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ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES:
DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION OF STP SCHOOLS AT THE
HIGHLANDER RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

by Barbara Israel, Mark A. Chesler, Beth Baker,
Elaine Wellin, Shana Langer and Bill Forderer

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF STP SCHOOLS

Seeing their lives and the lives of their friends and family threatened by environmental toxics, members of community and labor organizations have been actively fighting to protect themselves and their communities. In 1988, national and grassroots organizations dealing with issues of pollution and community health realized the problems inherent in fighting isolated local battles, and the potential benefits of bringing together local organizers. This realization provided the original framework for the STP schools, in which people active in grassroots organizations from around the country convened to share their problems, frustrations, successes and failures. The object of these schools has been to provide an opportunity for grassroots community activists to learn from each other, and to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences in their struggles. Bringing people together has helped activists support one another and strengthen and add cohesion to the work being done in individual communities.

Beginning in January of 1989, the Highlander Research and Education Center hosted a series of 10 monthly, residential weekend-long workshops attended by local grassroots and national environmental organizers. Called STP workshops (for Save the Planet or Stop the Pollution), the program received funding from several sources that helped pay for food and lodging for participants, travel for those who needed it (many participants and organizations paid all or part of their expenses), and salary

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for the Highlander staff.

More than 200 individuals participated in these ten STP schools, representing an almost equal number of different organizations. Individual organizations periodically sent more than one representative, and some individuals participated in multiple workshops.

OVERVIEW OF THIS REPORT

This report presents a description and analysis of the ten STP schools held at the Highlander Center from January, 1989 through November, 1989. The information has been compiled in order to: 1) provide an overview of the content and process generated at the STP schools, 2) present participants' assessments of their own learning and of the strengths and weaknesses of the STP schools, and 3) provide illustrations of the continuing needs identified by participants. All this information will be useful in planning future STP-related activities.

A primary audience of this report is the staff of Highlander and the participants in the various schools. In addition, other grassroots activists, agency staff, policy makers, and researchers working on environmental issues may find the results of interest. All the primary authors of this report personally attended at least one STP workshop.

METHODS

The information utilized in preparing this report came from three main sources. Each of the ten STP weekend-long schools was recorded on audio tape by a member of the Highlander staff.

Using excerpts from these tapes and notes taken on newsprint during the sessions, the Highlander staff created a written summary of each school. Each of these summaries was reviewed for data relevant to the three major aims of this report (stated above).

The second source of information was a survey of all participants that was conducted using a questionnaire developed jointly by the Highlander staff and researchers at the University of Michigan. The questionnaire was composed of nineteen questions, seven of which were open-ended. The open-ended questions sought interpretative or evaluative answers (e.g., what did you learn, what issues does your group work on), whereas the closed-ended questions focused principally on objective data (e.g., how long has the organization existed, does this organization have paid staff). A pretest was conducted at one of the STP schools in the Fall of 1989 and the final questionnaire was distributed to all 216 STP participants in January 1990. In mid-April, telephone follow-up calls were conducted with people who had not returned their questionnaires.

As of the end of June 1990, 54 questionnaires had been completed and returned and 76 people were unlocatable, had moved or could not be reached by phone. The result is a fairly low response rate (54/216 = 25%; 54/125 reached = 43%) and requires caution in interpreting the responses as representative of all the people or groups attending the STP schools.

The results from three of the items on the questionnaire are reported here (i.e., How has the STP school been helpful?, What

have you done differently because of STP?, and What topics would you like for future STP schools?). For each question, responses are grouped according to what the respondent identified as the content area of his/her group. For example, responses to groups identifying deforestation, rainforest protection and clear cutting in the national forest system as their main content area were grouped under timber/forest. In this way we were able to differentiate the benefit of STP schools for various types of community organizations.

