumptions about a workshop" that "Everyone will contribute to a safe/non-judgmental environment" (Arnold et al. 1991: 51). Who declares a space "safe"? Who is silenced in these "safe" places? I believe that such spaces work best when they are not declared or ever expected to be "safe". As I report later, the facilitators of the 1997 HEU Summer School explicitly rejected the notion of "safe space".

53 This is not to say that people do not have unique consciousness. John Fiske puts it well "Social agents, particularly subordinated ones, must never be confused with so-called free agents (if such beings exist outside of the imaginations of conservatives or football coaches) because their agency is always constrained by conditions that are not of their own making, and it is exercised by using resources produced by others (Fiske 1993:21).
for transformative learning (Razack 1993b: 45). Joan Scott uses the work of Raymond Williams to argue that when we talk about individuals "having" experiences, we naturalize socially constructed categories:

Talking about experience operates within an ideological construction that not only makes individuals the starting point of knowledge, but that also naturalizes categories such as man, woman, black, white, heterosexual, or homosexual by treating them as given characteristics of individuals (Scott 1992:27). . . . experience is at once always already an interpretation and is in need of interpretation"(37).

Rennie Johnston and Robin Usher argue that in critical pedagogy (and its use in popular education) a focus is placed on "reflection" as a means to make rational the experience of participants and thereby create knowledge (Johnston, Usher 1997: 139). This reflects a modernist bias of transcending experience into an objective analysis.

However, I (or Johnston and Usher) am not arguing that a focus on the "experience" is without merit, such as recognizing and honoring marginalized voices, but that it is a dangerous process:

Thus, it could be recognized that while a focus on experiential learning is potentially liberating in its concern for the "neglected learner" and its opposition to "banking" approaches to education, it can also be domesticating in that learners can be unreflective prisoners of their experiences or have their experience colonised and reduced, on the one hand by educational institutions and on the other, by totaling "radical" discourses (Johnston, Usher 1997:143).

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54 To his credit Paulo Freire (1994) made more explicit his call to respect but problematize experience in his work "Pedagogy of Hope". See especially Chapter 3.
For example, while it is important to discuss the suppressed histories of women, it is also very crucial to ask how the dominant culture understands what a "woman" is in the first place. What "experiences" make up the idea(s) of women? In a similar light, what "experiences" create the identity of "worker"? In what ways has domestic labour (performed almost exclusively by women) been organized and understood to not be considered "work"? How has (is) gender identity been connected to the idea(s) of performing domestic labour?

The selection of what is and what is not considered experience is a political act. To take experience on its face, to worship it even, to naturalize culturally and historically specific ideas (constructs) is a reactionary act. Popular educators, and other agents working for progressive social change, must work hard to locate histories of culture, discourse, the creation of subjects, and thought itself to continuously de-naturalize what has been created and therefore has the potential to change.

The Rational Subject

Issues around individuals and individualism do not end there, though. Ellsworth echoes some of this sentiment when she argues that "the literature on critical pedagogy implies that students and teachers can and should engage each Other in the classroom as fully rational subjects" (Ellsworth 1989: 301).

Again issues around liberalism arise. In liberalism, rational individuals are assumed to have equal consideration of rights and disputes over such rights are considered (in general) through "rational" systems. In these considerations of what is "equal," the concept of equality replaces the concept of justice (Razack 1993b: 49).

If one acknowledges that in a workshop or classroom (or other location) that space is likely unsafe for some people, it must be questioned to what extent feelings really are able to be expressed. Reason and argument, even an oppositional discourse, is more suited to the fundamental assumptions of liberalism ("Let's not
get irrational about this"). In the pursuit of rationalism the emotional effects of a racist comment or situation, for example, can become silenced in the pursuit of reason. In fact, the "irrational" has often been defined by the beliefs, cultures, mores, etc. of women, people of colour, and other exotic Others (Ellsworth 1989: 301). As such it can be anticipated that emotion, especially that from oppressed groups, is less readily heard than argument. Perhaps the process of popular education in diverse groups (broadly speaking) is inherently limited in the ability to move beyond "the rational".

However, pursuing notions of rational, individual learners who gain "higher" levels of consciousness and empowerment is dangerously connected to notions of imperialism and western hegemony. (Historically the argument went closely as follows: it is the colonizers who have higher consciousness over the irrational subjects who need to be saved from their heathen ways to ensure their personal and societal development.)

In this light, Robert Schapiro argues that it can be difficult to separate the notion of education (and its modern connection to personal growth) from that of development. Increased knowledge is associated with increased rationality and the valorization of local knowledge is only a process towards developing the individual, rational, western thinker who, like his or her society progresses in a linear way (versus, for example, in a cyclical way as some cultures understand) (Schapiro 1995: 40-44).

This assumption of the liberal subject that will make the right choices given the proper information is an aspect of much popular education work. In her work on participatory research (and connections to popular education) Wendy Fisher observes that participatory research ". . . is really a process of manipulating people to do something that you have pre-determined is for their own good"(Fisher 1997: 101)55. While I question if "manipulation" accurately reflects what may not be such
a conscious or consistent practice, that popular educators often have fairly explicit end-goals cannot be ignored. Sherene Razack reflects on this practice in regards to a Summer School for human rights activists at which she taught:

While there was a commitment to student-directed and participatory learning, there was also an increasingly substantial manual and an agenda of resource persons that limited flexibility and contradicted the notion of experiential learning. In reality, the Summer College embodied a specific social vision and analysis. . ." (Razack 1993b: 47).

In some ways I find such contradictions quite positive. Through such an overt agenda the pre-determined ends (which in fact may not be even clear to the organizers) become more explicit and perhaps more open to interrogation by participants.

My hope is that it become very common for popular educators to question their assumptions about what education is and what it is for. The role that education can play in social change is hard to determine. Is it really a leading cause for social change? Has it been? Could it be? That education is a great leader in social change should be a contention that is constantly examined in popular education, not a simple assumption.

Just What is Empowerment?

Another question that needs to be asked more carefully is what is meant by "empowerment". The goals of empowerment in the literature are wide ranging but

55However, in her excellent work (Fisher 1997), Fisher fails to interrogate her assumptions of the ideal-end point of anti-racism. I agree with her goals of "social justice" (undefined by her) and anti-racism (undefined) but struggled with maintaining the important critique of liberalist and modernist notions of social change while at the same time holding forth on the ideal of anti-racism. How do we "know" that something is racist? How is an anti-racist stance not staking a claim that it is something that is for others' own good? Jane Flax reminds us that we need to "Make claims about gender injustice . . . without transcendental guarantees or illusions of innocence"(Flax 1992: 459). Though, on what terms are we declaring something, no matter how local and specific, "unjust"? I believe further philosophical work needs to be done on ethics that recognizes the great limitations of modernist thought but does not lose, however precarious, foundations of justice claims.
often connected to broad ahistorical and de-politicised goals such as "human betterment" (Ellsworth 1989: 307). "Empowerment" issues need to be recognized as greatly diverse and changing over multiple locations. In terms of critical literacy work, Kathleen Rockhill observes:

Educators who advocate literacy for 'empowerment', do not ask 'what does it mean to speak of power for a woman whose subordination is accomplished through sexual objectification?' . . . [such as in the ] practices of institutionalized heterosexism which regulate sexuality as private, unspeakable, and for women, in opposition to intellectual performance (Rockhill 1991: 1).

Empowerment, claims Schapiro, is about providing education to move human subjects to a pre-determined ideal end - that of the intellectual project of modernism. This "empowerment" is really the creation of the ideal rational subjects that were discussed above (Schapiro 1995: 30-31). In a bit of a "strawperson" argument, Schapiro claims that progressive critical pedagogy theory rests on naive utopian ideas of a society without oppression. I, however, question whether many popular educators really put forth arguments that power can somehow be made to disappear.

There may be assumptions in popular education practice that people don't understand the social sources of their particular situations, and that once they do so they will act collectively. This perspective obviously ignores the "organic" knowledges of peoples and blinds itself to the multiple reasons that influence why

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56Schapiro significantly backs down at the end of his article when he claims that "It may very well be true that empowerment, in the sense that Freire and Fals-Borda mean it, can lead to a fairer social order, but it will never lead to freedom from the constraints or relations of power"(Schapiro 1995: 41). Who really believes it will? Freire says: "The fight is not . . . for a democratic society so perfect it suppresses sexism, racism, and class exploitation once and for all . . . the final struggle is not to satisfy men and women, but to recognize them as finite, incomplete, and historically bound people" (Freire 1996: 160).
people don't take action (Augerbach and Wallisertein in Martin 1994: 91), or take action in ways that are unrecognized or unexamined by this model.

There are potential tensions in a popular education model that respects experience (even critically) but also assumes a "radicalization" of participants is the gauge of success. For example, it is entirely possible that a group of people oppressed economically may, through an analysis of their experience, decide that foreigners are causing their troubles. The presumption is that with the proper critical dialogue such a xenophobic analysis will be de-bunked. It may very well not, for a host of reasons.

Where Does This Lead Us?

In the Introduction I explained that one goal of mine was to present some general issues and promote critical discussion around fostering a popular labour education movement. I conclude this chapter with a reflection on some of the key issues raised above as well as some general suggestions for the use of popular education in unions. In doing so I recognize that every union is a different context (and each contain numerous contexts) and that a recipe on how to do popular education in unions would not only be extremely presumptuous but violate some of the core theories raised above. My hope here is to raise issues that could be beneficial to consider for the labour popular educator.

General Recommendations

Firstly, a popular labour education movement would be strengthened if it is explicitly and widely recognized that even though "workers" share a common oppression in general terms, there are no innocent positions. George Dei points out "There is little doubt that a politics of similarities can mask forms of social injustice"(Dei 1996: 37). Yet, I share his concern that one must remain vigilant
regarding the extent that a focus on differences "can aid or impede a politics of transformation" (Dei).

In this vein, the us/them mentality should be greatly problematized and the hard work begins of building alliances. Alliances can and should be formed around commonalties, (such as the relationship that union members have to management) but these commonalties must not serve to erase the very real, and very powerful, differences that can ultimately lead to the weakening of movements if they go un-addressed.

It is possible, in fact, that by vigilantly addressing differences in a collective (not "safe") manner that alliances become strengthened. "It is important not to confuse diversity with divisiveness" (Dei 1996:37 emphasis original). Certainly this is much easier to write then to do, but it must be done nonetheless. I discuss this more in the next chapter.

Secondly, I recommend popular labour educators emphasize histories not just of "the labour movement" but of the idea(s) of work, home, leisure, community, skill, white, Black, and so forth. The practical emphasis could be to "de-naturalize" and "de-homogenize". Once again, to assume that the social organization of any period is "natural" is a reactionary act.

In this model, power is understood as ever-present and constantly shifting. Therefore popular labour educators will more thoroughly recognize the power that the "oppressed" have and continuously use to resist regulation on many, many levels. These histories can and should be examined in labour education.

However, how does one begin to challenge (what is perceived as) oppression without essentialising culture, and assuming a universalizing - all knowing - 

57 John Fiske observes "A blue-collar white man may, for example, form a social allegiance with Black men who share his skills and conditions of subordination at work, but may, in his leisure, ally himself with other white men in relations of racial dominance (Fiske 1993: 11)." Popular labour educators would be well served to struggle to locate and recognize these sometimes contradictory locations that participants in a popular education process may have. In identifying the tensions of different alliances, such as the hypothetical worker above, oppressive alliances (such as with the white men) may be better challenged and new alliances potentially may be formed.
perspective? Donna Haraway's notion of situated knowledges can serve as a guide (Harraway 1991). To recognize situated knowledge is to realize that every location has specific histories/memories that cannot be made pure, but can be encouraged to broaden. The voices of those that have been and are being oppressed (such as the Aboriginal people, as well as select voices within Aboriginal communities) must be given preference to the dominant voices.\(^{58}\) As Fiske argues "The imagination to understand how we look to others has always been better developed in subordinate social formations than in dominant ones, because it has proved necessary to their tactics of survival"(Fiske 1993: 46 emphasis in original). All voices must be critically heard, though, be they drawing on historical indigenous knowledge or contemporary social systems. In this light "organic intellectuals" are more recognized for their situated knowledges.

If popular labour educators hold a "partial perspective" that privileges those that are oppressed in any particular situation, then more of the educators will be coming from rank and file\(^{59}\). It is possible as well that in recognizing a partial perspective, more alliances will be sought across institutions and organizations.

A core aspect of these recommendations is that all participants in a popular labour education approach encourage each other (as members of multiple collectives) to recognize their multiple positions as oppressors/oppressed\(^{60}\) and to expand their awareness and actions. This, in theory, fosters perspectives of anti-oppression.

Of course it is always a process, and resistance to hegemonic forces is never complete. I prefer the notion of "disrupting" or "interrupting" dominant forms of

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\(^{58}\)There are echoes of Lukacs here and his push to listen to the voices of the proletariat as the true revolutionaries, as well as Gramsci's notion of organic intellectuals.

\(^{59}\)Such as with the Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST) project of the Ontario Federation of Labour where all of the instructors are workers from the workplace.

\(^{60}\)I do not mean to imply here that being both an oppressor and oppressed some how balances each other out in a binary way. A complex and on-going analysis is required to continuously struggle with how these dynamics are ever shifting.
power and thought. I would not have written this thesis if I did not believe some of that could take place in a union setting that drew on popular education theory and practice. This belief drew me to examine the work of the BC Hospital Employees Union.
Chapter 3
Change in the HEU: Grassroots Organizing, Equity & Education

The educational philosophy of the Hospital Employees' Union is committed to:

- Equality
- Collective action for change
- Democracy
- Social Change
- Building confidence, self-esteem and self-empowerment

Education begins from our shared and fundamental desire for social justice.

Education is not neutral. Union education seeks to liberate members, helping them to become critical, creative, free, active and responsible members of the union and society. Education for change, for action, respects the life and work experience all members bring to the process. Starting from that experience, union education seeks to provide additional information, develop understanding and analysis.

From "Hospital Employees' Union, Education- Philosophy and Goals" 1993

An overtly political educational philosophy such as that of the HEU, especially one where some attempts are made to put it into practice, obviously does not emerge in an institutional vacuum. Such philosophies reflect in numerous ways trends and politics of specific unions and specific factions within those unions.

In 1997 the HEU put on what the union called their first "popular education summer school" for 200 union activists. This ten day course, which addressed such topics as democracy in the union, poor bashing, and equity issues, gathered union activists in a unique experience for the HEU in their move to promote more grassroots organizing and critical thinking by its members. I provide a detailed

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61 The language of the philosophy is clearly imbedded within the field of popular education. As discussed in Chapter Two the overt recognition that education is never neutral and is connected to issues of power and social justice is laudable. However, the HEU education philosophy, as does much popular education theory, assumes a need for participants to be "liberated" and by implications that there are "liberators". However in none of the interviews I conducted did the term or even the concept of liberation emerge. Critical thinking and grassroots organizing was much more the focus. Given that, it seems to me that in this case "liberation" is meant more in a metaphorical sense.

62 While I will discuss this later in the paper, "activists" tended to be members who hold union positions such as shop steward.
outline of the summer school in Appendix A. The union's support for the summer school, which cost approximately $500,000, was quite high. Almost all the members of the Provincial Executive were present and a great number of resources went towards putting this training together.

In this chapter I present some of the recent history of the union (including the development of equity concerns) that seem to have contributed towards the increasing use of popular education in the HEU. I argue that as popular education involves participatory critical reflection, the context for its acceptance in the union increased as the union began to have success with grassroots mobilizing that requires such critical reflection and participation. The need for local grassroots action has increased due to changes in health care in British Columbia. I also believe that in part, the specific form of the 1997 summer school was connected to events at the 1996 HEU bi-annual convention. This convention included a debate around equity issues that was heated and at times involved what I argue was racist speech. There were also official actions at the convention following the vote on equity issues that caused great fallout. The union recognized a need to process the debate and turmoil at the convention in a meaningful way. The use of popular education in the summer school was seen as a first step in doing this.

The bulk of the information I used for the HEU histories is from the interviews I conducted, especially but not exclusively, with Karen Dean and Janet Fairbanks. In 1996 Karen Dean was the Director of Education and Janet Fairbanks was employed as the Education Representative. Both acted as planners for the 1997 summer school. Janet has a long history with union, starting as a rank and file member in the early 1970s and moving into her position as Education Representative in the early 1990s. She has since (after the 1997 summer school) been promoted to Director of Education. Karen Dean came from the farm workers' union into her position in the late 1980's. She is currently Coordinator of
Servicing. Where I quote another source (regarding history of education in the union) besides these two women I note it in the text.

**HEU Profile**

To review, the HEU represents the lowest paid workers in the health care system, with about 44,000 members and over 300 locals. The locals of the HEU do not bargain for themselves, all bargaining is done provincially and all the workers operate under a single agreement, and wages are equal throughout the locals. Through the HEU, BC is the only place in North America where long term care workers receive the same wages as hospital workers.

Formally the HEU is a service division of CUPE - Canadian Union of Public Employees, though they have autonomy in bargaining. The President of the HEU Provincial Executive sits on the board of CUPE. The Provincial Executive of the HEU is made up of twenty one members twenty of which are elected every two years at the HEU's bi-annual conventions. The twenty-first member is the secretary business officer, who is hired for the position.

The HEU is a union that is active on political and social issues. For instance, the HEU supports the NDP in provincial elections and also supports the organization End Legislated Poverty (more on this in the next chapter).

**Regionalization**

Starting a few years back, and as I write, the British Columbia health care system began restructuring and, as such, the jobs of union members, the role of management, and the relationship of health care providers to communities was and is in flux. BC is moving into a format of "regionalization" where Regional Health Boards (and community health councils) are being created that will set some health care policy in geographic regions. This shift in management power, from hospital

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63It was here, she reported to me, that she first was exposed to the work of Paulo Freire through an ESL program in the union.
boards to a more regional management structure is an important context of change that has been facing all of the members of the HEU union.

A good number of the people I interviewed mentioned restructuring as increasing stress and concern amongst employees. Karen Dean volunteered:

... the change [regionalization] was creating tremendous insecurity amongst our activists. People have been around for fifteen years, they know what this article in the collective agreement means, who the boss is and how to deal with things, they are being activists by rote in a lot of cases and very comfortable with it. Suddenly their employer is changing, who's got authority is changing, where decisions are being made is changing, then they got their union saying 'ahh throw the book out, be creative'. Everywhere they look their kind of markers are disappearing for them.

Regionalization and the instability that comes with it has required that union locals play in increasingly active role in responding to local/regional health care issues. Ms. Dean's observation above relates to the fact that being an "activist" in the union has changed. Given these changes the union recognized that to be able to respond to the changes of regionalization, activists needed to use and develop their critical thinking skills. The use of popular education was seen as a step in supporting such skills as well as grassroots organizing. However, this decision did not come out of a vacuum. The educational philosophy of the union has changed along with changes in the organizational needs of the union.

Overview of HEU Educational Development

Like many unions (see chapter 1), the HEU's educational program in the 70's and 80's involved traditionally organized courses, with the focus on training shop stewards. Unlike many unions, though, the HEU was not a member of the CLC (or CUPE) for almost fifteen years, from 1974 until 1988. As such HEU members did not attend CLC courses for trainings, nor use the materials designed for CLC members.
In the HEU the shop steward courses during these times were provided in a lecture format by essentially one main educator who would cover such areas as contract interpretation, public speaking, parliamentary procedure, and union history. It was reported to me that the only participation was a little practice with public speaking. The courses during this time were taught almost exclusively by white men, who received no facilitation training. Some trainings were provided from staff at Capilano College's labour program.