The complete set of tapes for four of the most representative schools (#2, #3, #6, and #11) were transcribed, resulting in several hundred pages of text. These transcripts provided the third main source of information for this report. They were analyzed in a qualitative framework, using a method of restating key phrases and combining them according to common topics and issues. For each school, participants' comments were grouped together according to the agenda item being discussed (e.g., biggest victory, who benefits from pollution, barriers to change). Within each agenda item comments were further grouped into sub-categories based on the content or theme of the statements (e.g., victory against government, political victory, self victory). The development of these sub-categories was based on analyses of over 800 pages of verbatim transcripts from the four STP schools, yielding over 3,000 participant comments (or pieces of data).

Although there were some similarities or common themes in these grouping of comments across the four schools, there also was some variation in the themes or issues which were brought up

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in the different STP schools. The discussion in this report reflects both the similar and different issues that emerged during the sessions. The sub-categories or themes that are discussed here are illustrated by quotes which are representative of the comments grouped under that category. As will be apparent throughout this report, a decision was made to provide as little interpretation as possible, in order for the words of the participants to speak for themselves. Thus, this report is an example of a program evaluation using qualitative methods.

PROCESS AND AGENDA OF STP SCHOOLS

The physical setting is an important element in the residential workshop learning process. The Highlander Center is located on a hillside farm facing the Great Smokey Mountains of East Tennessee. Workshop participants stay in any of several dorm-style rooms, together accommodating up to forty visitors. The main meeting room is a circular space with plenty of windows looking out over the mountains, a piano, and rocking chairs set in a big circle. Small groups can also meet on the deck, on the patio, in the dining hall, the kitchen, or in the library a hundred yards down the hill.

The workshops generally run from suppertime Friday through Sunday lunch. Facilitators schedule plenty of informal meeting time and see to it there is usually at least one musician among the participants -- guitar is usually the instrument of choice but the piano is played often. On Saturday night in particular, after participants have spent all day working, they begin to

share in more personal ways, through music, telling stories, or strolling under the stars. Friendly banter among Highlander staff helps to break down the formal expert/novice roles many first-time visitors expect.

People attending the workshops eat together and are asked to help wash the dishes and keep the common area clean. When people need to get away for a bit, they go for a long walk about the farm or past neighboring farms, read in the library (housing 6000 books and hundreds of tapes, periodicals, and research files on the economy, the environment, and regional culture), or watch videotapes in any of several locations.

The setting provides an opportunity for people to get away from phone calls and the usual heavy demands of their community work. Participants often bring their spouses and couples are housed together. There's also a small child care facility.

These elements make for a setting which is at once relaxed, hardworking, cooperative, joyous, and intensely personal. In a short time participants begin to trust one another enough to share their most fearful experiences and heartfelt hopes, and begin to work together towards common goals.

Each of the STP schools was attended by approximately 25-40 participants. Participants represented different regional areas from across the United States (37 states and the District of Columbia) and several international settings (South Africa, Ecuador and India). The majority of participants were working on local environmental issues such as toxic waste dumping, nuclear weapons waste, industrial pollution, and rural development. Some participants represented local groups

addressing recycling issues. Some members of labor unions attended who were faced with toxic chemical hazards in the workplace. Several members of groups for victims of environmental disasters and toxic exposure also attended. In addition, a considerable number of participants represented national environmental groups and research and information centers with a national focus. The Highlander staff facilitated discussion of the agenda outlined below. This agenda was initially developed on the basis of discussions with members of national and grassroots environmental organizations. Since modifications were made after the first few schools, there was some variation in the agenda across workshops. The following description highlights the major sessions included in most of the workshops. The particular topics discussed in each section are identified in Figure 1.

Friday night: Participants introduced themselves and gave brief descriptions of the types of issues on which they were working. Participants also discussed what they hoped to gain from the workshop and what their concerns or fears were in attending the workshop.

Saturday morning: Participants reintroduced themselves, providing an opportunity for new arrivals to introduce themselves, and then they discussed:

What was your biggest victory? Using a round robin format, participants described what they saw as their biggest victory in their fight for a cleaner environment. A volunteer from the group wrote the responses on newsprint.

Who benefits? Again using a round robin approach, participants listed on newsprint and discussed the various parties who gain from the process of polluting the environment.

What are the barriers? During this discussion participants listed and examined some of the factors which keep them from being as effective as possible.

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FIGURE 1

Major Topics Covered at the STP Schools and Subcategories of
Issues that Arose in These Different Sessions

1:WHAT WANT; WHY HERE/WHAT FEAR;ANXIETIES

* Exchange knowledge/ideas
* The children/future generations/society
* Receive and provide strength, support
* Lack of self involvement/professing ignorance
* Fear of environmental problems/focus on issues/
  contamination/health issues
* Effects environmental activism has on family
* Not know what to expect

2:BIGGEST VICTORY WE'VE HAD

* Victory against government
* Victory against company
* Political victories
* Started alternatives/community victories/community behind
  us
* Local group process
* Educating people
* Self victories
* Non-environmental specific victories

3:WHO BENEFITS FROM POLLUTION

* Business/economic and corporate
* Government/government and political
* Health care industry/health/helping
  professions
* Educational system/educational institutions
* Media
* Big environmental groups
* Church/religion/religious leaders
* Government and economic/connection between government and
  industry
* Workers
* We all benefit
* Lawyers/legal profession
* Other

4: <u>BARRIERS TO CHANGE</u>

* Rules
* Language/technical terms/knowledge base/terminology
* Economic and corporate
* Economic and corporate (alternative)
* Educational system
* Sense of appropriate behavior
* Problem with local group/fight with allies/divisions amongst people
* Not enough power
* Media
* Fear
* Church/religion
* Experts and scientific communities
* Our process/group maintenance
* Apathy
* Not apathy/agenda/time and energy
* Global dimension/scope
* Government and political;public sector
* Attitudes and beliefs
* Role of money and greed
* Government and corporate/connection between government and business

5: <u>CONTRADICTIONS IN OUR OWN WORK</u>

* Terminology/language and terminology
* Illusion of protection
* Pay tax to then try and get government to use tax to fix problem
* Lifestyle/behavioral practices
* Church/religious
* Personal political action
* Not outreach to allies
* Health and health standards/medical profession
* Economic/corporate
* Educational system
* Experts/scientific communities
* Government and economic/connection between government and industry/polluters control regulatory agencies
* Government political
* Legal

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6:TACTICS BEING USED AGAINST US

* Patronizing/condescending
* Intimidation
* Make community feel "chosen"
* Jobs/economics
* Company and regulatory agencies control meetings
* Media
* Pretend friends
* Church
* Technical language/control information/language and terminology
* Infiltration of groups
* Control of the process
* Control workers
* Take advantage of peoples looking at good side
* Give small victories to pacify
* Pick on the least powerful

7:WHERE OPPOSITION MAY BE VULNERABLE

* Our control of process
* Committed to issue for money not from heart
* Their lies
* Their track record
* Media
* Language and knowledge
* Public image
* Their decency
* Number of people/people power
* Economic and corporate
* Government and economic/connection between government and industry
* Government and political
* Mistaken assumptions about us

8:WHAT CAN WE DO/STRATEGIES

* People power/join together
* Involve kids
* Use creative ideas
* Educate people in the community
* Use of school to educate
* Use of information and research
* Educate self
* Small victories
* Take control of meetings
* Find person behind title
* Build community
* Network build/tap into larger organizations/coalition build
* Need to watchdog
* Create new laws
* Promote/support environmentally safe business/economic and corporate (alternative):goals
* Voter activity/registration
* Boycott
* Multinational:identify/challenge
* Government and political: goals
* Health and health standards
* Use information and research
* Language and terminology
* Use laws against them
* Get a lawyer
* Lifestyle/practice what preach
* Media
* Our process
* Planning and development
* Religious
* Relocate people in the community
* Immediate action;civil disobedience
* Changing power relationships
* Economic/corporate power
* National