However, like so much else in the union, the structure and format of shop steward courses would change in HEU in the years to come.

The first time HEU educators got any training related facilitation was when they went through CUPE's leadership course in 1988. However, it was not a formal facilitation training. The participants went through the training and then delivered it as half of the first HEU summer school in 1988. In this summer school participants went through the CUPE leadership course, then enrolled in a number of courses.

One participant who attended the leadership course (summer school) in 1988 said that there were "very surface discussions" on things like "autocratic vs. democratic leadership styles". After the course, the participant reported, that

One of the most autocratic people that I know in this union went back to her local - she was the chairperson - and she arranged her chairs in a circle and continued to be completely autocratic but because she had sort of talked about politics of furniture she was a democratic person

This observation concisely raises issues around how educators "know" who is being affected in what ways in any particular training environment (see Chapter Two). While I explore this issue a bit more later the point here is that, according to this participant, the training did not seem to attempt any real power analysis.

The HEU continued providing the leadership training in various contexts for the next three years. During those years, Karen Dean began to redo some of the
content, such as naming issues of "class" instead of using terms and concepts such as "stratification" and adding papers around class issues to the curriculum.

In general, though, it was still usually twelve simultaneous classrooms with twenty-five people each and a strong focus on regime. This regime reflected the perspective of "at this time during the training we must be doing X". The facilitators still had no training and were not apparently comfortable with moving from the training script.

In 1989 the union became involved in a strike that had been started by the BC Nurses Union. HEU does not have a strong history of job actions and strikes as they have historically gone to arbitration. Unfortunately, the 1989 strike reportedly was a failure as communication and organizing fell apart from almost the beginning. For example, the HEU received only 72 hours notice from the BC Nurses Union that they would go on strike (vs. the month or so that they had anticipated). One HEU staff person called it a "disaster".

A lot changed, though, in 1992. At this time, as Karen Dean, reported "The '92 job action was a huge turning point in trying to look for a better way in doing education. The union did a huge leap forward in how we did that job action." In 1992 there was an extended round of bargaining, but public bargaining was stopped to focus on fighting the provincial election. The union was very active in advocating for the NDP. One unionist reported that their political opposition, eventually became "furious about seeing blue [union] jackets".

What seems crucial here is that this election work was largely membership driven, and it was the first time the union had been mobilized in this way. The election went in the union's favor and they returned to bargaining.

Instead of opting for a strike the union focused on creative job actions that met three criteria: 1) it would have the maximum impact on management; 2) it would not harm patients, residents, or clients; 3) it would have minimum impact on members. The forth, unofficial, criteria was that it should be fun. The strategy
was that the provincial executive would pick a target every day, such as the Finance Department at the end of the month, and call it into the locals. The next day the whole province would pull workers from that department for a part of the day. In addition, each local could use two hours of picket pay in the ways they saw fit. The could pull the whole facility or just one section for forty-five minutes.

In this process the locals got creative, with departments phoning local executives asking to be pulled at the time for important or dirty jobs that needed to be done. The result was that management often had to step in, much to the delight of workers who were able to witness managers attempting to do their jobs. This was a great success on a number of fronts. Karen Dean (K.D.) and Janet Fairbanks (J.F.) reflected on the importance of this job action,

K.D. The big impact for our membership was that, first of all, it validated how much they really know about their facility, their workplaces, because it was that information that made it [the job action] most effective. The fact that they could use what they know, and they discovered that management knows very little about the way the place runs day to day. The second huge impact culturally was just watching their bosses work.

J.F. Because they were inside instead of in a picket line they could go watch their administrators scrub pots.

K.D. and try to do their jobs.

The job actions were successful and one result was the membership was quite empowered in their victory. "What the '92 job action taught people was that

64 However, one contact I interviewed argued that the 1992 job actions in his local were unsuccessful since the management got official notice on who was going to get pulled when. This person advocated striking as the preferred form of organizing.

65 One telling note regarding the 1992 job action was that the HEU actually had higher level public support after the two week job action than before the job action (according to HEU polls). This was a very rare phenomena at the time with public service strikes/job actions, especially in health. Karen
the best way to win on issues is with local action... it gave back the sense of where the collective agreement really came from" (K.D).

For me, the disruption of power by members from the bottom-up seems much like the creation of what John Fiske calls "locale". Fiske writes about the space of "locales" which are "interior, social, physical and temporal" spaces that are bottom-up products of localizing power (Fiske 1993: 12). Locales are sites of resistance to "imperializing" power. Subjects, through social identities, histories, and relations, form alliances that challenge their placements/acceptances of what Fiske calls "stations" (12). Stations are the opposite of locales in that they are physical and social spaces that work to construct and maintain subjects in the interests of the "power-bloc" (12)66.

The workplace is in many ways a "station" that highly regulates workers' bodies, expressions, etc. While a strike removes workers from these stations, a job-action creates a site of resistance, a locale, within the workplace. This act can serve to re-enforce the fact that workers have power within a context that constantly claims that they do not. Furthermore, through such locales, the workers were able to witness the impact their actions had on the structure of management and the actual bodies of managers. The space of work, the station, then becomes in part re/claimed by those doing absolutely essential, but usually under-acknowledged, under-appreciated, and under-rewarded work.

With the success of the job action, the union wanted to focus on how local action was bringing them the best success. In this context the union began to make significant changes to its educational practices. The first real change in this light

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Dean argued that the public support was largely due to the union's strict adherence to not impacting patients and residents.

66 Fiske uses the example of a group of homeless men at a particular homeless shelter who he said constructed a locale in the shelter. These men were subject to intense observation and regulation in terms of their daily (and nightly) practices. What they read, did, and watched was (is) highly structured. Yet, these men managed to create a resistant community within this station. For example, they slept during the day so at night they could gamble (forbidden) and watch movies and read smuggled (censored) magazines (Fiske 1993: chapter 1, esp. 23-25).
came in the early 1990's where the HEU instituted an Occupational Health and Safety course (OHS) that according to Ms. Dean involved a bit more "participation". They began to draw on a publication from a US organization called "The Troublemakers Handbook" for ideas on how to do workplace action that met their job action criteria. The union started to teach these action ideas in the OHS classes.

In 1992 the union revamped the shop steward courses, to draw more on the experience and knowledge of members regarding the collective agreement. Karen Dean reflected:

We took a much more, well not yet a popular education model, but a model where you drew, a little bit of popular education in the sense of drawing from members the experience and knowledge and building their confidence that they really knew how to pick up a collective agreement and interpret it, so we stopped the process of standing in front of people and saying 'this is what your collective agreement says.'

However, there was still no facilitation training. Yet, in offering "optional courses" the union began to draw more and more on outside facilitators that had a popular education background. The HEU reps got exposure and experience in popular education techniques.

That popular education is not just a set of techniques is a crucial point that I discussed in Chapter Two. In beginning a process towards using popular education in their trainings, HEU went through a period of focusing on techniques. Janet Fairbanks observed:

[Popular Education] techniques is sort of the way the transition worked. We started [in the early 90s] doing it as techniques without really understanding the whole philosophy. We were picking up on fun things, games, and stuff like that, that was participatory, without really having a grasp of what the philosophy was.
The change in understanding, according to Janet Fairbanks and Karen Dean was exposure to the popular education handbook, published by the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Change, *Educating for a Change* (Arnold et al. 1991). Both educators emphasized the use of "the spiral model" as a major influence in altering how they saw and organized a popular education approach in the union. The spiral model is a design model for workshops that involves five stages: 1) start with the experience of participants; 2) look for patterns, 3) add new information and theory, 4) practice skills, strategize and plan for action; 5) apply in action (Arnold et al. 1991: 38).

This model helped the organizers to realize what was missing in their work - a sense of objectives over strict processes, "[We were] not clear about our objectives, they were having fun, they enjoyed it, they were probably learning something but that wasn't really appropriate sometimes" (Janet Fairbanks). The spiral model, Fairbanks noted, helped explain to facilitators why one throws out the agenda:

> It's not just reading a script and asking a question, written on a paper, and going from whatever happens from there, but ... you have to think, and pay attention and listen to what is going on in the room. But if you know what your objectives are you can figure out how to ask a different question.

The HEU incorporated the spiral model into their first training of facilitators in 1993.

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67 This book was brought to the attention of Karen Dean by the first Equity Officer, Betty Baxter, who had been (and is) a professional consultant and trainer prior to her position at the union.

68 This model, as presented in Arnold et al. does promote in some ways the us/them dichotomy that I wrote about in the previous chapter. For example, "The spiral model values not only the knowledge and experience of the outside expert, but also - and even more - the knowledge and experience of participants" (Arnold et al. 1991: 39 emphasis mine). There is no inherent reason that this should be true. I agree to giving special emphasis to those more subject to dominant power, but there is no reason to assume that those are the ones participating in one's spiral model exercises.
1993 was also the year that Karen Dean wrote a new educational philosophy (see opening quotation of this chapter) for the union. The provincial executive endorsed the philosophy and significantly increased the education budget from about $500,000 (more in the year with summer school) to 1.3 million\(^6\). At this time the educational department was a staff of one, though the increase soon permitted the addition of Janet Fairbanks onto the staff.

This new philosophy both reflected and helped lay the groundwork for the new directions in education the HEU was taking. Some of the "goals" in the educational philosophy include:

- prepare ourselves to confront the changing political and organizational challenges facing the union

- develop and strengthen an organizing model of servicing which taps the creative energy of all members to take collective, locally-based, provincially co-ordinated, action to solve their problems

- acknowledge the diversity of our membership and to build on the strength that diversity brings. Challenge all forms of discrimination and inequality which weaken our ability to work together in a united way. Help to create a union which at all levels and in all aspects of its activity truly involves and reflects a diverse membership. (see Appendix B for complete HEU Education Philosophy).

This philosophy is reflected in the words of one summer school facilitator who argued that in terms of simply doing shop stewards courses, "That world is gone from us." She observed:

Being caught in a formal labour relations framework is not the way the labour movement will survive. [We need to] go to the membership

\(^6\)HEU provides wages, transportation, lodging, food, and child care support for participants in education programs, some of which comes from this budget.
for ideas, for campaigning approaches, mobilizing approaches. Battle of the hearts and minds of membership at a very big level. I don't think you can engage that battle if you don't do an educational approach that helps people develop critical minded approaches and that means a lot of emphasis on their autonomy and their critical thinking skills in the education process.

This educational philosophy reflected the desire of the union to move toward a more organizing organizing approach. The organizing approach that was developing called for an educational approach that fosters critical thinking.

The evolving educational practices of the union movement were evident in the 1995 summer school. In the 1995 summer school there were three tracks of courses with about thirty courses total. These tracks included a number of skills courses as well as courses on homophobia, women and the unions, and a course for men looking at equity issues. The latter course was a response to the fact that HEU is approximately 85% women and, as one education staff member put it "A lot of men don't get it or don't know how to support if they do get it."

In conducting the 1995 Summer School, a number of outside facilitators were hired to assist the union trainers and the course designs and facilitations were mixed in their approaches in the short courses that were made available. Some courses used a popular education approach and others did not, depending on content and style. What was understood as "popular education" surely was and continues to vary from context and person to person. Some form of it was happening though in bits and pieces, and this, according to one trainer, was important because of the need to change how unions operate, such as the over-dependence on arbitration.

Contract Arbitration was a course that the Provincial Executive wanted to see at the 1995 Summer School. This course covered such issues as, "What has the arbitrator decided that the contract means?" This is distinct from what the union
may think the contract means. This distinction is crucial in terms of how the union understands and pursues a great number of issues. One trainer reported that:

There is still an element in the union that if an arbitrator has ruled against us on something, then they don't want to pursue that issues at all, doesn't matter what the social justice aspect is, gee we'll lose it at arbitration so what's the point. Or they only want to have an arbitrator solve the problem, its safe, they can go dress up in a suit and feel comfortable and important. We have reps that are in that ballpark as well, who want to fix things for people and not work with people in an organizing approach.

Obviously this perspective has strong ramifications in terms of what is taken on in the union and how it is taken on. If arbitration is not a successful route for a social justice issue there are certainly a number of other avenues, such as job actions, to take on such issues. A shift in educational policy was, at least in the eyes of a number of 1997 summer school trainers I spoke with, an attempt to shift away from an arbitration-focused perspective into a more grassroots organizing approach. Ms. Dean reflected,

Changing over to an organizing approach or taking advantage of our strength in organizing is really bucking 100 years of labour code history. . . . The whole history of labour law in Canada is narrowing industrial action and I don't just mean striking, . . . [I mean] narrowing people's capacities to act and to enforce the collective agreement without third party intervention. The whole system is based on third party intervention. . . . It's like turning the Titanic. It's a long, slow process. That was another big goal in education, and popular education is a natural support for that, a process that is trying to take advantage of a more organizing approach.

The grassroots organizing approach, though, was alive not just in terms of job actions, but in the formation of groups to promote issues of equity in the union.
Addressing Issues of Equity

In terms of equity issues, HEU, has become increasingly progressive over the last decade. In 1988 HEU implemented a human rights policy where at every event respecting the rights\textsuperscript{70} of others had to be referred to. One staff person acknowledged that merely mentioning the document didn't do much, but it was a start. This person reflected "Every rep knew there was racism in all of the workplaces [but there was] no formal way to deal with it." Though, to begin, in 1991 the union negotiated language on harassment and 3rd party mediation on conflicts.

In the early 90's HEU bargained in their collective agreement for health care benefits for same sex partners. While the employer accepted this proposal the health provider did not. HEU successfully took the health provider to the Supreme Court of British Columbia to secure these benefits. This was the union's first major act in support of gay and lesbian issues.

At the 1992 HEU convention (conventions are held every even year) a resolution was passed to specifically address homophobia in shop steward's courses. This proposal did not mandate other forms of oppression to be addressed, though other forms of oppression were beginning to be addressed in the advanced shop steward courses, in an un-systematic way.

Support for gay and lesbian rights continued, and eventually contributed toward the formation of what became known as the Equity Caucus (EC). Specifically, in the 1993 the union offered to support ten members of the union to attend a conference on gay and lesbian rights. However the union had a difficulty in recruiting people to go. A number of people privately reported to one union staff person that it was not safe to be "out" in their locals and therefore they could not

\textsuperscript{70} In chapter Two in my discussion of "The rational subject" I cite Sherene Razack's point that in the consideration of what is "equal" in rights discourse the idea of what is "just" can be lost (Razack 1993b: 49).
Following the conference (with some union members attending), the union sponsored focus groups on issues of equity at the 1993 summer school. These groups expanded into other issues to eventually become in 1994 the Equity Caucus. Again, the Equity Caucus had (and has) four sub-groups: Lesbian and Gays, Ethnic Diversity, First Nations, and People with Disabilities. Each group was and is provided with an annual budget of $40,000.

Soon after their formation, the Provincial Executive supported a conference for the Equity Caucus to establish goals. The Provincial Executive, in the summer of 1995, agreed to hire an Equity Officer on a temporary basis. The mandate for the Equity Caucus was temporary, until the convention of 1996. Essentially the mandate of the caucus was to advise the union on education and policy.

Up until the 1996 convention the EC focused a lot on energy on educating members about the importance of equity issues and the need for more resources to be put into equity issues. During this time a two videos were produced, including one on various forms of oppressions in the workplace and another for a specific work site where a union member was returning to work after a sex change. The union, along with the EC, made the video to provide education and support around transgender issues.

The EC also focused energy into presenting the argument that the Equity Caucus and their sub-groups should become standing committees and have automatic delegates to the convention floor. Such a change in status would require proposals to the HEU Constitution and Bylaws committee for the 1996 HEU convention. In fact, it's possible that the final spark to really try a more systematic and intentional approach to using popular education at the 1997 Summer School

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71 For example, one union member told me that prior to 1994 an openly gay person could not in most cases be elected to conventions. This person believes that this is less true now, though there are still regions that have no members in the Lesbian and Gay caucus.

72 A professional director was hired and actors with experience in popular theatre assisted EC and other union members in writing the skits for these videos. The discrimination in the workplace video is used in some shop steward courses.
was not just a growing consensus regarding changing educational approaches, but rather the, at times, very contentious 1996 Annual HEU Convention.

1996 HEU Convention

"[The Provincial Executive's action] rocked the union to its foundation."

Convention participant

The 1996 HEU Convention was a significant event in terms of the 1997 Summer School for at least three reasons: the approval of the Equity Caucus subgroups standing committees, the Provincial Executive's response to this vote, and finally the push from the rank and file to have a summer school in 1997. As will be made clear, each of these actions had important direct and indirect influence on the 1997 Summer School.

At the 1996 HEU Convention there were different proposals to the Constitution and Bylaws committee regarding the status of the Equity Caucus, including a fair amount of identical motions from different locals to make the four sub-groups of the Equity Caucus standing committees with automatic delegates to the convention (thereby making them a formal aspect of the union73). The multiple proposals in support of the EC was the result of the education work of the Equity Caucus. The provincial executive (PE) also had a motion regarding the EC that stopped short of providing automatic delegates to the floor of the convention.

In the vast majority of cases, the motion of the PE is the one chosen by the Constitution and Bylaws committee74 to be brought to the floor for a vote. In this case the Equity Caucus' motion was brought to the floor. One person at the convention reported to me that when it became clear what was happening, she

73 This motion would mean that the chair of each of the EC sub-groups would have a vote at the convention. Practically at the conventional level it would mean adding four votes to about 500.

74 This is an ad hoc committee that is appointed by the provincial executive. There are no staff or provincial executive on the committee, though the committee does have staff support. Members of the committee are local activists.
turned to a friend and said, "Ohh my god, all hell is going to break loose, hold on for this ride, this is going to be interesting." She explained, "We all knew this is not what was expected."

The motion was debated hotly for about two hours. Ultimately, though, the motion passed by over a two-thirds majority. The length of the debate alone signals some strong resistance to questioning issues of power and privilege in the union. More importantly perhaps was the discourse used in the debate which at times was reduced to such racist speech as "special interests."

I name the concept and term "special interest" as racist speech because its use in this context is embedded with negative and prejudicial assumptions about people who are not able-bodied straight whites. To invoke a concern that groups consisting of people not represented in the "mythical norm" of identity are "special interests", and (by extension) raise concerns that these groups may unfairly be given resources or opportunities, assumes a number of things: 1) that the system, organization, or union (in this case) operates solely on merit. (Therefore, the union is an island against the racism, etc. of the society and / or the larger society is devoid of racism, etc.); 2) disproportional representation of white men in positions of power is due to merit, and by extension; 3) disproportionate under-representation of people who are not white, straight, and able-bodied in positions of power is due to the inferior character, culture or being of people of colour, lesbians and gays, people of aboriginal descent and people with disabilities.

In other words, to rally against "special interests" places cultural, political, and economic phenomena onto the pathologized bodies of those not in power. The story told here is that it's not that lesbian women, for instance, face unique forms of harassment or that union hiring practices have historically favored whites but that some groups and individuals are oversensitive and lazy.

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75 The budget for each sub-group of the EC is now $40,000 a year, with the Equity Officer controlling a budge of $25,000.
That North America is deeply imbedded in racism, classism, homophobia and other oppressions should, of course, go without saying. In fact, the notion of autonomous individuals, rewarded solely by their effort, flies in the face of the premise of unions in the first place. Unions originated and sustain themselves in part through the recognition that capital provides disproportionate power to those that control it (and inherit it). The word "special" is essentially a claim that in a system that is equal there are certain groups that wish to be above the rest of us.

Teun A. van Dijk argues that terms such as "quotas" (or in this case "special interests") act as "buzz tactics" which serve to present the users of the term as concerned with egalitarianism (i.e. a happy union family of "brothers and sisters") while simultaneously attacking the less powerful (Dijk 1993: 84). Dijk observes that the use of blatantly racist discourse is quite rare. Rather, racist talk takes more subtle forms. In this case, I would argue, the larger hegemonic story of liberalism is told through the term of "special interests". Of course in the larger society the same liberalism story is told to name unions as "special interests".

Dijk argues that these social and cultural beliefs are functional, they must serve the interests of the group or institution using them (Dijk 1993: 42). While I question the rationalism underlying this claim (there are many hegemonic beliefs that do not serve those that accept them) it is well worth asking "who benefits?" from an discussion opposing "special interests". The answer, of course, are those in dominant social and political locations.

Among the many descriptors I heard (especially from members of the Equity Caucus) regarding the debate, those that seem to sum up the experience well are simply that it was "very difficult and emotional". One person of colour in the Equity Caucus, "Mr. Cummins" observed,

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76Dijk observes "On the contrary, more or less shared official egalitarian and humanitarian norms and values in ethnic relations require a more subtle, indirect, and strategic way of speaking or writing about ethnic minority groups" (Dijk 1993:283).
There were a lot of people who were saying 'it was so horrible about this and that and everything else' - I'm sure it was but I think it was a healthy thing for us to do. In the long run we achieved what we set out to do, by setting up the standing committees and we really did have a change in the direction of the union.

Another member of the Equity Caucus, of Aboriginal descent, agreed that it was "painful" and "frustrating" but that some of the stories needed to be heard. In this "painful" process clearly the pain belongs to those represented by the Equity Caucus77 who had to endure this possibly necessary, but racist, experience.

Ultimately, as I outline more in the next chapter, the union recognized the need to address in some critical form the cloud that hung over this debate. The 1997 Summer School was perceived as the first major opportunity to do this.

However, it was not only the debate on the Equity Caucus and the issues it raised that presented concerns for the union, it was also the role played and actions taken by the Provincial Executive.

One person at the convention, "Ms. Bosma" noted that the PE fought to get their motion to the floor (and therefore needed to defeat the motion that was on the floor) but "by doing that they appeared to be disagreeing with the idea of Equity Caucuses having delegates, an interesting political situation they found themselves in that they weren't ready for."

The overwhelming vote in support of the Equity Caucus wasn't lost on the PE. Soon after the Equity Caucus vote the PE took the extraordinary step of claiming widespread interference by the staff over the vote and "asked" the large bulk of the

77 I agree with the Equity Caucus members above that the outcomes of this debate seems very positive. However I also recognize that I agree from a position of privilege. Even if I were in that room the "debate" around future and safety and power and access in the union would not be about me or my body. Even as an ally I cannot imagine the visceral experience of such a debate but can recognize easily how it was "horrible". In a move to disrupt racism (in the broad sense) in the union, racism (sexism, abelism, etc.) was re-created in the form of a painful experience for people of colour, aboriginals, gays and lesbians and people with disabilities. How one disrupts racism without re-creating it or its effects is a theme that I explore later in my examination of the summer school.
staff to go home. Ms. Bosma reported that the PE knew that most of the staff were in favor of the motion to make the Equity Caucus a standing committee. She said that the PE believed that their motion didn't come to the floor due to staff interference and that the motion that did pass did so in part due to staff interference. Formal charges of interference were brought against four staff members, all of whom were ultimately cleared.

The rank and file responded angrily to the removal of staff by the PE. This anger by the members occurred for a number of reasons. For one, the staff were asked to leave quietly and very little information was forthcoming to members initially in terms of what had happened to the staff and who had made the decision. In addition, there were issues around the PE demonstrating such power at all at the convention. The PE is elected (or re-elected) during each convention. As such it is a time of transition of power and while the "old" PE reigns to the end of the convention, such a power-play by a potentially lame-duck PE was unprecedented at the union.

Furthermore, as Ms. Bosma observed:

The fact is that the members identify the staff as the union, we are the faces they see when they have a problem, we are the people that give them the bargaining course, we are the people that are with them on-site, we are the people that go to labour-management with them, we are the people that go to local meetings, we are the face of the union. The PE forgot the fundamental step that, quote/unquote, they are the leaders, the membership sees it as us.

The trust in the staff and anger at the PE was clear on the floor. Ultimately all of the PE members that had not already been re-elected were replaced in the elections (fourteen out of twenty). The new PE was credited by a few people, including two

78Union staff are expected to be "non-political" at union conventions as they are not elected or appointed representatives of any local. Their job is to provide various forms of support to delegates and the PE.
members of the equity caucus, with being more concerned about and dedicated to equity issues\textsuperscript{79}. In fact, one member of the Equity Caucus told me he thought the impetus to remove many PE members was in fact equally about supporting equity issues and anger at the PE for removing the staff.

However, the new PE is a completely white in its make-up. Mr. Cummins reflected:

Before we did have a couple of people of color on the executive, but there were some issues around them, they weren't really supporting the equity issues at the convention either. . . I disagree that we have a problem with that, we have a lot of allies on the Executive. . . At the convention we were really focusing on getting our resolutions and constitutional amendments past, we weren't really concentrating on political power in the electoral process, if you look at the cover it looks like we failed, but I don't think that we have, we have some strong allies.

I agree that the Equity Caucus made large strides at the convention, with the sub-groups becoming standing committees of the union. The "issues around them" that Mr. Cummins referred to above was that some of the people of colour on the PE were not very supportive of equity issues. However, that people of color are not represented in a PE that is perceived (by some) to be formally more open to equity concerns may reflect issues around who is able to be heard and seen as a progressive board member - are people of color that hold such positions seen as supporting "their own special interests groups" if they advocate around equity? In other words, was or is the price of advocating for equity issues too high for people of color in

\textsuperscript{79}One Equity Caucus member did argue that one reason the old PE was replaced was due to a lack of genuine concern of PE around issues of equity. She believes the new PE are "a little more open minded". However, given that the debate around the equity caucus was so vibrant I wonder if there would not have been more support for PE members who were opposed to the motion if the PE had not sent the staff home.
terms of marginalization, exclusion, etc.? In what ways is it more palatable for members to hear equity issues from a white PE?

I cannot pretend to know what answers there may be to these concerns, or even if the specifics of the situation relate to what I am raising here, but I do believe issues of representation are worth exploring by union members, especially the Equity Caucus (i.e. what does representation mean in the union?). Equity and the HEU will be discussed more in the context of the 1997 summer school.

On a final note, there was a proposal in 1996 to have a summer school every year, as up until that point the scheduling of summer schools had been inconsistent - with some being canceled for strikes, etc. This motion was defeated but there was strong support to have a summer school in 1997, which was supported.

The new PE, according to Ms. Bosma, "Sat down, discussed what we're going to do, knowing that there was going to be a summer school, they asked [the education staff] to put a proposal forward that would deal with trying to heal some of the wounds that came out of the 1996 convention." Ms. Bosma explains:

There is a huge rift now, there is a huge rift between those that want equity caucus and those that don't, there is a huge rift between staff and the PE, there is a huge rift between the membership and the PE, everybody. The very foundations were torn apart in '96 because the foundation we build on is that we're one happy family, we weren't. It was a good rift in retrospect.

This point illustrates the tensions between focusing on the bonds between union members (through their relationships with employers, the workplace, the union, 80Chris Allnutt, Secretary-Business Manager of the HEU Provincial Executive wrote in the HEU paper Guardian "Most of you will know that a decision to direct staff assigned to work at convention back to their normal jobs has caused some friction. Here too the tensions of change had an influence. It was a decision that hurt people who are actively committed to the union. . . . Yes we have to heal" [Allnutt 1996: 2]. These remarks were not directly related to the summer school but do reflect the perspective that there was a big rift.
etc.) and the need to acknowledge the very real power differences that exist within the union beneath the canopy of "worker" and "HEU member".

Importantly, as I explore in the next chapter, the designers\(^{81}\) of the summer school recognized that the rifts and issues that face(d) the union were not simply differences of perspective and opinion but of access, power and representation. The summer school was seen as a tool to begin to address these issues that emerged so clearly in the 1996 HEU Convention.

\(^{81}\)The primary designers of the summer school were Karen Dean, Janet Fairbanks, and Denise Nadeau, a community popular educator. See the next chapter for more on the design process.
Chapter 4
1997 Summer School: Issues in Planning, Design & Execution

From July 2, 1997 to July 10, 1997 the BC Hospital Employees Union hosted its summer school for 200 union activists. Given the changes in health care with regionalization, the participants were put into groups (thirteen of them) organized by geography. With thirteen facilitators and thirteen sub-groups, participants from all over British Columbia, and eight days of workshops, guest speakers, and political actions, it is of course impossible for me to begin to address or capture (or understand) all the complexities of the summer school. In fact, given the confines of space, I am unable to write about much of the data I have gathered. Appendix A provides a detailed overview of the summer school, including objectives of each workshop and a summary of the processes of each workshop.

In this chapter I examine how some of the key issues raised in chapter two were taken up in the HEU 1997 Summer School. I argue that the summer school operated with a progressive and critical perspective on a number of issues raised in Chapter Two. With my focus on equity issues, I also raise concerns about what I perceive as some problematic exercises and assumptions. Furthermore I deconstruct the rejection of the popular education approach (content and process) from some participants as a strategy to suppress equity issues, as well as an expression of concern regarding the style of learning the summer school demanded.

I raise the above issues through a discussion of the following, sometimes overlapping issues of the summer school: planning, goals-objectives-themes, who

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82 The union's definition of "activist" along with other themes and issues mentioned here are examined in more detail below.

83 Eleven of the facilitators were HEU staff, one was Denise Nadeau, the popular educator who was part of the design team, and the last was a trainer from the BC Nurses union.

84 I wish to acknowledge, as someone who has designed and delivered popular education workshops, the great benefit of hindsight in my analysis.
gets to go, organizing the event/philosophies, experience and popular education, participant perspectives on popular education, and snapshots of the school (on the body, class focused issues, global connections and perspectives, poor bashing, repeating the effects of racism, the equity events, democracy in the union, the rally).

Planning
"There was a feeling of the planning team that the larger picture and context of the struggle was being lost" summer school facilitator

A union in the context of a swarm of changes was the perception that most of the facilitators I spoke with had of the HEU in the mid 1990's. This was certainly the perspective of the three planners of the summer school, Karen Dean, Janet Fairbanks, and Denise Nadeau. Fairbanks reflected:

We knew that we needed to spend some time looking at 'where are we' in the changing world of health care and with all of the attacks on unions - we needed time to sit back and do some analysis. . . As a consequence [of the changes] what we knew we needed to do, the only way you could be creative with change and take advantage of it, is number one if you have confidence to deal with it and number two if you have some analysis to deal with it. And that was really the goal of the school - was to say this is exactly the wrong time to be talking with people about particular skills - this is the time to really appreciate our own capacity to look a new situation, analyze it, look at its contexts and then figure out what to do with it.

She also observed that the Equity Caucus debate at the 1996 convention (its content and its aftermath) were also crucial to their planning:

. . . for many people it [the debate] was the only thing they remember from convention. . . how do we talk about these issues, we hadn't had an opportunity since the convention to de brief that whole experience. We didn't de-brief that experience but what we did was we talked about the issues and integrated the issue of working - looking at differences. It gave the opportunity if people wanted to talk about the convention,
and by gosh they did, we never asked the question about convention but we knew it was going to come out. We gave the space for that to happen.

In that spirit Karen Dean approached the provincial executive with the proposal to base the summer school on three broad goals of the training, "Reflection, Regeneration and Renewal" (see below for more on these goals). The three planners, upon receiving approval for a very general proposal around these goals were given complete design control.

Clearly, much like the summer school that Razack writes about (1993b - see Chapter Two) there are very explicit perspectives and analysis underpinning the HEU summer school. While the process of the school is one that draws on the "experience" of participants (more on this below) the planners had pre-determined objectives, on which they were very explicit.

There were certainly major logistical obstacles in researching possible goals (or generative themes for that matter) of potential participants. There are approximately 44,000 members in HEU and while most would not really be eligible for summer school (see below) a great number are. Polling, interviewing, or surveying the potential membership would have been quite difficult, though surveying may have been possible.

However, logistics aside, the education staff clearly perceived a need in terms of providing a forum for some members to critically examine the union and the context the union was (is) operating in and planned the school with this in mind. The summer school was a chance to further promote the organizing model that the facilitators discussed above as well as process the 1996 convention.

I asked all of the facilitators I spoke with about the hopes they had for the summer school. What would come out of it? In most cases each local (out of approximately 300) had a limit of a couple of people who could potentially be

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85I discuss later what some participants believe they got out of the training.
accepted to summer school - for a total of 200 participants. 200 participants out of
44,000 is only about .0045% of the union. In asking the question "What could come
out of it?" I acknowledge that I'm asking it of myself - why should I bother to study
such a thing as the summer school? I'm reminded by Sherene Razack's claim that
"No educator could credibly claim that a two week residential program changes
political practices in any remarkable way" (Razack 1993b: 54). Yes, remarkable
changes are probably not a realistic expectation for such a school. However, the
humble beginnings of change may be. None of the facilitators or planners expected
shattering results, but were hoping that positive changes would continue and grow.
The responses of one facilitator seemed to reflect this sentiment:

The goal is to remember this is a grassroots union and everything has
to come from the grassroots, we must start to put the tools out there,
we cannot do it one at a time. . . . not even a third of [our members]
will ever, ever, ever get to a union education training. The idea is not
to teach people [one] body at a time. . . the idea is to start changing the
ground culture, having a look at what is happening on the ground, so
when issues come up about poverty at the locals and there is a
discussion at a local meeting we've got somebody in the room that's
going 'no, no lets hang on a bit here and think about this'. There is no
intention, nor should there be that the 1997 Summer School is going to
change the entire political social outlook of all 44,000 members of the
hospital employees union and by the time we get to convention in 1998
we are going to be a loving, caring family and we'll all think the same
way. The goal we had was to start. The goal we had is 'it ain't gonna
happen if we don't start.'

In general this perspective reflects a recognition of the unique knowledge, skills and
perspectives that union members bring to their workplaces and union locals. Such
a process can serve to reinforce and foster "organic intellectuals" which were
discussed in Chapter Two.
The broad perspectives on the summer school documented above ultimately evolved into more specific goals, objectives and a theme.

**Reflections on the Goals, Objectives, and Theme of the Summer School**

In the beginning of the summer school participants were introduced to the goals and objectives of the school (see Figure 1) along with the theme, "Creating New Options to Act Together" and these were compared to the expectations of each sub-group. My wish here is not to examine each goal, objective or the theme in any great detail. Except for the "Reflection, Regeneration and Renewal" goals, none of the respondents spoke about the specific goals, objectives or themes. I provide Figure 1 to give context around the planning and execution of the summer school.

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<td>1997 HEU Summer School Goals and Objectives</td>
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**Goals**

| Reflection: | To recognize and affirm our collective power to motivate and shape social change. |
| Regeneration: | To build energy, inspiration and a sense of direction. |
| Renewal: | To learn skills and create new knowledge to act for our vision. |

**Objectives**

1. To discuss the challenges and contradictions we face in our daily work as activists and union members.
2. To reflect on how our local's' struggles are connected to the broader picture.
3. To discuss and analyze the forces that divide us and identify ways of working together.
4. To discuss ways of deepening democracy in our union.
5. To learn information and/or skills that can help us work at the local level.
6. To identify and plan how to apply our skills to activate our locals.
The theme, goals and objectives illustrate the tension of attempting to foster a collective vision and unity while also seeking to recognize and disrupt internal oppressions. For example, the theme and language of the goals, objectives and theme is, not surprisingly, one of unity. The participants are united in some ways in their relationship to management and the union. The objectives, though, recognize that there are "contradictions" and a need to deepen democracy.

I argued in Chapter Two that alliances are complex and unions ultimately can gain strength by critically looking at differences. For the HEU to examine the "forces that divide us" (objective three) it can be difficult to not have the "race to innocence" and fail to recognize that a key force that "divides us" is "us". For example, in regards to issues of democracy in her session, one trainer reflected:

I guess what I would say is that there is a greater resistance to look at the democratic issues internally than there is externally, which is not really unusual for any organization but it actually is a very big question for the labour movement.

Of course issues of equity, such as at the 1996 convention, are also often very divisive. Those that advocate around such divisive issues can be accused of hurting the "movement". In the 1997 summer school such potentially divisive issues were brought forth, and I examine below the tension and balance of fostering unity in part through critical analysis.

The goal of "regeneration" was brought up by a number of the participants I spoke with as well as in a number of the evaluations. One participant, I call "Mr. Gries," claimed, "the main concern of everybody is burnout. You've got three people in a thousand person local doing everything from every committee to whatever." Echoing this, another activist, I call "Ms. Roth" said:

Many of us still volunteer a great deal of our time and energy, which is an interesting thing, because the union, the union activists never
dream of allowing you to do that for your employer. I do think there's an issue with that conflict. I volunteer a huge number of hours of my life for union issues, even though the basic action of doing so is really against how the union treats its members. The other thing worth looking at or reflection on that is employees of the union. ... The people that are hired as staff have huge expectations made of them, huge. I don't mean to be nasty but there is a little bit of hypocrisy in that.

Ms. Roth raises serious issues around what amounts to exploitation of labour by the union (and unions in general). While this issue is well beyond the scope of this paper, it is connected in the sense that union staff and volunteers are under great work burdens. Certainly the union would rather have more activists, each sharing the burden in more equitable ways. In fact, Mr. Gries (and another respondent I discuss below, "Mr. Hall") argued that this issue should have been a fundamental one at the summer school - how to get more people active.

A great many participants (including Mr. Hall and Mr. Gries) described the opportunity at summer school to network with other activists and share concerns as a great source of rejuvenation. Dividing people into groups by region facilitated the formal and informal connections between people.

The effect of the latter should certainly not be overlooked. Participants cited repeatedly the importance of meeting people in their region and the relief they felt from hearing that other people have the same problems they do. A number of participants spoke of the bonding experiences of their group as they went through the group and dealt with difficult issues. Part of this bonding is the importance of the informal learning and fun that participants had. One activist, "Ms. Sawchuck" said:

86Livingstone reports that "Several recent U.S. and Canadian national surveys have found that over 70 percent of the job training received by employees is informal"(Livingstone 1998: 38). While I am writing about formal education that is not considered "on the job" I recognize that informal learning, through peer exchange primarily is absolutely necessary for the success of projects such as the HEU summer schools.
You do a tremendous amount of networking that has nothing to do with the subject you are talking about, you schmooze like mad right, I mean you do if you're smart. And that's very good. . . .there is more of that willingness to not only be concerned about what is happening [in our workplace] but what's happening on other people's [workplaces] as well - and I think a lot of that arises out of the fact that you meet people from those locals. In this kind of a setting, there is a formal component to it, but the informal component to summer school is bigger than the formal component, you know hang together with the guys after class, tell lies, swap stories, you know that kind of a collegiate thing.

Ms. Sawchuck's claim in some ways both supports and challenges some of the assumptions of this thesis. I agree strongly with Sawchuck that the informal learning that occurs at such events is crucial. In that light, Sawchuck, who while being very supportive of the popular education model at summer school is in essence challenging the focus I make on the formal aspects of the school.