9:HIGHLANDER EVALUATION

* Support
* Stimulate thinking
* Process of workshop
* What are you going to do differently as result of workshop/stp

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Lunch

Saturday afternoon:

Small group discussion: At some schools, role plays were conducted. Participants were divided into small groups and each group developed a role play involving an industry announcing that they were locating a plant, incinerator, or hazardous waste dump in the community. Within each group, participants chose roles (e.g., politician, scientist) and developed a scenario for informing the community of the benefits of the industry's actions. After the small groups had come up with a plan, each group acted out its role play and the audience responded in role in the large group. This was followed by questions and discussion. After all groups had presented, the entire group examined the lessons learned from the role plays. In other workshops, small groups were formed to discuss other agenda items in more depth, such as goals and strategies. Again, these small groups reported their findings back to the larger group.

Saturday evening:

What tactics are used against us? During this discussion participants shared some of the tactics which they saw being used against them. These tactics were listed on newsprint.

Where is the opposition vulnerable? Participants listed where and why the opposition may be vulnerable. Responses were printed on newsprint.

Sunday morning:

What can we do? Actions? Strategies? Participants discussed both broad and specific strategies which could be used to fight the opposition.

Evaluation of the workshop: This included discussion about: Was your apprehension realized? Were expectations met? What are you going to do differently? What can the STP schools do better?

In addition to the revisions that were made as a result of learning what was useful for participants, other factors influenced how this agenda actually was implemented. One main influence was the participants themselves: at some workshops people focused more on one part of the agenda.

A second major influence on the direction of the agenda was the facilitator's behavior. At times he would respond to the

group's interest in a particular topic.

> Okay, we're getting into another discussion. Let's just go into another discussion, okay. (11-2-22)*

At other times he would try to bring the group back to focus on the current agenda topic, or move discussion to the next agenda item.

> Let's hear some more examples of how we've used education in our own communities. (6-2-5)

> Let's switch directions and talk about contradictions. Who can think of some contradictions that exist to keep us from where we are going? (6-2-20)

At other times, the facilitator would check with the group to make sure people agreed with the direction of the discussion.

> So am I to assume that we go on listing some goals right now? Is that what I'm hearing? We do have some sort of consensus on that? (3-5-1)

Another role the facilitator played was to relieve tension and/or revive the group, as appropriate. This took several forms, including diverting conversation, suggesting a break, or suggesting a song. Finally, the facilitator often conveyed the importance of informal conversations outside of the structured sessions.

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*Each of the quotes presented in this report is followed by a set of three numbers: the first number represents the number of the STP School, the second number indicates the tape number, and the third number indicates the page number from the written transcript. Therefore, 11-2-22 means that the quote comes from STP 11, tape 2, page 22 of the transcript.

We're moving well ahead of schedule and I noticed a lot
of people really enjoy the interaction and picking up
on some of these subjects and we want you to do that,
okay. One-on-one or whatever. We want to encourage
it. And that's the reason we take so many breaks and
that's why we let them run over a little, to be real
honest with you is to encourage you to do that.
(11-3-9)

WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM THE WORKSHOP?

Expectations

In the opening session of most schools, participants were
asked what they wanted to gain or learn from the workshop. The
two purposes mentioned most frequently were: (1) to exchange
knowledge and ideas; and (2) to receive and provide strength and
support.

Participants wanted to exchange ideas, and to learn more
about the environment and about strategies for change.

Each of us I think has so much to tell each other. To
listen, to speak, and to learn and plan strategy.
(3-2-8)

I would like to learn more about the environment.
(11-1-7)

Participants also wanted to learn from others' experiences.