However, I believe that the format of a participatory process that is focused on critical thinking promotes discussion and formal/informal learning. One participant, highly supportive of the popular education format ("I think probably I learned a lot more than I would have had I been just sitting at a desk listening to a lecture") was so interested in the issues presented around disability that during the free time she went to the library at the location and watched six to ten videos on issues of disability. She said prior to the summer school she probably would not have supported a strike around issues of disability but now would.

The formal aspect of the program is based on discussion and dialogue so that relationships (however cordial or not) are more readily formed than in a banking education format. I also hold that the formal content of the school retains much merit on its own.

Who Goes to Summer School?
Summer School is open to "activists" in the union who commit to being active for at least two more years. While there are a number of ways to be active formally and informally in the union, all of the participants I spoke with hold a position in their local, such as Shop Steward.

For summer school 1997 there were fewer applicants than anticipated and therefore none of the applicants were turned down. While approximately 30% of the participants at the 1997 summer school were people of colour or First Nations peoples (in part due to regional demographics) it seems to me that the application process may provide a barrier to getting applications at all, especially from those who have not been successful in getting elected to office.

Officially, openings to apply to summer school are posted and members apply to go. Two participants I spoke with, both who have been active with equity issues, claimed that some postings are not necessarily "open" and who gets to see applications or the process that applications go through is highly political. One member said that upon their return from summer school the people that went gave a report to the members:

We had people say "gee I'd like to go to summer school next time around" [We] let them know, all these avenues are here for you its not just for the elected people . . . a lot of them didn't know that.

In Chapter 1 I discussed the circular logic that can dictate who goes to trainings and classes\. While the HEU certainly needs to invest in and reward those that have been active at the local level in a formal way, recognition should also be made that for many, especially those already marginalized, access to formal union activism can be a substantial challenge. A member of the Equity Caucus, now formally active reflected:

\[87\] ... the unionist tendency is to seek not the most oppressed in a group of workers, but those who have leverage with which something could be done to remedy injustices\[Martin 1994: 93].
How are you going to get on an executive if nobody, you know, nominates you? And if you don't have the self-esteem you, you know, you're not going to volunteer yourself. If someone says to you 'I really think you should try to run for something' and you say 'I don't think I can do it', or whatever, and the person says 'yeah, I think you'd be really good at it, you know why don't you try, we'll support you' then you have some self confidence there and someone's giving you support. If you don't have that then you kind of just waver in the background, I did that for many years.

Being formally active requires support from members. In a discussion with me regarding the application process to summer school (and other union events) a member (different from above) of the equity caucus observed,

People do not understand that when you are a minority you are oppressed, it truly means that - you are not the most popular kid on that block. That means you are not likely to become the chairman of your local, even though there are exceptions to that, commonly you won't.

This member emphasized that the most active formally are often the most popular and those that raise and support what some may see as controversial issues (such as equity) may not be the most popular members. Furthermore, as another summer school participant pointed out, workers that have certain disabilities may not be able to hold positions due to health but are eager to be active in another way.

The application form does seem to emphasize a formal relationship to the union. The form asks if the applicant has ever applied to or attended previous HEU summer schools, then asks information on "present and previous local union activities" and provides a number of boxes to check regarding committees, etc. However, if one is not on a committee or a delegate there are spaces under "other community/politically-related activities" to write about contributions to the local,
community or political issues. Arguably this could carry the same weight but again, all the people I spoke with had a formal relationship to the union and it would seem significant that the form only asks about non-formal activism in a different section.

**Organizing the Event/Philosophies in Planning and Practice**

With the issues around popular education practice and theory raised in Chapter Two on my mind, I asked planners and facilitators about their assumptions and discussions around issues such as "safe space" and "experience".

To the credit of the trainers, the issue of "safe space" was explicitly discussed as myth - one trainer reported that they "talked about the illusion of safety" during the trial run of the summer school for the facilitators. However, as another facilitator acknowledged, issues of safety are very hard to take on:

> We talked about it [safety] a fair bit but the truth is you can't create a safe space, we acknowledged that. Sometimes people have a false sense of safety and they disclose things assuming that there is safety in the room.

Who risks and how much is always an important issue, especially when there is a strong power differential between a teacher/facilitator and participants. Inspiring people to organize always raises issues around who is doing the inspiring and who is doing the organizing. In this case, most of the trainers and planners are members of the union and share some common bonds of risk through that connection. However, all of the planners and eleven of the thirteen facilitators were white, which raises questions about how the planners and facilitators understood the issues of risk and privilege.

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88The planning team ran the facilitators through the curriculum to act as a test run and to provide additional training support to the facilitators.
One facilitator said there were discussion in the training of facilitators sessions around issues of class difference between the facilitators (staff) and the participants (rank and file). It did not seem to me from my conversations with facilitators and planners that there was any significant discussion around the privilege and positions of the facilitators.

Given the context of the Equity Caucus debate and the emphasis on participation in the summer school, the trainers did plan (and do) an "agreements" section "To agree on conditions for a productive learning environment" (HEU 1997: 30). Denise Nadeau, one of the planners and facilitators, has written elsewhere:

Agreements encourage participants to express their needs early in the course. They enable the entire group to take responsibility for the group’s functioning. Keep in mind that some agreements can silence group members. In our experience, especially in groups which are cross-class or cross-race, agreements around communication forms - using ‘constructive criticism’ or ‘I’ statements, for example - can silence expressions of anger at racist or classist remarks. We learned that a general discussion on how to deal with these remarks is more useful than agreeing on a formula response (Nadeau 1996:37).

How this is taken up is directly connected to the understanding and use of "experience".

**On Experience and Popular Education**

Clearly the HEU educational philosophy and the philosophy of the summer school is based largely around the use of "experience" as a (or the) foundation to learning. It is this use of experience along with an analysis of power that I interpret to be the basis of the term "popular education" within the context of the HEU.

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89 I'm quoting here from the "1997 HEU Summer School Facilitator Notes" a thirty-two page document for the facilitators that organizes each session chronologically and summarizes each activity under the headings "Subtheme," "Specific Objective," "Content," "Technique/Procedure," "Time," "Materials," and "Notes". Appendix A is a summary of much of this document.
While some may debate whether a process that is so controlled "from above", such as the HEU summer school, is truly a popular-education practice, I, again, am not interested in promoting some pure form of popular education. I am interested in how various traditions and forms of popular education were used in this union context.

The format of the summer school was primarily rejection of the lecture format, though the facilitators certainly established parameters of discussion and guided the process toward completing certain tasks. (Later on I will look at a few of these specific sessions.)

The "rational subject" that Ellsworth and others write about (see Chapter Two) was disrupted a bit as aspects of the summer school had participants report "feelings". I still question the limits of this within popular education (or any formal educational process) but probing feelings is still a disruption of the very rationalist perspective that often prevails in such environments. Emotions, of course, are imbedded in the understanding and expression of experience.

I asked facilitators (and some participants) about how if the group was expected to respect experience how one respected or took up the experience of a participant that was, for example, classist or racist.

One facilitator of colour responded:

I think it would come down to is, trying to get experience from the group, see if everyone feels the same way, "Is that what everyone's experience is?" That way you usually can get the other grades of different experience, and sometimes I would interject in terms of my own experience, on the issue of racism. . . . Sometimes it may be easier to bring other issues that's probably not racism but discrimination, that everyone may have experienced. We talk about discrimination and how they feel and relate that back to racism. . . . I think the important thing is not to, in a way, shame people of what they are thinking because it's a system that makes people think that way. And there is a lot of things in that system that reinforces it.
Echoing this, Mr. Cummins, a member of the Equity Caucus said:

I think there was a lot of participation in my group. If someone came out with something really sort of way off, there were usually other people in the class that would say "well hang on here, that's not quite right and here's a few more facts about it".

These types of examples were repeated by a number of people. Experience was not something that was accepted uncritically at the HEU - people were challenged to explicitly examine a number of dominant beliefs and assumptions, including those they cited as being their experience. All of the facilitators I spoke with reported critical and sometimes heated discussions. One facilitator reported that participants in her group needed to be reminded to not seek representation of whole cultures in a single person (in this case a visible minority). In this sense there was not a worship of experience and a simplistic us/them mantra present in this school.

Yet, it seems that, as discussed in Chapter Two, in these critical moments around experience it often became a matter of competing experiences, where some form of rationality becomes the final judge. What seemed absent to me was the process of deconstructing the notion of experience itself, i.e. how people come to "know". In other words, what cultural, historical, symbolic, discursive forms constitute what is understood as knowledge?

As I introduced earlier in the thesis, I'm not referring here to the important processes of uncovering suppressed histories (such as that of labour histories or histories of women) or even the importance of presenting alternative perspectives on situations and phenomena (such as a critical perspective regarding corporations or taxation). I'm referring here to the additional challenge of tracing the historical

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90 This type of reminder may be just the sort of "agreement" I would have proposed in the beginning of the conference.
and contemporary contexts that regulate the creation of subjects that in many cases are understood as "natural". From this perspective one would educate on and advocate for the rights of people with disabilities as well as deconstruct how "disability" is known and has been known through various histories.

**Participant Perspective On Pop-Ed Process and Content**

Any discussion on popular education needs to address content and process. Later in the thesis I look at some specific sessions of the summer school that explore content and process, but this section explores more generally some of the perspectives of participants on the popular education approach.

Near the conclusion of the summer school the participants were asked to conduct an evaluation in the form a letter to a friend, "Honestly describing what the course meant to them. What would you honestly tell a friend?" (HEU 1997:32). Of the approximately 200 participants 160 completed an evaluation. Ten or so people responded negatively, expressing desires for skills based training and some expressing a reaction against focusing on political and social issues, such as equity. The vast majority of the evaluations were quite positive, citing a number of rewarding aspects of the training, including the social/political nature of the topics. For example,

I am especially happy that so much time was spent on examining social issues and I was really pleased that a key member of our local was here for that reason (he's the type who thinks trade unionism begins and ends with the collective agreement, the bone head) [#47].

The format of the course was great as we did most of the work step by step [#90].

I was particularly impressed with the subtle way the course help bring out the realities of power control, and equity [#147].
The format was one of popular education, where we examined several issues facing us all. . . . The process was creative and helped us to break out of our boundaries to explore different ways of doing things [#5].

Such sentiments were largely shared in the ten questionnaires returned to me regarding the school (see Appendix E for a copy of the survey). In response to question #3 on the survey, "Why or why not would you encourage a friend to attend a similar Summer school?" one respondent wrote:

It is important that we look at things in a way that takes in the 'big picture'. Individual issues are important, but they shouldn't be the only issue. Good environment for interaction.

Another stated:

I would definitely recommend summer school to anyone and everyone who isn't afraid to broaden their mind.

Interestingly, very few of the evaluations mentioned the term "popular education" and many of the participants I interviewed were not sure of the term when I inquired about its use. I suspect this had to do mostly with the lack of the use of the term "popular education" in the summer school. When I asked about the process and the content - which I am much more interested in than terms and titles - most had fairly strong opinions and most of them positive, such as the reflections of these activists:

I think it put everything in perspective, like how everything fit in with other things. You don't kind of get that when you have these traditional courses.

The caliber of facilitator they had there was amazing. . . . The ability of these people [facilitators] to lead you through this minefield and not tell you what to think but to bring people to the awareness that their
attitudes might be self-defeating. . . it was out of this world. . . it was mind boggling and I don't boggle easily.

With the exception of one evaluation that seemed to suggest more and deeper political analysis, the negative feedback was usually framed as a desire for more nuts and bolts courses. However, nuts and bolts classes are and continue to be available at the HEU through the shop steward courses as well as through outside courses that the union will provide some reimbursement for should a member wish to attend.

The rejection of the popular education approach (including process and content) reveals, I believe, a few important issues. One, there is a concern by some activists about the changes in the union structure and the need to develop grassroots skills for local activists. However, I believe the expression of this concern, in terms of the need for more "nuts and bolts" reveals a rejection for the need to critically examine issues of equity and power in the union itself. Therefore, the plea for more nuts and bolts can be seen as a strategy to reject the validity of equity claims.

An interview I conducted with "Mr. Hall" is illustrative of these points. Mr. Hall is a white man who has been active in the union for almost twenty years and has held a great number of positions in his local executive.

In response to question # 3 on the survey (see above) Mr. Hall responded with the following:

I would not recommend that anyone waste their time on a summer school set up as it was in 1997! There was a lack of reality in the whole set-up.

Mr. Hall answered the next question on the survey, "What was the most important thing you learned in the training", by urging
That our union must go back to teaching the 'nuts & bolts' of what shop stewards need to know in their locals. The last school was a horrendous waste of time & money!

Mr. Hall indicated on the survey that he would be willing to be interviewed and I had a phone conversation of approximately forty minutes with him. The following exchange captures some of Mr. Hall's key issues with the summer school in terms of process and content:

Me: In 97, this last one, you had written that this [the summer school] was not a very good thing at all.

Hall: No, it bore no relationship to anything in the workplace, nothing. It didn't even bear much relationship to the politics at the time.

Me: What did you think of, they spoke about it being done in a popular education approach, how would you describe what that was there, did they talk about that?

Hall: It wasn't an education because it was self-educating, supposedly. If you have no idea on the subject how can you educate yourself on the subject you know nothing about?

[Later]

Me: If nuts and bolts courses are taken care of do you think there is any role for this sort of political training that's gone on off and on at the HEU for the last few years?

Hall: It has to be more of an option because it doesn't appeal to everybody, not a generic course everybody can take and understand. To me it was very, how to put it, intelligentsia, sort of an upper class part of mental thinking, it didn't apply down in the trenches like. The average person in the trenches it just blew by them like it was going out of style. . . . Most people go to courses in the union to learn how to do something, you don't know how to do it already, you want to learn how. And if you don't give them something that teaches them how to do
something about their problem they end up going home and forgetting all about it. Its sort of a second level, once you know the basics you may want to get into higher level stuff, but you can't go into college without going to high school first.

As I discuss below I believe Mr. Hall's responses reflect more than a concern about the need for nuts and bolts courses. First though, his criticisms of the processes itself are intriguing as he asks "how can you educate yourself on the subject you know nothing about?". As someone who is obviously invested in the theory and practice of popular education I found myself troubled by his comments (which is evident in my asking him if he could ever see a role for such courses). It sounded to me that Mr. Hall felt like he and his group had been put in a situation that made them feel frustrated and ignorant (and challenged in their power - more on this below). His point raises the question: In what ways is a popular education approach a distinct way of knowing and learning that silences certain people?

To be clear, I very much reject the notion that learning happens only in schools or only amongst certain groups of people. Popular labour educators need to be clear that all forms of educational structure are an imposition of some kind (be it top-down nuts and bolts or a more participatory popular education model) there are assumptions in popular education that the participants want it, need it or will benefit from it. I wrote about this earlier. Mr. Hall's points remind me that in any process people are silenced and fall through the cracks.

Yet, Mr. Hall's desires for "nuts and bolts" and his assertion that the summer school was a "horrendous waste of time and money" reveals a desire to silence other bodies and other issues - including those of equity. Mr. Hall is literally saying that issues of equity, issues of democracy, issues of poverty are not worth attending to. He named the content of the summer school as "fuzzy wuzzy". Mr. Hall

expressed real concern that the problems and issues that arise in performing day to day work in the union were being displaced by projects such as the 1997 summer school. When pushed by me he agreed that political issues could be an "option", for those interested. While the process of participation and the form of that participation may have run contrary to his likes and/or learning style, Mr. Hall is arguing here about content.

Like those that complained about "special interests" Mr. Hall is not using blatantly oppressive language. Rather he is invoking similar racist speech tactics to de facto argue that issues of racism or homophobia, for example, are potential topics of interest for some people, but not relevant day to day issues for most union members (and/or issues of justice and organizing for the union in general). He too is telling the hegemonic story of liberalism. His perspective reflects that of the "business union" that I discuss in the introduction: a recognition of the role a union can play in terms of wages and benefits, but also a defense of the status quo.

Mr. Hall is making the case that political and social issues are not nuts and bolts concerns for shop stewards. Yet, harassment and rights violations are very much part of the day to day concerns facing many members that shop stewards are supposed to represent. The implication in arguments like Mr. Hall's is that a lack of participation in a local by people of colour, for example, can be explained by a lack of interest or oversensitivity - not as resistance to discrimination and racism.

I discuss Mr. Hall not to criticize any single person, but to discuss some of the forms of resistance to conducting popular education that invokes issues of equity. The kind of backlash that is represented by Mr. Hall (and a few others) perhaps signals that some form of power is being challenged in projects such as the summer school.

**Snapshots of the School**

*This year's school takes an entirely different approach due to the new challenges we face. In regional groupings, participants will analyze their work as activists, learn about and discuss "big picture" issues, examine our divisions and commonalties*
and develop action strategies and ways of deepening democracy in our Union, communities and the health care industry.

From the 1997 Summer School Application

The ambitious agenda sketched above took the form of a wide range of workshops. While I can examine only a few of these workshops I list them in Appendix A to provide an overall sense of the school program. To this point in the thesis I have written about general issues regarding the school such as context, planning, philosophies, and some general impressions from participants regarding popular education. In this section I describe and discuss a few of the specific sessions of the school to examine how some of the important themes and issues discussed above got addressed.

I'd like to repeat that in presenting criticisms in this section I do so from a perspective that is very supportive of the move toward popular labour education in a general sense and the work of the HEU in a specific sense.

Almost a year had passed since the school when I interviewed people and I quickly learned that respondents' memories around particular sessions tended to fade in most cases. Often I needed to remind participants of the activity of specific sessions, which in many cases sparked memories. All participants had detailed memories of the whole experience including around the issues that I was focusing on.

What attracted me most to study the 1997 HEU summer school was a willingness to focus on power issues internally, an all too rare and brave act in a union context. As I argued in chapter 1, I believe unions that claim to have a social justice agenda are ethically bound to conduct anti-racist work. Furthermore, as I discussed in the Introduction and outlined in Chapters One and Two, popular and union education traditions both have shortcomings in terms of equity. The HEU summer school provides an opportunity to further explore these issues.
Given the extent of racism in the larger culture it is to be expected that the HEU union struggles with racism. It is exciting that there were and are attempts to address it. The summer school is not the first or only initiative of the HEU in this vein (see Chapter Three), but it was the first major event following the 1996 convention to take on issues of equity, which it did in a few ways.

Equity issues were not the primary focus of the summer school. Rather issues of equity and "divisions" (as one trainer put it) were woven into the larger structure. Throughout the Facilitator's Notes there are suggestions to bring forth issues around homophobia, race, or gender for example. However, each of the thirteen sessions were different and the respondents I spoke with had fairly different experiences in particular sessions. In some cases race may have been discussed in relationship to issues of class, in other cases the same exercise did not yield these discussions92.

A Brief Overview

In brief, the summer school was organized around "modules" with workshops within the modules. The modules were as follows: module 1 "Examining Our Work As Activists"; module 2 "The Big Picture"; module 3 "Working Across Differences"; module 4 "Making Our Voices Heard"; module 5 "Workshops: Skills To Make Our Voices Heard"; and module 6 "Applying Our Skills". Each day began with a short (about ten to fifteen minutes) recap and discussion of the previous day. As well as the popular education exercises there were also four presentations in the training and one informal session to meet and discuss issues with members from the Equity Caucus. These presentations (events) were organized to connect thematically with the issues addressed on that day. The space to discuss these presentations/events collectively was in the daily recap.

92 Of course, these issues are never absent, even when they are not discussed. The lack of a discussion about an issue may reflect hostility toward an issue, or fear of discussing an issue (such as homophobia). Furthermore, while one participant may perceive an issue as being absent another might very much experience its presence.
Module Five, "'Workshops: Skills To Make Our Voices Heard" was a day planned to be made-up of elective ("optional") one-day courses that participants enrolled in (see Appendix C). However, this day was cut in half so that members could attend a rally for a member who had lost his job. I briefly discuss this below.

In general, most of the exercises involved small group work and large group discussion and used various methodologies to bring out and report on issues (such as role playing or group drawings). The facilitators had key points they were asked to introduce if no one in the group did (such as introducing race as something that "intersects" with class in discussions about class location).

I focus most of my attention to modules 2 ("The Big Picture") and module 3 ("Working Across Differences"). While equity issues are introduced as discussion points throughout the curriculum these two modules provide the bulk of specific attention to equity issues. I address specific workshop sessions in a chronological fashion.

Interestingly, issues of class, which I discuss below, were addressed in "The Big Picture" while other equity issues were addressed in the section "Working Across Differences". The names of the modules were not that crucial to the day-to-day sessions, though the placement of the class discussions perhaps signals a recognition that issues of class were seen as a unifying issue while issues of differences were perceived as potentially disruptive.

It is also worth noting that "Working Across Difference" was the smallest module, with participants receiving the afternoon off. However, issues of equity were not the only, or even the most important, concern of the organizers. Given issues of regionalization and the threats to the health care system, issues of health care were understandably addressed. Democracy in the union (which is arguably an equity issue) also received attention.

I now turn my attention to examining some of the modules that explicitly addressed issues of power and equity.
On The Body

One of the first exercises to touch on equity issues was the "Body Scan/Collective Body Scan" on the first day. Here participants "reflect on the body as a starting point and critical factor in organizing" (HEU 1997: 5). The program of the school included physical exercise, meditation and other body activities outside of the traditional intellectual approach. The Body Scan exercise was an initial aspect of recognizing the need for paying attention to health.

In the Collective Body Scan participants begin to examine how bodies are affected by outside forces - especially at work. Participants were read a list of symptoms of stress and asked to respond physically to each symptom they have by progressively slumping: dropping head, dropping arm, etc. The symptoms included "being tired all the time," "unable to relax without TV," "sleeping too much," "using more alcohol and drugs," as well as sixteen others. Participants are then asked to notice the position of others and reflect on why some are showing fewer signs of stress. Supplementing this discussion is a list of sources of stress including, "Lack of control over work," "Poor lighting," "Sexism," "Racism," "Physical Danger" and many others.

This exercise was early in the school and as such was more of an introductory nature. The process involved an important public recognition of privilege and lack of privilege. However, one wonders where the exercise might have gone if there were a discussion of "violence" rather than merely "stress". It is true that the violence of unsafe work environments and racism lead to stress on the body. The notion of stress though has a tendency to individualize and psychologize issues of social justice.

As the body is a primary source of social control as well as resistance to such control an analysis on the construction of bodies is an important political practice for labour popular educators. For example, in a context such as the HEU it may be
illustrative to trace the organization of workspaces and the bodies that are
considered "able" in those constructed spaces.

**Class-focused Issues**
*I learned... about poor bashing and democracy. It really woke me up when I
thought I was in the middle class, but was in the low income class. I blamed the
people on welfare for the bad shape of the country, but have change(d) my mind
when I found out about corporate tax cuts (participant evaluation #65)*

As I wrote above, the third and fourth day of the school ("The Big Picture"
and "Working Across Differences") were the most explicit in terms of equity issues,
with an emphasis on class issues. This emphasis is not surprising considering it is a
union training. An analysis of class is an important and unifying process for many
union members. Given the unifying nature of class discussions these sessions I
suspect were more comfortable for participants. Unlike some of the other sessions
class analysis does not challenge what the union may be doing, but reinforces it.

As I've argued earlier I believe strong efforts need to be made to make the
theoretical connections to other oppressions, such as how class discrimination is
dependent on gender oppression and vice-versa. As I demonstrate below this was
not always the case.

On the third day participants took part in a "Quarters" exercise "To discuss the
class system in Canada and get a better understanding of where we are in it. To
discuss class, power and privilege in Canadian society and health care". Briefly, in
this exercise "Quarters" participants are divided into five equal groups to represent
the population and given quarters to represent the amount of wealth of each
quintile of the population. Given the nature of wealth distribution the distribution
of coins is highly uneven. As I demonstrate below this was not always the case.

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discuss class, power and privilege in Canadian society and health care". Briefly, in
this exercise "Quarters" participants are divided into five equal groups to represent
the population and given quarters to represent the amount of wealth of each
quintile of the population. Given the nature of wealth distribution the distribution
declined: Group 1: .3% of wealth = 0 quarters (seven cents); Group 2: 2.4% of wealth = 2 quarters; Group
3: 9.3% of wealth = 9 quarters; Group 4: 19.8% of wealth = 20 quarters; Group 5: 68.8% of wealth=69
quarters.

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93From the lowest (1) to the highest (5) quintile the breakdown presented (from 1987 statistics) was as
follows: Group 1: .3% of wealth = 0 quarters (seven cents); Group 2: 2.4% of wealth = 2 quarters; Group
3: 9.3% of wealth = 9 quarters; Group 4: 19.8% of wealth = 20 quarters; Group 5: 68.8% of wealth=69
quarters.
assigned group as well feelings about people in the other groups. Participants were invited in small groups to discuss changes in their economic position.

The group then discussed a number of questions including the following from the facilitator notes:

- Who is usually found in the top quintile?
- The bottom? The bottom two? (Class, race, gender, ability are different identities that intersect - placing people near the bottom) [hand out provided]
- Who benefits from this structure?
- Why don't most Canadians talk about class?

The exercise continued with analysis of the health care system and the placement of HEU workers within that system. My thoughts on this exercise are in part reflected and inspired by a conversation I had with a facilitator, "Ms. Nestel", around what part of the summer school seemed to get at power issues the most:

Nestel: The most powerful in terms of the broader stuff was the game with the coins which starts to bring out class issues, but I felt like, and this was the thing about the course being, maybe being too ambitious, I thought we could have spent a day easily on issues of class, because what happened in my group, people were kind of blown away by the exercise. A number of people in the group saying "I think Canada is a classless society". It's a very powerful experiential exercise. . . In retrospect I would have spent some time talking about the realities of divisions of class and other issues of equity, you know to look at who does have access to positions of power. Lets have a little bit of a statistical look at the income.

Me: I noticed though that in that exercise . . . there is some talk about race and gender and its connection to class - how is that . . .

Nestel: I don't think we really got into that to reinforce it for people. I think the strongest bit of that exercise was the pennies, which got at the class things. We raised in the discussion what is the
connection of race and gender and people responded to it but I don't think it was very deep, I don't recall that discussion being a very moving discussion

Me: I found it interesting too that class is sort of defined as issues of wealth versus, for example, the relationship to the workplace - was that discussed at all? Like management vs. workers. . .

Nestel: No, I mean all of those things could have been done. That was the problem, the whole thing, each bit of it was very rich.

More than one trainer spoke about the effect of the quarters exercise on participants, a number of whom importantly seemed to have a gained a broader sense of economic issues. In particular, for some, the recognition of the role of corporations was crucial.

As I said in my dialogue with Nestel, I found it curious that a union would emphasize wealth distribution vs. other notions of class, such as the relations to the means of production. I don't wish to imply that the later is the definition of class\textsuperscript{94}, but it certainly is an important one for those in the workplace, especially around issues of constructing more democratic workplace.

The homogenization (us/them) was not, at least for Ms. Nestel's group, overly disrupted by thoroughly examining the relationships between class, race,

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\textsuperscript{94}In fact, I find the concept of "class" very slippery and often am disappointed in the explanatory power of certain definitions. For example, if class is based primarily on the relationship to the means of production would the class position of a miner change overnight if he won the lottery and bought a business, and hired employees? What of the cultural context? What of the class position of his family? One intriguing way to address such questions comes from Gibson-Graham who conceives of class:

\ldots as the social \textit{process} of producing and appropriating surplus labor (more commonly known as \textit{exploitation}) and the associated process of surplus labor distribution. \ldots As the term 'process' is intended to suggest, class and other aspects of society are seen as existing in change and as continually undergoing novel and contradictory transformation\textsuperscript{97} (Gibson-Graham 1996: 52,55).

Gibson-Graham is not focused on placing people in groups (working class, middle class) but rather recognizing relations that shift and often contradict through location, time, and space. An analysis using such a method in a popular education style could be quite intriguing.
gender, sexuality, ability and other constructions. Such a process could involve, as Sherene Razack argues, the issues of interlocking oppressions, Razack argues:

Analytical tools that consist of looking at how systems of oppression interlock differ in emphasis from those that stress intersectionality. Interlocking systems need one another, and in tracing the complex ways in which they help to secure one another, we learn how women are produced into positions that exist symbiotically but hierarchically. We begin to understand, for example, how domestic workers and professional women are produced so that neither exists without the other (Razack 1998: 13).

Global Connections and Perspectives

The quarters game and class analysis was followed by a session called "rich world/poor world" that had members examining maps which illustrated the flow of wealth globally. Discussion were held on the global economy and forms of resistance by workers. As preparation for the upcoming speaker, information was provided on the drive for international codes of conduct for multinationals (i.e. regarding sweatshops).

Serapina Cha Mi-Kyung, who has a background of organizing women in garment and toy factories in Asia, and now works with Koran House of International Solidarity, monitoring Korean multinationals overseas, was the presenter. From this presentation and the earlier discussions, one participant "Mr. Fuller" reported that in his group:

One of the big issues that really got a lot people upset was child labour, that really became quite heated and confrontational really in some cases. Because we had the Filipino people in the class [who] took exception to how we couldn't understand how parents could "sell their children "or [send] them to go work in these horrible conditions. One of the guys there, that was Filipino, tried to explain to us that in some cases the parents don't have a choice.
This reported discussion underscores a few tensions in regards to making international connections in issues. An analysis of the flow of wealth can serve to demonstrate how North American economics is destructive to the vast majority of the world’s people (though I don't know if such discussions took place in analyzing global wealth). There were discussions about the role of multinationals in the "rich world/poor world" workshop. However, a discussion of overseas sweatshops which places the burden of international economics on parents clearly raises other issues, such as blaming the victims.

Mr. Fuller said he and others struggled to understand the positions of parents whose children work in sweatshops. A focus on the parents of poor children in the "Third World" though places the unionists in positions of "innocence" as the sweatshops and the bad parents are overseas. Such a tactic allows the cruelty of child labour to be placed on poor choice and not on systems of trade and economics from which North Americans benefit (such as through inexpensive goods).

What made the space "heated" was the risks taken by people of colour who challenged this innocence and the notion of "choice". At best these debates allow for critical thinking to develop, at worst they place demands upon people of colour to be the impetus for challenging solidarity.

Poor Bashing

The BC Hospital Employees Union, to its credit, recognizes that attacks on the poor are connected to the struggles of their members and working people in general. The HEU has been active in opposing reactionary welfare reform and supporting community groups that do anti-poverty work.95 Work such as this is an example of the community outreach and partnerships that I argued for in Chapter One.

95At the 1996 convention the delegates passed resolution 71 which resolved that HEU:
- Continue to support and work with End Legislative Poverty and other community groups
On the fourth day (after a morning off) participants went through the workshop "Poor Bashing/Public Sector Bashing". The workshop objectives were "To make the links between our struggles as public sector workers and that of people on welfare" (HEU 1997:21). I briefly mention this exercise as an example of progressive union education that reaches beyond its own walls. After a role play around stereotypes of people on welfare (see below on some hesitations I have about this) the group discussed a number of themes and issues including:

How do workers distance themselves from the person on welfare?  
Who do we hear are deserving or undeserving poor?  
What are some of the manifestations of public sector bashing?  
What are some of the similarities with poor bashing?  
How could we support people on welfare? (HEU 1997: 22).

The group analyzed what was deemed as two forms of poor-bashing - stereotypes and systemic, and discussed an HEU policy to support the work of the organization End Legislative Poverty (see footnote #95). Strong connections were not made connecting racism and poor bashing, but the conversations around not blaming the poor need to be recognized as an important example of a union disrupting the "poor vs. worker" split.

One trainer spoke about the importance of giving people the space to express their beliefs and emotions to bring out issues such as poor bashing, and in turn raised some issues that I address in the next section:

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- Campaign to stop poor bashing  
- Lobby the provincial Government to repeal BC Benefits and restore/improve the rates of income assistance  
- Demand that the Federal and Provincial Governments pass new legislation that guarantees for everyone in Canada: the right to income when a person is in need; the right to an amount of income that takes into account budgetary requirements, the right to appeal, the right not to have to work for welfare; the right to income assistance regardless of which province the person is from; the right to adequate housing.
We created, we tried to create some kind of space for these discussions to happen, you know you've got the role playing on poor bashing, we wanted to have that discussion. Well in one group the poor bashing started way before the role play - it was the day before, it was a chance to switch the agenda, here we go (laughter). But what we saw was people who were coming out with their honest statements about these people on welfare would come back sometimes the next day after we've had someone from End Legislative Poverty which is an advocacy group for people on welfare for poor people here in BC, after that speaker, the same person would come back and say "gee I really did think that there were all those jobs out there because I've never had trouble finding a job but you know I think I was wrong, I think I've learned something". We saw moments - people would change.

Repeating the Effects of Racism

As I progressed through my interviews I began to think more and more about how issues such as racism or classism or homophobia can be disrupted without recreating the violence of those oppressions. I found this issue relevant to the summer school as it became clear that an attempt was made to "bring things out" so that they could be addressed and dealt with. Yet in bringing things out, people who are the subjects of others' racism, sexism, homophobia etc., must go through the experience of racism.

One of the first interviews I did with a planner of the summer school brought these concerns forward for me:

These kind of discussion, what it did really... what was so fundamentally different about this than anything we had ever done before was we had never really allowed or made room for or made it OK for non-politically-correct beliefs to come out. If you can't get that stuff on the table, you can't create any change and actually see people move from one position to another. So for years activists have come, sat through - even equity courses frankly - and you know spoke, participated, never really buying that the level of discrimination in society is such that these things are necessary.
With the exception of one workshop (in the module "Working Across Differences", which I will address below) none of the participants I spoke with or any of the evaluations mentioned explicitly the concerns I had and have. This is not to say that the issue of re-creating violence in an attempt to disrupt it did not emerge. It may even be at the core of popular education (or anti-racist) education itself.

For example, in the "poor bashing" role play the two characters make stereotypical comments about welfare recipients ("My neighbor on welfare has just had another baby. She'll never get a job") to provide a basis to critique these opinions. For someone who has been on welfare this kind of role-play can be quite disturbing. Yet, it can also serve to bring things out as the planner above remarked and as this interview I had with Mr. Cummins, a person of colour, on the equity caucus believes:

Cummins: Myself personally I believe to address the issues they have to be totally out in the open. There have been other education sessions where they tried to tone down the contentious issues, around, the ones I know about, around the equity issues because it was felt that it would become too contentious and sort of you know allow the disruption to be the full session itself. And I think it was probably a more open discussion about all the issues at summer school. But still you know it was a fairly targeted audience that are quote 'activists' and I'm not saying that because they are active in HEU they are progressive, because that's not the truth, we still have quite a bit of resistance to deal with, but you know there were those things there. The issues were more in the open and left, not left for people to deal with, you had to deal with them.

Me: You think the result of that was generally constructive?

Cummins: I think so, that's really one of my strong personal beliefs. There are people within our caucuses that don't want to do that because, not that they're afraid, its just that you know, they don't want to have to face it like that
Me: Because its too personally disturbing?

Cummins: Yeah

Me: Because it sort of repeats the violence96 right?

Cummins: Sure it does, yeah. Its, depending on what the experiences of the individual it can be very traumatic, so some people [have] the hope that we can find other ways to deal with it... 

Mr. Cummins recognizes the issue of repeating violence but, for him, its a price well worth paying, and perhaps even necessary.

Is it possible to deal with issues of power and privilege in a popular education context and not repeat some of the effects of privilege? Popular education approaches can simultaneously disrupt issues such as racism for some at the same time re-creating them for others (depending on one's social location). The latter can take place formally (such as in stereotypes scripted into a role play) or informally such as in this example from Mr. Fuller:

We had a Black girl in our section, and we would do some role playing and all of the sudden because she was Black they want her to play the hooker or the drug dealer or something like that. . . . [Later] people would actually go up and apologize.

Clearly the experience of role playing was different for this woman than for those from more dominant positions in the group. What are the ramifications of not "playing" along? I suspect such occurrences were not just an isolated case, though my only evidence that this may have happened in other role plays is the level of racism in the general culture and reports of other racist acts. For example, one

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96I am the first one to use the term "violence" in this conversation, but Mr. Cummins' immediate and emphatic response "sure it does" demonstrates that the concept is not one I am introducing.
trainer said that a participant in her group made a comment about lesbians early in the session and another participant spoke up and said "Hey that's me you are talking about." On a more positive note, a few people of colour told me they were never asked to speak on behalf of "their people" in their group.

However, given the occurrence and potential occurrences for people to be subject to racism, sexism etc. in the name of bringing things into the open, I've struggled with the lack of comment on it by participants. While Mr. Cummins notes alternative perspectives in the equity caucus none of the people I spoke with that were either on or represented by the caucus expressed any strong concern about how issues around equity were dealt with. My only conclusion is that a) it is seen as a necessary evil (Cummins), and/or b) that many prejudicial and racist acts are not out of the ordinary, and subsequently are not deserving of special mention.

Perhaps it is a necessary evil - if so how can it be minimized? I want to emphasize here that I don't pretend to have any great solutions. How one talks about (or deals with) racism or sexism, for example, without recreating its effects, is a question activists, popular educators, unionists and academics need to continue to grapple with. While I do think people need a space to express their thoughts and feelings there always has to be vigilance about what these expressions may do to those less powerful. One facilitator expressed this struggle:

Some facilitators went deeper really pushing the group and the scenarios. In my group to be honest, I tended to not push too hard for certain reasons because I was being aware of the people that were feeling a little bit edgy. . . I was aware of a gay man and a lesbian in my class and different views in the class. I probably didn't push the group as hard as some of the other facilitators did. Because I was probably being more protective (laughter). . . . I was, of course, aware that there

97 A forthcoming addition of the OISE journal Trans/orms will be examining this very issue.

were going to be other opportunities later. Sometimes when I didn't push on an issue I wanted to take a cue from people that would be most effected.

The one summer school workshop that explicitly brings forth the issues I'm laying out here was called Name One Thing". The objective of this workshop was "To examine the dynamics of international[sic] [internal] oppression and international[sic] [internal] dominance".

This workshop was mentioned to me by one participant without prompting as something she had problems with and one facilitator told me she "hated" it and another expressed "ethical" concerns with it. In contrast, I also had a member of the equity caucus tell me that the workshop went fine. My intention here is not to belabor what I (and some facilitators and planners) believe to be a big mistake by the planners but to provide an unfortunate example of recreating the effects of homophobia, racism and so forth.

In this workshop participants were asked to identify in writing (on a card)

... something about yourself that people can't obviously see, that is not apparent but that is also safe, that you feel comfortable with, what you wouldn't mind other people finding out about i.e. being adopted, born in Toronto, family was Jehovah Witness, etc. [Participants are broken up into groups and given cards. They are asked to ] talk about how much they dislike people who have the identity/characteristic on the card... the person whose card has been selected does not disclose who they are and that their card has been chosen. They must participate in the discussion and not indicate in any way that they are the people chosen (HEU 1997: 23).