I suppose that what I expect here out of this is to
gain knowledge and knowledge about people's
experiences, which I think is probably the most useful
thing that I can get out of this. (3-3-35)

One of my hopes when I came here was that I would come
into contact with a diverse group with whom I could
learn from and share experiences with. I suppose the
other expectation that I have out of this meeting is to
receive hope that we can come together in some kind of
meaningful way to share our experiences and to make
each of us more productive in our communities when we
return. (3-2-35)

There also was an interest in learning more about group
process and how to improve the functioning of local

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organizations. In particular, participants wished to learn more about how to bring people with different backgrounds together to work on a particular issue.

> I hope to learn more about working with other people and how to make groups work together. (11-1-14)

> The town's about 30,000, so you can see what a small minority that is, and of course demographically it is the retired poor, the poor white, some of the Black and the Indian. We have not utilized that, so I'd like to figure out how to utilize all of those groups in connection with what's happening nationally. (3-3-1)

Participants were interested in gaining knowledge not only for themselves, but also to share with their communities.

> My expectation here is to get all the information that I can to help provide this information back to my community members and use some of the strategies that we work on here, contribute here. (3-2-35)

> You just kind of hope to hear what other folks is doing, get ideas from people to bring back and share. (11-1-3)

In addition to exchanging knowledge, participants wanted to receive and provide courage, strength and support with one another. One aspect of this was expressed as the need to discover others who were feeling and doing similar things in their lives and local groups.

> Last night, listening to the problems, I was somewhat overwhelmed, but also gained a lot of hope because I felt like altogether we can make a difference in all of our problems. It felt real supportive to be here last night and feel like you weren't alone with your little isolated problems. (3-3-5)

> I have reached one of my goals just by seeing all you people having your fights and knowing you're doing the same thing. (3-3-7)

Another aspect of this desire for support was to be rejuvenated, or energized.

> The biggest reason I like to come to these things is it gives me a chance to get over being burnt out some, getting to meet with other people and pick up on some of their energy and hearing some of their stories makes you feel like you're not by yourself. (3-2-34)

> My hope is that through sharing our common knowledge, we energize each other and go away from here real determined. (3-3-11)

> I'd like to feed off the energy and take it back because it helps to get rejuvenated so much and know you're not the only one. (11-1-15)

And some participants also wanted support for the specific project that they are engaged in.

> The purpose of me attending this meeting, we are presently actively trying to get as much support as we can and to give the communities as much knowledge as we can on the company's total disregard to the health and safety of its workers and the environment in which they work. (3-2-36)

Apprehensions or Fears

As part of the introductory process of discussing goals and expectations for the workshop, participants also were asked to share their apprehensions or fears about participating in the STP school. The purpose of this activity was to build trust and comfort among "strangers" in this new environment. Participants' responses ranged from broadly not knowing what to expect to some fairly specific fears.

Some participants stated that they had experiences and ideas they wanted to share, but had some concern about their ability to express themselves in a way which would be understood by others.

> My first concern about this school is that I'd be able to express myself. I've been at home with my three kids for the past 5 years and I've been talking on their level and so it's real good for me to be in this situation. (3-3-5)

Other participants were not sure they had anything to share or

did not know what to expect.

> My greatest anxiety was, what do I have to offer?
> I've stopped wondering what I have to offer and started
> listening more to other people. (6-5-22)

> I didn't know what to expect was my anxiety. I didn't
> know what STP stood for..didn't know what I could
> contribute. (6-5-20)

Still other participants were not sure if listening would be
enough. They were afraid that they would not be able to use the
information as effectively as they wanted to.

> I guess that probably my biggest fear would be that I
> wouldn't use the information as wisely as possible that
> I get from a meeting like this. (3-2-36)

> And my fear is that I'm an outsider to my community.
> My fear is not being able to motivate insiders or long
> time residents to mobilize on this. (3-3-5)

Some participants also said that they were not sure that they
belonged because they had not been active enough or were not as
directly affected by a pollution problem.

> I feared I'd be with a bunch of people who have
> something like an immediate fear of incinerator in
> their backyard, and I would be one of those people from
> an area where I don't have an incinerator in my
> backyard. I don't have waste dumped in my backyard.
> I'm just a concerned citizen. (11-1-16)

> One thing I'm afraid of is everybody else was gonna be
> more active, more exciting than what we do. (11-1-4)

> I guess my apprehension in coming here was I haven't
> been all that active with groups on environmental
> issues. (11-1-10)

Participants were also anxious about being outsiders. For
example, some ethnic minorities were concerned that they would
have to play a certain role.

> I was afraid as a Native American, that people would
> make me perform. (6-5-22)

Others were concerned that they would not feel like they belonged

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because of regional differences.

> My biggest anxiety, no longer living in the south, when you come back home, people won't think you're from home anymore. (6-5-19)

Still others had concerns about coming to the workshop because of what they had to leave at home.

> My own personal anxiety was leaving three teenagers at home. (6-5-19)

> I had a lot to do this weekend to get ready for a meeting on Monday. (11-1-15)

PART II: CONTENT OF STP SCHOOLS:

TOPICS IDENTIFIED AND ISSUES EXPLORED

As indicated in Figure 1, each of the major agenda items at the STP Schools generated extensive discussion by the participants. The sub-categories under each agenda heading were created to label the similar topics that were discussed within each agenda item across the workshops. In addition, some issues were so important to the participants that they continued to surface and be discussed at various times during the workshops. These issues "cut across" the formal agenda and process of the schools, and therefore we have labelled them "cross-cutting themes" to distinguish them from the formal agenda headings of the workshop (see Figure 1). Sometimes these themes arose in discussions of participants' learning goals, or as barriers to change, or in small group role plays and reactions. These themes were identified through the process of analyzing the discussions that occurred during each workshop. There were a number of cross-cutting themes that stood out as quite common and important to participants, as judged from their repetition and the depth of people's concerns in all sessions. These included:

- global impact of environmental pollution*
- connections between government and industry or between polluters and regulatory agencies
- degree to which various groups benefit from pollution
- dealing with conflicts between local grassroots groups and national environmental organizations*
- local group process or group maintenance and leadership
- benefits of sharing ideas and receiving support
- education as a strategy for change and the role of educational systems*
- building coalitions with communities and labor
- overcoming the barriers of racism, sexism, and class discrimination*
- using experts and research to advantage*

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- changing power relationships and building a power base
- altering personal and family life styles

In order to illustrate the relevance and power of these themes, information on several of them (as indicated by asterisked items above) is presented below: global issues as a concern of many participants; education as a change strategy used by many local groups (which integrates several of the above themes); and the divisions amongst people in the environmental movement (which also integrates several of the above themes).

GLOBAL ISSUES

The need to examine environmental problems from a global perspective was expressed at different points throughout the STP schools. Among the global-level issues discussed were: global politics and global organizing, interconnectedness of the world, population issues, U.S. (and other developed nations) dumping around the world, awareness of global environmental issues, and the complexity of global interdependence.

Global politics/Global organizing. STP participants concerned about global political and environmental issues focused on the ecological implications of capitalism, the centrality of the multinational corporation in the struggle over global problems, and the process of working with people from other countries to stop multinational pollution.

> The multinational corporation represents the capitalistic system. Whether you're talking about peace groups, toxic waste groups, or unemployed people, or unions - this is the beast that all of these groups are dealing with. Single multinational corporations are stronger than single countries now. (6-5-10)

> Just within this group we feel like since there are other people out there who are fighting it makes us feel a little stronger. If there are folks in other