Clearly this exercise is literally asking people to be racist and subject people to that racism, all the while demanding their silence! I observed to a planner that someone, having been given the example of the family being Jehovah Witnesses
may have written that they are Jewish and been subjected to anti-Semitic remarks. While some members reported that their groups were very "careful" about what they said, others apparently were not as much so. One planner, who did not like the exercise, said that people were supposed to pick something "safe", yet how one's religion or family background is "safe" escapes me (and I think her).

The exercise continues with a debriefing about how it felt to be in the groups (probably not too great) and why people may have "jumped on the bandwagon" to denigrate others. Eventually there was a discussion on who gets labeled as "special interests groups" and the power between the named and the namer in such situations. I applaud the later discussion but not the process to get to it.

The intentions for this session seemed to be to get participants in dominant social positions to experience forms of discrimination and to challenge the ideas of negative difference and the power of naming the Other. This was particularly important considering the 1996 HEU convention. However, good intentions for some "higher" purpose do not allay the effects of experiencing racism. The exercise in fact depended a bit on creating a "safe" space just when it would be the most difficult to do so.

The fact that the exercise made it into the training at all reveals some theoretical weak points, namely in not questioning enough the visceral experience of reproducing racism. All of the facilitators went through the training prior to the summer school and in doing so had a negative experience with this exercise. One person wrote that she is Catholic and was subjected to anti-Catholic rhetoric and was understandably upset.

Where the line is in doing participatory anti-racist work I don't know, but from my perspective it was clearly crossed here. Fortunately, from my perspective,

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in terms of so clearly "crossing the line," this was a unique case at the summer school.

**The Equity Events**

The final component to the module "Working Across Differences" was the meet and greet with equity caucus members and a panel presentation on issues of equity. While neither of these events would be considered by many people to be in the form of "popular education", I discuss them briefly to bring forth issues of tactics by the Equity Caucus.

At the "meet and greet" each sub-group of the equity caucus set up an information table (with snacks) as well as information about the caucuses and issues of equity. The lesbian and gay group, for example, had information on the history of the pink triangle (as well as other informational handouts regarding homophobia).

There were no formal presentations by any of the equity caucus groups. Mr. Cummins observed that the meet and greet served the tactics of the Equity Caucus in that "we're not fighting anything, we just sort of talking about stuff." He observed, that the

Summer school was some benefit in that it gave us [the equity caucus] another forum to sort of present ourselves. The way we went about it was non-confrontational. . . . it wasn't sort of real in-your-face thing. . . . Basically what we've been able to do is put a face on the issue. . . .

Mr. Cummins spoke literally and figuratively on that last point. He argued that one success of the groups has been not to take up "the real big call of fighting racism or fighting homophobia" but to educate about the people connected to these oppressions. One wonders if they would get the support they do or the visibility they get if they were to take up "the big call".
Mr. Fulton, another Equity Caucus member who was pleased with the summer school (more on this below), remembered that he had raised the issue of a formal presentation, but it didn't go very far. There were presentations regarding equity on the evening panel, but those were not about the Equity Caucus or even the union specifically. Rather, the evening panel (where each speaker had about ten minutes) focused on broader issues of equity. The panel addressed some issues related to the union, such as the National Action Committee on the status of Women, which the union supports, as well as issues of racism regarding Aboriginal peoples.

The next morning the popular education model was taken up again through an important discussion regarding democracy in the union.

Democracy in the Union

This leads us back to the wider issue of democracy in society as a whole and the goals of a labor movement. What is the ultimate role of labor? Is it merely to lobby power and get more for its members? Or is it to transform power in society as a whole by extending democracy to the workplace and the economic sphere and to break up the authoritarian rule of concentrations of power, influence and wealth? From the HEU Summer School hand-out "Solidarity and Democracy: creating democratic communities in the workplace" by Elaine Bernard 1997

I do think that there will be some constitutional amendments as a result of that discussion, which is what makes the Executive nervous Facilitator

One of my initial attractions to studying the HEU 1997 Summer School was that the Provincial Executive had approved an educational process that could end up challenging their power. Part of my interest was the plan to look at democracy in the union. Despite the structural democratic systems present in unions the hegemonic position in North America is that unions are not very democratic. It is understandable, then, that internal critiques regarding democracy in the union can be particularly sticky.100
However, the push for workplace democracy (and by extension increased union democracy) is getting stronger. David Livingstone reports that "The popular demands for workplace democratization have become so strong that even the most established authoritarian managements now at least rhetorically recognize it" (Livingstone 1998: 262). However, Livingstone also documents the good news that over twenty percent of workers (including management - excepting corporate executives) would prefer to see the economy organized through cooperative enterprises and managed by employees (261).

The HEU has taken steps in becoming more democratic, such as allowing representation from rank and file on sub-committees in 1997. The 1997 summer school provided an opportunity for further reflection on democratic structures in the union.

Not only did the PE approve the popular education model but all of the members of the PE participated in the bulk of the school (with exceptions for some meetings). This participation certainly sent a strong signal to the activists and the rank and file that the PE was and is taking the issues raised at the summer school seriously.101

The fifth day of the summer school ("Making Our Voices Heard") focused on issues of democracy with an emphasis on democracy in the union. Participants

\[100\] One person at the Summer School, who believes HEU is relatively strong on the democratic front, argued

While on the one hand it's [the labour movement] one of the institutions that defends democratic structures in the society. I also think it's in many ways, the labour movement is very undemocratic and people are very reluctant to really stick their necks out and disagree - for fear of the loss of their future...there is not a lot of space to disagree. If you have political differences you can express them in leadership but then there is cabinet solidarity after that. If you express differences from the floor of convention its a struggle for people - its a struggle for people to be accepted and not to be typed or stereotyped or whatever. I don't think there is a culture in the labour movement that encourages the expression of different opinions.

This sentiment also reflects the opinions of those at the NAAPAE conference that I wrote about in the Introduction.

\[101\] One person observed that "... there are lots of union leaderships that wouldn't have even considered playing that kind of role in something like that."
played a game developed by a Nicaraguan group that explores the idea of democracy; examined the physicality of power in another exercise, and finally spent time in small groups discussing the following questions: "What would democratic practices at all levels in the union look like? What skills, tools, mechanisms do we need to accomplish this: at the local level - at the provincial level?"\textsuperscript{102}(HEU 1997: 27)

Early in my interviews a few people mentioned to me that some members of the PE were nervous or defensive during these democratic discussions. However, the bulk of the respondents reported no problems at all. In fact, one person observed, when I asked if people minced words with members of the PE there, "In fact I think some people took opportunities to point things out for the Provincial Executive."

However, a few people did say that issues around democracy got very interesting, as this person expressed:

> There was I think resistance to looking at some of the democratic issues that impinged on the internal functioning of the organization. And yet there was, if the group had been kind of able to let go I'm sure it would have had a lot to say that would have probably upset the leadership more, in terms of internal democracy, a lot of stuff about communication in the union, who knows what - and actually in terms of reporting out to the membership. . . . the only reporting out is what gets written . . . you can really feel the frustration around that. The other [issue] that sticks out for me. . . . in the democracy game there's that question about "sunset clauses" [you can only run a certain number of times for office] there is a question in the democracy game on that - and that was one I sensed that leadership didn't want to discuss that one for sure.

It's telling I think that in the evaluations where the common tendency was to speak in generalities ("issues" was a fairly common term) "democracy" was mentioned.

\textsuperscript{102}The HEU only has two bureaucratic levels - provincial and local. Despite regionalization the union does not have a regional bureaucracy.
many times. Something is clearly going on and the HEU has an opportunity to become a model union on this front.

I'm not aware whether issues of equity emerged as being an aspect of democracy, such as representation in high ranking staff positions by people of colour or a focus on getting more participation in the locals by under-represented people. The discussion seemed to be more focused on structural issues and issues of communication.

Interestingly it seems that discussions around democracy in the union play into an "us/them" dichotomy with the rank and file as the "us" and the PE as the "them". Regionalization and the push for a more grassroots driven union are bound to create tensions around who is making decisions and how they are reported.

The Hospital Employees Union took a big step to examine their own decision-making structures in this format. Hopefully this will become a trend and expand into more systematic analysis of workplace decision-making and bargaining around workplace democracy.

The Rally

The next day of the summer school ("Workshops: skills to make our voices heard") was intended to be a series of day-long classes on a wide range of topics, including public speaking, facilitation skills, and a number of courses on equity issues (see Appendix C). Participants pre-enrolled for courses, some of which drew more on popular education in their design than others. It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to trace the practices of the twenty-one classes offered.

However, this module is worth mentioning, however briefly, due to the decisions around holding a rally in lieu of classes. A week before the summer school it was decided to hold a lunch-time rally regarding some issues related to bargaining. During the summer school the Provincial Executive decided to also
hold a rally after the first rally for a member that had lost his job. In essence this meant that it would be very difficult to complete the one-day courses and the majority of courses did not meet again after the two rallies.

Some members (in the evaluations and in interviews) reported that the rally really disrupted their plans to learn about specific items and skills. Others noted that the rally was a great unifying event.

On that last point it is noteworthy that a large number of the courses for that day dealt with potentially threatening topics (such as homophobia and sexism) and were cut short for a non-threatening unifying activity. Interestingly the member that lost his job was, according to Mr. Fuller, very vocal in his opposition to the equity caucuses at the 1996 HEU Convention. As such this member was, Mr. Fuller says, "flabbergasted" to see support from the members of the equity caucus at his rally and has since "softened his approach".

Of course, closing ranks on behalf of a single member isn't too surprising, to not do so would have been surprising and probably considered unacceptable. I learned too late about the fired union member to specifically ask Equity Caucus members (beyond Mr. Fuller) about their feelings and thoughts regarding rallying for someone that opposes the Equity Caucus. Regardless of personal feelings the political fallout to not support him certainly would have been too high. For Mr. Fuller, even though he reported negative feelings about the fired member he seemed to believe and recognize the importance of supporting a fellow member.

What Mr. Fuller and other participants, as well as facilitators, thought about this school in general is the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter 5
Voices of Participants and Facilitators

Perhaps the most important question is "what happened?" In this section I will report, at length, some of the feedback that was given about the school through the evaluations, from the surveys I sent out and from the interviews I conducted. The evaluations provide a sense of "first impressions" while the other sources, from almost a year later, are more reflective of the impacts of the summer school.

In the process of providing feedback in these various forums participants and facilitators also made recommendations for education in the union. I will report a number of these recommendations in the final chapter.

Initial Impressions

As I reported above, participants were asked as part of their evaluation, to write a "letter to a friend" honestly describing their experience in the summer school. I've selected excerpts from a number of them to provide an overview of responses.

The bulk of the evaluations were positive even when containing criticisms of the union or the school:

I'm really proud of the work we did, and of the direction that HEU as an organization is headed. We still have a ways to go, but I think that we are on our way to something exciting (#5).

Summer School has been great! . . . though I felt we did not have enough time to discuss many important issues regionalization, hierarchy of H.E.U., Equity Issues and the community care sector (#7).

I must tell you that there was very little of waste out here - it was very productive session. I not only felt comfortable enough to talk about
problems we face at our local but it was reassuring to know that other locals face these same problems (#12).

It has been a real brain drain, but there has been also a lot of fun - in class we did lots of role playing and drawing of pictures to present different aspects of our lives. That really helped to bring things into focus and gave us concrete examples of the world (as individuals and local) (#118).

While there were less than ten evaluations that were clearly negative, those that were tended to be pretty strong:

I've never felt as lost as to where I was going or why I was learning what I am learning. . . many of us don't feel we are getting what we came for (#112)

Our union has found a novel way to waste money. They have taken what used to be an educational session and turned it into a summer camp (#24).

There were also those that hoped for a more basic format (see my discussion of Mr. Hall):

I would like to see a bigger emphasis on defending our contract (#58)

Our classes are on a "feel good" type philosophy. I would have much rather had a strict, back to basics type format (#80).

Not too surprisingly, there was explicit evidence of a backlash against addressing equity issues:

There doesn't seem to be freedom of speech unless you are in a certain group. . . . Thankfully on the last day the instructors allowed the minority i.e. married or single straight white people to air their differences (#17).
I will be returning to the local with the same knowledge as what I left with. My burnout is still spreading. If you need any information on special people I will share it with you (#21).

I do not know specifically what #17 is referring to process wise, perhaps aspects of the public evaluation. One certainly hopes a barrage of racist comments were not permitted on the last day. The percentage of people of colour at the summer school was about 30%. These comments echo the common response of those in dominant power positions of "reverse discrimination" - perhaps its a good sign that a person in a dominant power position (based on the comment) is apparently threatened.

However, in general, issues of equity and activism emerged as powerful motivators for members. A number wrote about making new connections with their union activism:

I now know that government has a lot of control and targets the lower classes of society. . . . It has encouraged me to become more involved in community activism and I hope to encourage you in being a part of this. The group that I have involved with are so open and diverse and not narrow minded it was exciting to network with these people. "They have shown me the light." . . . I hope I can encourage you and my other friends to be more active in the union movement so we can have a fair, just and democratic society (#42).

I met a variety of activists and being a newbe activist I was educated on different concerns and common frustrations. I also learned about the global picture, because I was not aware of those concerns and how it interacts with all of society (#57)

I learned a tremendous amount of what is going on in the world and how it is going to shape our daily lives. . . . it is imperative that people are educated on the arising corporate take over of our citizen's rights (#78).

Was this ever an eye opener. I'd no idea of the scope and implications of being a union activist and how this not only impacts my work on
the local level but also my responsibility on community issues i.e.
poverty, gov't. spending, sweat shops in the Third world countries,
disabled persons, etc., etc. All in all I've come away with a much
stronger sense that my role is that of a Human Rights Activist. . .
Thank you H.E.U. (#83).

Others expressed pleasure at being connected to something bigger that has social
justice connections - there was even talk of rebellion:

You wouldn't believe how happy I am to finally feel like I belong to a
group that believes in democracy, solidarity, participatory social justice,
equality (#103)

. . . Now I feel a part of something much bigger. . . school gave me some
great ideas about how to dismantle hierarchies inherent in unions. It
also made me feel like our local can set an example for the union with
regards to equality issues, women's issues, etc. I really want to get my
members involved in the equity caucuses (#115)

This was a stimulating and very open/honest learning experience. The
events at convention around equity and the feeling from the
membership that there was a lack of accountability from the PE came
up very strongly. It put rumour/backlash around equity issues in the
open where answers and feedback could be given in a much more
constructive form (#146).

I see our health care program in a broader aspect and now realize how
very "poor" the "average" person of this province is and how hard we
must struggle and pull together in order to fight against the huge
corporate structure this is before us. I'd like to see how long before a
rebellion will occur in our own society (#101).

Some members while appreciating the process expressed real concern about how it
may be a bit too early to celebrate where the union is at in terms of equity issues:

I realize how much work we need to do to help and make people
realize how undemocratic and sensitive we are not. I have some ideas
of how to share the information to get back on track with democracy but need help (#16).

Most people in the class felt that they were not discriminatory against First Nations. But how many people did not truly listen when a First Nations member would speak? The body language and the cross talk in class was obvious at times, including my own (#20).

I can say truthfully your money is well spent. There is so much information available to bring back to you that will help overcome some of the "apathy" we have at the local levels. We are such a diverse group represented here and it is not without its problems, but because of the accessibility to each other I am praying some of the differences people have with each other will be discussed and resolved for . . . gay and lesbian issues, First Nations, disabled persons and ethnic persons. . . . The facilitators are excellent, knowledgeable and course materials are excellent and available (#85)

Others wrote of the process as being painful but ultimately positive. Arguably (these are anonymous forms) these evaluations could reflect the experiences of those in less powerful locations and/or those that had to face their own racism(s):

I have come to a Union of Solidarity only to find such turmoil and tension my insides turn! I want to belong, I cannot find a place! All our differences that should be positive and bring us together are the things we allow to separate us. . . . I am glad we had summer school to try and change that. God help us if we don't! (#14).

For who ever reads this a great deal of pain resulted in a larger degree of satisfaction when we as a whole saw it all come together (#133).

There were some painful things yet those lead to positive growth (#148).
One participant, interested in the social justice perspective, expressed a wish for there to be a different format for more veteran activists:

I felt as though we were taken down a road I didn't need to revisit... this agenda was for those just stepping on, starting down the road... I feel this summer school held me back. (#93)

**Upon Reflection**

When I sent out surveys to fifty of the participants I included the questions:

What was the most important thing you learned in the training? In what ways have you been able to apply and/or share this learning? (see Appendix E for full survey).

In follow-up interviews (and interviews with those that did not complete a survey) I asked participants to speak about what they were able to apply from the summer school.

Recall that the goals of the training were officially "reflection, regeneration and renewal". The planners seemed to recognize that this was just a beginning towards fostering a more grassroots union.

Some of the respondents wrote and spoke about the impact the school had on the union or their local and some focused a bit more on how they were affected personally. One of the strongest examples of the latter is a woman I'll call Ms. Holmes.

Ms. Holmes wrote that the most important thing she learned at the summer school was "... an awareness of just how important unions have been and are in many social issues". In terms of how she has applied this knowledge, "I've made a commitment based on knowledge received and am now chairperson of my local". I asked her "Did the summer school affect you running for chair?"

Yeah, I did not want to run, I had already been asked... I had said no, definitely not. But [after] summer school, I thought yeah, you can't make changes if people aren't willing to put that effort into it... I
didn’t realize how naive I was about a lot of social issues and stuff and knowing full well a lot of members of my local are the same, I thought I’d like to be part of it - and that all be people should be educated. I try very hard at the meetings to always educate on some aspect. . . things I’ve learned at summer school, and Wage and Policy [course] and the different things I’ve been at and read.

This is probably a best-case scenario in terms of the goals of the organizers. Ms. Holmes spoke of how informal her attempts are to bring issues up at meetings, though she did organize a video presentation at her local on some equity issues.

The worst case scenario was represented by three of the surveys (including Mr. Hall’s 103) that all said there was nothing they could apply (in one case an "n/a" was used, in another case the respondent wrote "can’t think of anything"). In two of these cases there was a request for more nuts and bolts classes.

The tension to address other issues was also felt by some who were very supportive of the summer school. One facilitator wrote:

... overall our group responded very positively to it...[I] would also say that it was positive in the way it really stimulated people to think a lot, that’s sort of along the lines of critical thinking, but I don’t know that it was so useful in the sense of what do you take back with you - this is always the struggle - which is how practical is it? . . .the purpose was renewal, reflection... . . regeneration, I think from that point of view it achieved its goal, but maybe not as concrete perhaps as some people might have wanted. Let me put it this way, I myself and I think the group, did sometimes have trouble linking the very concrete discussions that we had in the first day or so about "what’s our practice like" to the bigger world stuff, and you know, it was an extremely ambitious program.

103 Mr. Hall is the only respondent with a negative survey who agreed to an interview.
When asked about nuts and bolts programs most of the respondents said they were important but had received them elsewhere through other courses.

In terms of equity issues Mr. Cummins reflected, "It has helped in some ways in making it easier for the equity caucus. We need to do more with other programs and the union everyday operations. We need to live the popular education model."

I asked Mr. Cummins what he thought came out of the summer school:

For a lot of people it was their first serious look at it, they can't escape it, we have a good communication department and pump out a lot of stuff. . . . There was quite a few people it was the first time to really sort of examine the issues of poverty and corporate rule and things like that in sort of a more intense way. I think people had the notion of poverty, their notion of poverty was like they, picked up from mainstream media. . . . it opened the eyes for quite a few people, I don't know if it changed anybody you know drastically but I think just getting the other side of it was worthwhile for them.

For Mr. Cummins personally he spoke of how the summer school helped him in his political and social work, including the contact he has with people at the hospital everyday. This last point was echoed by another member of the equity caucus who told me that:

Summer school helped to just enforce it [activism] more as well [become more involved] in a lot of the issues - I've become more aware . . . of what the issues are out there for different people as well.

A long time activist on equity issues, Ms. "Furst" told me that she gained new awareness of international and other social issues. However, she spoke more about how this type of education effected her and others that are subject to racism, homophobia, sexism and other oppressions:
Furst: People learned a lot about equity issues, I hope they did. I find people are more careful, I can't say more tolerant. Caution is a big thing in the 90's. I've had bad experience in the local.

Me: Do you find that even if people are not more tolerant but are more careful does that create a better workplace environment for you or does it not really matter?

Furst: They can't hurt me, they can't blatantly hurt me (I should change that). Yes it does, oh yeah, it's a safer environment ultimately, which is important. I'm not saying that some people through education and this kind of education do [not] create - come to an understanding. but if coming to the conclusion of being careful is all they come to then that's better than nothing. It's a safer environment and hopefully they will evolve beyond that through the years.

Me: Do you think there's a way that education can be done in the union to move beyond that?

Furst: I hope so because I'm a part of it. If I don't believe in that where would I be?

While Ms. Furst (and Mr. Cummins) have hope and have seen progress, neither have seen or expect to see I gather, any dramatic changes - at least yet. Ms. Furst's words, "If careful is all they come to then that's better than nothing", speak volumes about the daily effects of racism.

Yet the support of the summer school by all of the members of the Equity Caucus that I spoke with needs to be highlighted. The EC members observed that they were able to assist in educating members about racism (broadly defined) and support a formal educational initiative that brought issues of power and privilege to the forefront. A number of members of the EC also told me there is a long way to go.

104One non-Aboriginal said to me "Our Native people in the union take a terrible beating, more so than anyone else basically."
My final example of effects of the summer school relates to finding one's political voice. One participant reported greater confidence on the part of the person he went with:

The person that went with me had never been involved in the union before in her life. She is our [title]. She came back- she's a timid . . . woman that was [always] terrified. If you said jump she would say "how high?" And now she will stand up to them [management]. She will give them respect or whatever but she'll say "I want to know the issue", she's not afraid to confront them, now she has, she knows the agreement better than before, she knows the issues better, because of her experience in summer school. . . . She's not afraid to speak up and tackle the employer's representative and say "Don't con me, we've done our homework, if you haven't, then why are you at this table?"

This kind of response lends credence to the premise that for some people an interactive participatory methodology can be quite empowering. (I reject the notion that it is so for all people or even has the potential to be for all people.)

In summary, it is, of course, impossible to judge exactly what happened at the HEU 1997 summer school. What does seem to be clear is that for perhaps different reasons, the participants want it to happen again. The summer school certainly seemed to provide a powerful experience for people who have worked very hard to promote the union's goals and aspirations. I'm still struck by the language (and length) of the evaluations: discussions around justice, corporate agenda's, racism, and change. There is no question that there are serious equity issues in HEU. However, the union has taken very significant and important steps (the summer school included) towards addressing them. Workers that are not straight or white or able-bodied deserve political representation and a decent working environment. If a progressive union won't fight for it, who will?

I'm also aware of the urgent need to deal with the day to day issues of the local - getting a quorum for example. It does not seem incongruent to me to have
nuts and bolts courses (how to get more people to the meetings) and to have workshops on political and social issues. These issues are connected - if disenfranchised union members begin to see a greater commitment to their needs and issues by the union they will become more active. If the union truly wishes to become more grassroots it has to continue to create space for discussion and debate around a wide range of issues.

The summer school contributed to this in a number of ways, both at the school itself as well as by fostering regional connections between locals. Regional contacts were cited by a great number of people as a very positive outcome from the summer session. It seems to me that these regional connections should be supported, which leads me to a short chapter of recommendations.
Chapter 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

I began this thesis by asking how popular education can be practiced in the context of a progressive union environment. While labour and popular education practices have strong histories of counter-hegemonic work, both also have practices (and theories) that are problematic in terms of equity.

Participation in formal union education is quite small and many programs are skills-based. Political and social issues are still too rarely examined. Furthermore, union support (in terms of hiring and policies) for women, people of colour, gays and lesbians, and other oppressed groups, while growing, has a long way to go.

Both unions and popular education practices (and theory) have a tendency to ignore internal power issues (such as sexism) in their struggles against "external" oppressions. Popular education theory can also rely too much on problematic assumptions around "safe space", an uncritical use of "experience", and the development of "rational" subjects. Furthermore, popular education can act to re-create the effects of the oppressions it is attempting to disrupt.\textsuperscript{105}

I recommended at the end of Chapter Two that the us/them mentality that is present in some union and popular education work should be disrupted. One step in this direction is for popular labour educators to recognize (and encourage others to recognize) their multiple positions of power as oppressor and oppressed. Recognizing and working through internal power issues and contradictions can foster alliances and promote change.

Union education and popular education can and do offer opportunities for social change to happen. Certainly the criticisms I outlined in the early chapters of this thesis do not apply to all unions, union educators or popular labour educators. As I wrote earlier, my faith that a strong and positive popular labour education

\textsuperscript{105} See Chapter Four "Repeating the Effects of Racism".
movement can emerge led me to examine some of the practices of the BC HEU summer school.

**HEU Summer School**

In a context of a changing health care infrastructure and a need to address issues of racism and difference in the union, the 1997 HEU summer school was an important and constructive step. The school was a welcome example of a more holistic educational approach in a union environment. This holistic approach was accomplished by addressing issues of the body, family life, restructuring health care, international economics, and various equity issues.

The summer school curriculum avoided a number of the mistakes of popular education that I highlighted in Chapter 1, such as believing in "safe space", worshipping "experience", and assuming the participants are purely rational subjects. However, I also presented some examples of how the curriculum may have fostered, at times, a very risky space for some members. Some aspects of the curriculum failed to make adequate theoretical connections amongst various oppressions (such as class and race).

Importantly, though, the vast majority of participants reported very positive feedback and seemed to have renewed energy and focus for their work. In some cases participants seemed to have gained new insights into social and political issues, including equity concerns. The support of the school from EC members (and the limited backlash regarding equity issues) signals that the school was one constructive forum to address equity.

Given the limits and possibilities of popular education in conducting anti-racist work (such as re-creating the effects of racism), I interpret the support of the summer school from the EC as a recognition of the realpolitik situation that an important and symbolic step was taken by the union and that this step was worth whatever price that may have been paid by certain members.
With little exception most of the participants strongly supported continuing the summer school. I outline below some of the key suggestion of participants, facilitators, planners, and myself for improving the summer school and other educational initiatives.

**Program and Planning**

Popular education offers a great number of possibilities (such as the promotion of critical thinking, dialogue and action) as well as problems (such as de-emphasizing internal power issues and re-creating the effects of oppression). How does one promote the former while minimizing the later?

Constant vigilance has to be kept regarding how issues are addressed, with special attention to who is at risk in any given situation. What will it mean for a person of colour to be in a role play about welfare? I suggest that the planning team formally consult with representatives of the equity caucus in the plan and design of the school. I quote again John Fiske’s observation that "The imagination to understand how we look to others has always been better developed in subordinate social formations than in dominant ones, because it has proved necessary to their tactics of survival" (Fiske 1993: 46 emphasis in original).

Formally involving members of the EC would provide a deeper resource in terms of evaluating how various issues intersect and interlock. I suspect that some of the concerns I raised in Chapter 4 (such as too little attention to race in discussions of class or an exercise that involved racist speech) would be less likely to occur in this model.

I recognize that there is always a tension between providing the freedom for participants to exchange ideas and emotions and the rights of people to be free of experiencing racism and other oppressions. More input into the process from those that are subject to such oppressions should assist in struggling with these tensions.
I also wish to suggest again that it would be a powerful tool for HEU activists to examine historical notions of some of the key concepts addressed at the school - the idea(s) of medicine, the idea(s) of worker, the idea(s) of dis/ability. Again, how do we come to "know"? What cultural, historical, symbolic, and discursive forms constitute what is understood as knowledge? This focus would provide union activists with more tools to challenge very fundamental assumptions around social organization, i.e., who "should" and "should not" do what, when, and how.

It never hurts to remind ourselves that how and who we (and they and me and us) are is a social phenomena that has drastically changed through time and across space. This practice reminds us that the economic system, the political system, the family, the church, the able-body, and the workplace are not natural phenomena - they are social constructions and therefore open to change.

For example, in the HEU context, it could be a very powerful exercise to trace the history of the idea of "disability" and the relationship of the idea(s) of disability to the workplace and to workplace legislation. How do we "know" disability? How is disability created and disrupted? A similar process could be conducted in relationship to the notion of "health" and "disease". How is health understood and known? What is "disease"? How are ideas of disease and health related to the workers of HEU? I recognize that what I am suggesting is a tall order. However, so was the agenda of the summer school. Perhaps the work of examining "how we know" could be incorporated into some of the more concentrated "optional" courses.

In terms of who attends the summer school, it seems to me that as an organizing strategy and as an issue of positive social change, that the HEU consider supporting those who are represented by the Equity Caucus and active in the union to attend summer school, regardless of formal positions held. I say this because it

106 I draw on Razack 1993a and 1993b for this suggestion.
107 My understanding is that the preliminary plan for the 1998 summer school includes two days of "optional courses"
has to be acknowledged that it can be very difficult for some members to be elected to office for a variety of reasons, including bigotry and prejudice.

It must also be noted that issues of democracy cannot be separated from issues of equity. HEU should have a commitment to hiring people of colour and First Nations people into high ranking staff positions.

In the interest of being more "popular" perhaps the planning team could also contain or consult with rank and file members elected to serve as consultants and/or planners. Ideally, pre-summer trainings could be held regionally to survey potential participants about practical, social, and political issues and needs. This suggestion, though, would mean expanding the educational base.

**Expanding the Educational Base**

*The only thing is the lack of follow-up, that's the problem. There's really a lack of follow-up. It seems to take place then it dies. And by them not having summer school this year... it sort of put everybody on hold again, there was no follow-up. Summer school participant*

*I actually think a lot depended on the follow-up and whether there was a commitment to continue to work with those people and there wasn’t in that kind of sense. [HEU] does these great things but its not part of a five year plan. I find often with union education its "oh we have a great idea let’s do it" and its not a very systematic educational plan. Summer School Planner*

Many of the respondents I interviewed spoke about the need for follow-up, preferably regionally. That this should be done in a systematic manner is a crucial point that the quotation above emphasizes. Follow-up trainings (especially regionally) could serve to re/connect activists that are working with the same health councils and boards, refresh learning and skills from previous trainings, provide new information, skills, and ideas, and expose a greater number of people to this information. Furthermore, an educational delivery system that involves greater local input is more in line with fostering a grassroots organizing model. In this light, one facilitator argued:
I think to maximize working with those two hundred people might have involved regional follow-up workshops to try to be more skill focused. The skills we were teaching were more critical thinking and to be able to function in a group more democratically was one of the outcomes. . . . In terms of leadership skills then we needed a follow-up to work with that more and address the specific skills needs they had on whatever they were working on.

One participant recommended regional follow-ups three months later:

I would like to see them do - to ask- "what was the most important thing for you?" and then have a workshop or seminar or whatever on that particular issue. I think they should have probably addressed racism issues within the union rather than leaving it to outside interests such as CLC, BC FED or international solidarity, things like that to hold their seminars or workshops, most of the time you can't get time off because it's not a union function. And lot of times people won't do it on their own time if it's union sponsored then they'll go, they don't want to use their own money.

There are other opportunities to go to other trainings, and stipends exist to offset the costs. However, some of the stipends may not cover full costs and also involve application processes, etc. that usually act as barriers to participation. This participant, as are other participants in other locals, are sponsoring some of their own regional meetings in the hopes of maintaining the connections they started at summer school.

Of course, there is the issue of money. HEU tends not to have summer schools when they have a bargaining year (like this year) and follow-ups would be even more expensive. Yet, unions do make choices about where to allocate money, as was evidenced by the union increasing the education budget dramatically a few years ago. I suspect that the impetus for an increased education budget would need to come from the rank and file. I also suspect that if a strong case could be made for
a systematic plan of large trainings and regional follow-ups that there would be a lot of sympathy for an increase in the education budget. It was the rank and file, after all, that demanded a summer school at all for 1997.

One trainer reflected that in her wishes:

For sure there would be more things like the HEU summer school that was a long time away from work... it's extremely expensive. The great example is the CAW that has those kind of resources and that kind of facility. I think its also the kind of thing the union should be going after the employer on, like the CAW fund. To get more money for that. If the CAW can get money out of the autoworkers[makers] to teach people Marxism. These are always questions of priorities and there is also limited [dollars if bargaining is taking place]

Having the employer pay more of an education load was also brought up by this facilitator. In doing so she also raised the issue of sharing the teaching burden:

I think a lot of education the union provides is good for the workplace. . . but it's for the good for the employer because they are going to be involved at different levels. . . I want to see a way of the employer providing the money and us providing the education down the road and argue with them "yes this is for your good that we'll be providing this kind of skills to our members" . . . [Also] we can get members to take it at the local level, more of the train the trainer.

HEU certainly doesn't have the kind of power that the CAW carries, but representing 44,000 members does perhaps provide them some clout to bargain with management for education funding. One way to stretch the dollar is to begin to use

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108 The summer school was held at the University of British Columbia. HEU rented training and lodging space.

the more veteran activists as trainers. However, this raises some issues in the union as a few people observed:

[I'd] really like to see us do more training of facilitators within the locals. . . . there is a bit of a fear in the staff union about [being replaced] I think there is plenty of work for everybody. . . . [I'd] like to see [us] utilize some of our long-term activists, the ones that have been through our shop steward courses, they aren't entitled to come back, because we want to continue to expand the pool, but I think we need to utilize some of those people who have a lot of experience and can do more specific tools courses, [they] can become more specialized in specialized areas.

The train-the-trainer idea, as well as the concern about replacing training staff, was mentioned by more than one person. It would seem, though, that with an extensive plan to provide more training, including regional meetings, that no paid education jobs would be in jeopardy.

**Popular Labour Educators**

The HEU experience bodes well for the promotion of popular labour educators. One test of its successes, a few people told me, is the upcoming convention in the fall of 1998. How will issues of democracy be addressed, will the membership continue to support the Equity Caucus? On both of these fronts the people I spoke with were confident that progress is and will be made in terms of greater democracy in the union and stronger support for the Equity Caucuses. I have hope that the HEU model of popular labour education will also continue to grow and develop to meet their changing needs.

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110One evaluation suggested that there be different tracks for veterans and new comers to the summer school, "Maybe there should be a few days in the beginning for those who are first time travelers before the rest of us come. Then we can take the corner together and work towards the future and global picture (#93)." Perhaps the veterans could assist in workshops they have previously been through.
Those that are doing popular education in unions ideally will have more opportunities to share ideas and resources. In doing so my hope is that special attention will be paid to a perspective of social justice that interrogates interlocking forms of oppression.

*Broadly* speaking, how can this happen? More meetings such as the NAAPAE conference need to happen. Popular educators should unionize (and support a policy in opposition to the replacement of full-time union members with contract workers - such as education consultants). Rank and file members need to demand critical education and not what Elaine Bernard, executive director of the Harvard Trade Union Program, calls union "propaganda" - when members are given the information to toe "the line" (Bernard 1997:11).

Initiatives can and do and should come from the rank and file. As Myles Horton said, unions should encourage ideas to percolate not drip down. The Equity Caucus of the HEU is a strong example of a grassroots percolated idea that was and is supportive "from above."

Popular educators (and other activists) have to support union struggles. And unionized workers need to get out the vote (and other support) for struggles for gay and lesbian rights, welfare rights, and initiatives to support the environment. Much of this work requires some form of coalitions - but history has shown this can happen and it's happening now, such as with the HEU and the organization End Legislative Poverty.

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111In 1951, Myles Horton, the director of Highlander, became the Education Director of the United Packinghouse Workers of America. He soon declared in the Union's newsletter that "education is not something apart from the union program as a whole. An education program is either a window dressing or it goes straight to the heart of the union."(Zacharakis-Jutz 1993: 62). In less than two years, though, under a great deal of conflict with the Union's vice-president, Horton resigned. At that time labour educator Kermit Eby wrote in *The Antioch Review*:

Some of the political heads of the United Packinghouse Workers of America are protesting the work Horton's educational program is doing because it means that pat answers which the same politicos hand the rank and file no longer suffice. Horton emphasizes what he calls the "percolator" rather than the "drip" system of education - ideas perking from the rank and file up rather than dripping down (1993: 64).
The business of change is what popular labour educators should be about. This requires an educational practice to promote social change based on hope. The popular educator Paulo Freire, who was imprisoned, exiled, censored, and continuously arrested for his work in popular education reminds us that hope is essential:

Hope is an ontological need. . . . I am hopeful, not out of mere stubbornness, but out of an existential, concrete imperative. . . . my hope is necessary, but it is not enough. Alone, it does not win. But without it, my struggle will be weak and wobbly. We need critical hope the way a fish needs unpolluted water (Freire, 1994: 8).
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The Training Trap: ideology, Training, and the Labour Market


APPENDIX A
1997 HEU SUMMER SCHOOL OUTLINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Specific Objective/Process Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXAMINING OUR WORK AS ACTIVISTS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODULE:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Welcome</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome participants and deal with logistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal introductions</td>
<td>Introduce participants and create a space for collective work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants write 7 characteristics to describe self and tape to chest, group mingles and reads lists. Participants meet in pairs to give union info about self and to explain choices on list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>[Record participant expectations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write main expectation on a paper, collectively posted and examined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals</td>
<td>To introduce objectives, the agenda, and assumptions of summer school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goals of Reflection, Regeneration and Renewal are referenced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>To introduce objectives, the agenda, and assumptions of summer school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objectives of course are reviewed (see figure 1), connections made to objectives and specific modules. Expectations discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumptions</td>
<td>To introduce objectives, the agenda, and assumptions of summer school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assumptions of school are listed, such as &quot;everyone in the group is an activist and/or committed to unionism, participants bring analysis and experience to the course.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreements</td>
<td>To agree on conditions for a productive learning environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion on creating a productive learning environment, specifically listing &quot;valuing our differences and diversity&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelines</td>
<td>To situate our organizing/activism in our personal histories &amp; in the history of social movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal timelines are drawn recording histories of justice &amp; social change work. These are shared and reflected in group. If significant social movements not present (such as 1st Nations, Gay/Lesbian rights) they are introduced. Gains of various movements discussed. Participants reminded they are part of historical struggle re: workers and capital.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regeneration</td>
<td>To introduce the regeneration workshops and encourage participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants given overview of optional, but encouraged classes to regenerate &quot;mind, body, spirit&quot; around issues of self-care.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

112 Compiled from the "Facilitator Notes". Listings under "Specific Objective" (presented in bold letters) are quoted directly unless none are provided. In the latter case I provide a summary in brackets. The agenda and facilitator notes also listed "modules". The modules are themes that cover a number of workshops and sometimes overlap days which I record in bold capital letters. I summarize the main processes listed in Facilitators Notes below the specific objective of each technique. In writing the summaries of the processes/techniques I drew from the language of the Facilitators Notes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Specific Objective/Process Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Body scan                       | To reflect on the body as a starting point and critical factor in organizing  
Participants (if they feel comfortable) are lead through a body awareness process where they are slowly asked to bring awareness to their body/parts. Participants are reminded that body is critical factor in work and the job and activism effects the body. |
| Collective body scan            | [to look at how collective bodies are affected by external forces]  
A stress checklist is read and participants re-act bodily (symbolically) when a source of stress effects them. Issues of privilege are discussed (why might one person demonstrate less stress then others) as well as the body as a source of importance in organizing. |
| Intro to quadruple diagnosis of our collective health | To analyse the relationship between our practices as activists, our context, the principles we believe in and our daily life at home.  
A discussion on the notion of "diagnosing" and how this connects to upcoming activities. |
| Examining our practice          | To examine what we do and how we do it  
In small groups skits are designed and presented addressing the day to day work of activists in HEU. Skits decoded: Common themes? Who benefits from work activists do? Any new insights? |
| Key concepts                    | To discuss our working principles - what we believe in as trade unionists  
Small groups discuss their understanding of the words: solidarity, social justice, organizing, democracy, leadership, participation |
| Event: (Networking with the Provincial Executive) | Participants had an opportunity to discuss issues with PE  
This was not considered part of the summ. school curriculum. |
| **DAY 2**                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Opening                         | [To recap yesterday's events]  
Participants briefly (scheduled for 10 mins.) review yesterdays activities, and share questions, feelings from previous day. |
| Context                         | To explore the context of our practice (the forces that impact our work as activists)  
Small groups identify and discuss forces (political, social, ecological, cultural, etc.) that are impacting, shaping and influencing their work as union activists. Groups do drawing to represent conclusions. Drawings discussed and themes compared. Conclusions "decoded" including: what are the main causes of these themes? What members are being impacted most in our different contexts? |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Specific Objective/Process Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triple role</td>
<td>To reflect on our home life and our work life and how they impact on our work as an activist Small groups given skits that reflect tensions in homelife and worklife balance. Discussion around gender roles, paid and unpaid work, ways work-home mutually impact each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing it all together</td>
<td>[examine &quot;contradictions and knots&quot; in the gaps between understanding, principles, and practice] Three different groups each design a skit based on the theme of bringing together &quot;your practice as activists&quot; and one of the following: 1) context - outside forces that affect work, 2) key concepts or working principles that guide work, 3) home and work life. Each group identifies contradictions, specific problems, and suggestions on addressing problems. Issues raised in skits discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MODULE 2:</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE BIG PICTURE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The big picture</td>
<td>To reflect on how our local struggles are connected to the broader picture (specifically health care and the larger picture nationally and internationally) Introduce theme of examining changes in health care and &quot;the economic agenda&quot; behind changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 visions of health care</td>
<td>To develop and contrast two different visions of health care - that of the corporations and ours Participants in small groups discuss what they see as corporate &quot;nightmare&quot; vision of healthcare. Report back is done in creative fashion: TV ad, jingle, drama, etc. Discussion on issues. Facilitator provides handout on &quot;Disease Management Opportunities&quot; systems. Discussion on key elements of corporate vision: who benefits? what is impact on workers? What happens to poor people, gays and lesbians, people with disabilities, and other oppressed groups?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting rid of shit (negative feelings)</td>
<td>To release negative feelings A group exercise that involves shaking arms and body and envisioning releasing negative feelings that come when one is overwhelmed with negative information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our vision</td>
<td>To explore our vision of a progressive public health care system Same groups that did &quot;nightmare vision&quot; above envision and draw a picture representing a progressive, public health care system. Presentations discussed including: current system and where it seems to be going, union and these visions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>[collective discussion on what worked and didn't work]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Lecture: Neil Brooks &quot;The Big Picture: Debunking the Corporate Agenda&quot; Lecture on health care and economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Specific Objective / Process Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recap</td>
<td>[15 min. review of yesterday and review of the day]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successes</td>
<td>To discuss our success, our 'victories' in fighting the nightmare and working for our vision of health care. Group discussion on successes in health care struggles, discussion on regionalization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarters</td>
<td>To discuss the class system in Canada and get a better understanding of where we are in it to discuss class, power and privilege in Canadian society and health care. A game involving the distribution of wealth where groups are divided into quintiles representing wealth - symbolized by allocation of quarters. Participants begin by discussing feelings about being the group assigned, in partners they may discuss personal economic situation. Group discusses distribution of wealth, including who is at the bottom (&quot;Class, race, gender and ability are different identities that intersect - placing people at the bottom&quot;). Handouts on poverty provided, discussion on economics and health care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich world/poor world</td>
<td>To discuss the distribution of wealth and power globally. 2 groups examine and discuss maps that illustrate global distribution and flow of wealth. Discussions around role of cheap labour on global economy and worker resistance. Information provided on global campaigns for international codes of conduct (Nike, Gap, etc.) Theme to be addressed by afternoon speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Event:</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Understanding APEC with Serapina Cha Mi-Kyung&quot; Lecture from woman with background organizing women in garment and toy factories in Asia, now working with Koran House of International Solidarity, monitoring Korean multinational overseas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[afternoon off, morning free]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DAY 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODULE 3:</td>
<td>WORKING ACROSS DIFFERENCES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recap</td>
<td>[review and discussion from yesterday, review agenda, introduce day]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor bashing/public sector bashing</td>
<td>To make the links between our struggles as public sector workers and that of people on welfare. Discussion on changes in welfare system, how changes justified (incl. blaming the poor). Skit presented about people clamming poor don’t wish to work. Discussion on how workers distance themselves from poor. Discussion on stereotypes and systemic poor-bashing. Discussion on similarities and interconnections between public sector bashing and poor bashing. Discussion on how HEU can be allies with people on welfare - hand-outs provided on poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Specific Objective/Process Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name one thing</td>
<td>To examine the dynamics of international [sic - internal] oppression and international [sic - internal] dominance. Participants write down one thing that is not obvious about them that they are willing to share (&quot;being adopted, family Jehovah Witness&quot; etc.). Participants are put in groups and given one card (cards tracked to make sure cards go to groups where author of card is a member). Participants &quot;talk about how much they dislike people who have the identity/characteristic on the card&quot;). No one is to reveal if the card is about them and all are asked to participate. Participants discuss experience and feelings. Discussion about identities and difference - why are certain things identified? Discussion on who gets labeled a &quot;special interest group&quot; and the power of labeling. Connections made to class from previous discussion. Handouts on heterosexism, and power provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head/Heart/Feet Evaluation</td>
<td>[Evaluation] Participants write about what they are feeling and thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events:</td>
<td>&quot;Equity Caucuses Meet &amp; Greet&quot;/&quot;Looking at our differences and connections&quot; panel discussion. Each of the four Equity Caucus sub-groups (Lesbians and Gays, Aboriginals, Ethnic Diversity, and People With Disabilities) set up an information table with food. Participants mingled and had the opportunity to ask questions and get information. Panel discussion on equity issues outside of the union, each speaker given about ten minutes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAY 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODULE 4:</td>
<td>MAKING OUR VOICES HEARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recap</td>
<td>[review of previous day, comments, feelings, etc. Intro of day]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy bingo</td>
<td>To broaden our understanding of democracy. Participants play &quot;bingo&quot; with cards that have categories of relationships (family, community, institutions) and structural fields of influence (political, economic, cultural). Situations are read out and participants mark situation as predominately democratic or anti-democratic. Groups discuss choices and then discuss questions around what situations they identified most easily with and new learnings about democracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power chairs</td>
<td>To broaden our understanding of democracy. Participants create a symbolic powerful position by moving chairs. Participants are then put in chairs and issues of how power relates to status, gender, race, etc. Discussion on power structures and democracy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Specific Objective/Process Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy in the union</td>
<td>To identify the skills, tools and mechanisms, we need for democratic union practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation of concerns about the need to promote genuine participation in the union. Small groups discuss: &quot;what would democratic practice at all levels in the union look like (include yourselves)?&quot; and &quot;What skills, tools, mechanisms do we need to accomplish this: at the local level- at the provincial level?&quot; Groups report back with a skit or a drawing for first question and on a flip chart for second question. Common themes and observations discussed. All suggestions recorded for a report to staff and the PE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event:</td>
<td>&quot;Making our voices heard&quot; with Libby Davies, MP &amp; Maude Barlow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation from MP (Davis) and Honorary Chair of the Council of Canadians (Barlow).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAY 6</td>
<td>WORKSHOPS: SKILLS TO MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional courses</td>
<td>[one day optional courses on a variety of issues and themes - see Appendix C for summary]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The time for these courses was cut in half as the PE decided to have a rally in support of a member who had lost his job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optional Event:</td>
<td>Museum Night: Guided tours of the UBC Anthropology Museum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAY 7</td>
<td>APPLYING OUR SKILLS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recap</td>
<td>[Discuss courses and rally]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessing our local</td>
<td>To identify and plan how to apply our skills to activate our locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participants use a form and discussion to assess the effectiveness of their local, and work with similar sized locals to prioritize the four group provides feedback, drawing on yesterdays (shortened) classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying our skills: directions we can go in</td>
<td>To identify action proposals for our locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small groups work to identify four concrete things that can be done to increase participation and strengthen local (keeping in mind can't do an action plan for local as that is undemocratic). Groups report back in the from of a media message (press release, news report, etc.). Discussion on proposals. People meet with others from local (or nearby local) to discuss steps they will take to follow-up. Discussion on supporting each other in the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Specific Objective/Process Summary</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Revisiting key concepts      | **To add to our initial key concepts in light of the input and discussions during the workshop**  
Group re-examines their understanding of key concepts from module 1 (Solidarity, Social Justice, Organizing, Democracy, Leadership, Participation). |
| Reporting back to our locals | [To prepare report to locals]  
Discussion of what "accountability" means, esp. in terms of democracy. Facilitator reviews flow of course, and asks for highlights and low lights. Discussion on most important things to report back to local.  
Participants write outline of report to local. |
| Evaluation                   | **To evaluate course**  
Participants are given a form, one side asks questions regarding ranking workshops, what should be added or deleted, feedback on social events, etc. The flip side participants are asked to "write a letter to a very close friend, honestly describing what the course meant to them. What would you honestly tell a friend?" |
| Appreciation                 | **To close the course**  
Participants have paper taped to their backs and each person writes on the back of each person what they've most appreciated about them in these last eight days. Facilitators thanks group and reminds folks of evening dance. |
APPENDIX B

HOSPITAL EMPLOYEE'S UNION
Education - Philosophy and Goals

The education philosophy of the Hospital "Employees' Union is committed to:

- Equality
- Collective action for change
- Democracy
- Social Change
- Building confidence, self-esteem and self-empowerment

Education begins from our shared and fundamental desire for social justice.

Education is not neutral. Union education seeks to liberate members, helping them to become critical, creative, free, active and responsible members of the union and society. Education for change, for action, respects the life and work experiences all members bring to the process. Starting from that experience, union education seeks to provide additional information, develop understanding and analysis.

Successful union education is a self-generating process. It carries into all parts of the union, motivating members to act for social justice in different areas of their lives.

Union education uses a problem posing approach - providing a frame-work for thinking, creative, active participants to consider a common problem and find solutions. Union education raises questions of why, how and who. Participants are active, describing, analysing, suggesting, deciding, planning.

"Problem posing education is prophetic, and as such is hopeful, corresponding to the historical nature of human beings. It affirms people as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead. . . for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are, so that they can more wisely build the future."

Union education is a process of dialogue.

Union education recognizes that a union is a place where working people do extraordinary things.

The goals of our educational program are to:

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113The staff at the HEU faxed me a copy of this document, which I have re-created here maintaining the formatting of the original.
* prepare ourselves to confront the changing political and organizational challenges facing the union.

* allow members to actively share their knowledge, understanding skills with all of the members of their local. Education is about individual and group power.

* develop an in-depth understanding of the major policy issues facing the union and its members, including government and employer strategies and tactics. This process should provide analytical skills useful to a continual process of education and understanding as those policy issues evolve

* build the unity of the Union.

* acknowledge the diversity of our membership and to build on the strength that diversity brings. Challenge all forms of discrimination and inequality which weaken our ability to work together in a united way. Help to create a union which at all levels and in all aspects of its activity truly involves and reflects a diverse membership.

* develop and strengthen an organizing model of servicing which taps the creative energy of all members to take collective, locally-based, provincially co-ordinated, action to solve their problems.

* develop a global understanding of local realities. Develop strategic skills, to act on our global understanding in the labour movement, other social movements, and the community to defend and extend our rights of people seeking social justice.

* increase our skills and abilities in all forms of communication - verbal, written, non-verbal, in a variety of contexts. We must build members' self-confidence.
1997 Summer School - One Day Optional Courses
"Skills to Make our Voices Heard"

1. The dreaded "E" Word - Demystifying debt, deficit and the economy; Underlying changes in global control of economies and what it means in our daily lives.

2. Basic Facilitation - Listening, reflecting and making progress in meetings are all part of facilitation skills.

3. Public Speaking - Geared to be heard in groups, meeting and RHB's/CHCs

4. Is Retraining a Real Option? Many members look to retraining to deal with changes in healthcare. What does retraining do and what does it not address?

5. Getting Our Message Out - New regionalised employers mean new skills are needed to reach community allies; communication skills are key.

6. Making the Links - Anti-poverty issues and us; What is this poor bashing all about and what does it have to do with protecting public services?

7. Making the Links - Women and unions; Despite popular myth, women's equality is still a long way off. How do we keep working for equality effectively?

8. Making the Links - Advocating for disability issues; Many of our members are disabled. How are we going to work for change?

9. Making the Links - Dismantling racism at work; it's real and devastating. Let's tackle racism as a union issue.

10. Making the Links - Dealing with homophobia; Recent events paint a clear picture of the links among movements that discriminate. Homophobia cannot be allowed to divide us.

11. Making the Links - First Nations health; Mainly non-union, these issues affect healthcare quality and are related to poverty, racism and physical isolation. Can we make a difference?

12. Making the Links - Working as allies; How do we all work together to fight discrimination in our work and communities?

13. Making the Links - International Solidarity; By linking with workers and unions around the world we are able to deal with our issues at home and support others in their struggles.

14. Mapping the Risk - Self-empowerment gives us the skills to understand our own power and how to use it best.

15. Mapping the Risk - A tool that draws on worker's job experiences and involves them in health and safety issues.

16. Write That Brief - Writing that brief, and keeping it brief; Writing presentations for regional employers, community groups, etc.

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114 This is a duplicate in both content and style of the information HEU faxed to me.
17. **What's that Debit?** - Understanding financial reports of healthcare employers.

18. **You too Can Research** - Basic research skills you can do in your community to fight privatisation and support your work.

19. **Where are We?** - Reaching members in your local by using mapping and our organizing skills.

20. **Jazzing up Local Meetings** - Making local meetings relevant to members by trying new approaches and other ways of decision making.

21. **Violence Can End** - We should not be accepting violence on the job; Learn how to use violence in the workplace regulations and make a difference.
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
HEU 1997 SUMMER FACILITATORS/PLANNERS

What is your relationship with this union (title, history, etc.)?
What does labour education mean to you? What does it mean at HEU?
What was the definition of popular education at the 1997 Summer School?
Why use popular education in union training/school?
What role(s) does education have in social justice movements?

What was the response by union/management toward using this approach?
How did you decide on the agenda for the school?
How did you decide on who would organize the training/school?
Why did you choose the issues that you did? (if applicable).
How were issues of "safe space" understood?
What do you think was the most challenging aspect of the training?
How were issues of equity addressed during the school?
Why were they addressed this way?
I'm interested in the different ways that issues of power and privilege get taken up in union settings. How were connections made between the issues presented at the summer school?
The summer school was based on the sharing of "experience" what would you do (or what would happen) if someone said "my experience is that poor people are lazy" or a similar remark?

Can you describe what happened in your group in the session [democracy - quarters game, equity issues - name one thing]

[Following a few interviews I began to ask]: I've been told that people were given the space to be "honest" and express what they were thinking?

What is the vision/dream you have about the work you do?
How close to this vision/dream do you think it is possible to achieve in this context? What are obstacles to achieving your vision in this context.

How does this education work connect to other aspects of your life?
Is there a cultural/national ethnic group you identify with?
Is there a class you identify yourself with?

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115 These interviews were semi-structured; in a number of cases one or two questions would lead to issues that I had not specifically inquired about but ended up pursuing in the course of the interview. The interviews were much more of a dialogue than this interview schedule implies. I also conducted an interview with Janet Fairbanks and Karen Dean regarding some of the history of educational initiatives at HEU. I had a few follow-up discussions with Janet Fairbanks regarding dates and structures of the union.
APPENDIX E
1997 HEU SUMMER SCHOOL PARTICIPANT SURVEY\textsuperscript{116}

Thank you for taking a few minutes to fill out this survey. Since it's been almost eight months since the 1997 Summer School, this survey will help provide a sense of how the training has affected your work as activists. Please feel free to add any comments that aren't covered in the questions, or to use additional paper to answer the questions. Please return survey by Friday, March 27

1) Looking back on the Summer School was what you learned
   a) very useful
   b) somewhat useful
   c) not useful
   d) very useful

2) How important was the popular education approach to what you learned?
   a) very important
   b) somewhat important
   c) neither important or unimportant
   d) unimportant
   e) very unimportant

3) Why or why not would you encourage a friend to attend a similar Summer School?

4) What was the most important thing you learned in the training?

5) In what ways have you been able to apply and/or share this learning?

For purposes of background:

7) What is your sex? Male/Female
   8) What is your age ________

8) Is there a social class you would say you belong to? Why?

10) Is there a cultural/national ethnic group you identify with?

Thank you very much for completing the survey.
Matt Adams

\textsuperscript{116} As explained in the introduction, the bulk of the participants I spoke with completed a questionnaire prior to being interviewed by me. However, in the interest of getting more representation in terms of people of colour, I conducted two additional interviews with participants who did not receive a survey.
I'd like to get some information about your work experience:

- what is your position at work?
- how long have you had that position?
- how long have you been a member of HEU?
- how active would you say you are in the union?
- (if applicable) can you describe examples of your activism?
- have you been to other HEU Summer Schools? [which ones, etc.] How, in general, would you evaluate those sessions?
- the 1997 Summer School was considered to be done in the tradition of "popular education". How would you describe what that meant at the 1997 Summer School?
- how would you describe the process of the summer school?
- how did you feel about this process, did it work?
- can you describe the sessions on equity - what happened at the sessions?
- can you describe the sessions on democracy in the union?
- poor-bashing?
- what if any sessions do you remember best? why?
- what have you been able to apply from these sessions in your workplace or general activities?
- I read over 160 evaluations from the summer school, the "letters to a friend" that participants wrote at the end of the school. Many people wrote that they had a better understanding of "issues" - what do you think these "issues" are?
- I'm interested in the different ways that issues of power and privilege get taken up in union settings. How were connections made between the issues presented at the summer school?
- In what ways were local or union events connected to larger issues?
- do you think the union should continue to have summer school? If so, how should it be organized?
- what are the key issues that the union should be educating its members about?
- what do you think the union should do to educate its members about these issues?
- did the summer school result in any changes in your local or in your work in the local? please be specific?
- has your view on strikes been altered since before the summer school? Are there issues that you would support a strike on that you would not have prior to the summer school?

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117 These interviews were also semi-structured.