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countries who can feel that same way because we're in touch with them, because we noted where that company was located, and we wrote what this company does, we can put pressure on that company and can maybe force it to go somewhere else again and spend more resources looking for a place to put their poison. The more we can do that, the more we can chase them around, the more they'll be forced to look like criminals. This barge of incinerator ash that went to Panama wound up dumping some on a beach in Haiti before they were kicked out of there, then the damned thing changed names and ownership, then it wound up showing up empty in Sri Lanka. We followed it every step of the way all the way around and somebody confronted the captain of this barge in Sri Lanka and asked, "What happened to your payload, buddy - where did it go?" He said, "I don't remember." The more we can push them, the less legitimate they are. (6-5-12)

Union Carbide's corporation headquarters are in Raleigh at the research triangle and that's the division that headed the Carbide plant in Bhopal. You probably know about the absolute sellout, that those victims have yet to receive any compensation, forget reparations or rehabilitation or monitoring. So we are helping to host this tour to help connect these issues. How do we, in our communities, look at focusing on these questions when our court system and our regulatory agencies can produce nothing for victims and no protection for communities? (3-1-33)

People have no qualms about buying a refrigerator or a washing machine that is made by GE in Mexico. People literally don't know what they're doing, they think GE is an American company. So, when these companies like GE decide to take their operations overseas so they can poison people for free, we need to organize boycotts and education campaigns to let the American people know just exactly what's going on. (6-5-11)

We had some visitors here from Mexico about four or five years ago. The delegation from the ARCO plant in Mexico was on strike. They were coming here to get support for their strike. We took them down and met the union people here and we were able to introduce them to the people in this area. And they were surprised at the complaints the workers were making here, because they said these workers are telling about all the hard times they were having and they said gee whiz we're striking down there to get some of those hard times for us. So we can't deal with this problem until we include people from outside the borders of the U.S., just like we can't deal with it without getting together with working people and people that are in the community working at a particular plant. We're gonna

have to extend it beyond our borders. Air goes everywhere. (3-1-17)

Interconnectedness of the world. Participants often emphasized the interconnectedness of the world, the relatedness or "web" of environmental problems (such as acid rain), of social problems (such as racism), and the necessity "to globalize people" to understand and take responsibility for that interconnectedness.

> We are not likely to solve the problems of racism and hatred in one part of the world without solving it in another part of the world. The now worldwide phenomenon of acid rain and many other environmental contaminations prove there is not gonna be any solution to the environmental problem in any one corner of the world or any one state or any one region. (3-1-12)

> I think one of the barriers that we're facing is globalizing people. Making people realize that just because you don't live five minutes from this plant it is affecting you and will affect you forever, possibly. (11-2-24)

> The trail goes from the mines to the west, everywhere, it doesn't just stop in the US you know. I just think it's important for everybody to take responsibility for now and for the past, too, and enact a responsibility for the future, for the children's future. (11-1-5)

Population issues. Another global issue of importance to participants was the effect of overpopulation, especially in terms of providing food, clothing, and dealing with the strain on world resources.

> Population, and the fact that it's projected to double in another twenty years globally, and the lack of birth control, and the Catholic Church, for instance, still opposes birth control. It's just living in a, we're living on a limited sphere, the globe and the resources can't just keep going around. (11-2-24)

> How do you produce enough food for 6 billion people using nothing but organic materials? (6-2-5)

U.S. (and other developed nations) dumping around the world. Participants talked about the dumping of hazardous wastes and the

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manufacture and selling of hazardous substances, such as pesticides, in developing nations.

> The Third World countries have been threatened by what goes on in the U.S. Like in our case, the tanning company shut down about half of its plant. We found out they didn't close it, they moved their dirtiest of operations to Argentina. We're transferring problems and we're doing it globally. (6-4-9)

> We're not all ignorant in Latin America. Why does the U.S. and other (developed) countries sell us dangerous pesticides they won't use themselves? (3-7-32)

Awareness of global environmental issues. As organizers, STP participants talked about the awareness (and the denial) of global environmental issues as important elements in designing change strategies.

> Denial of the threat of global warming - as a barrier to change. (6-2-25)

> When I go into a school I'd speak to third grade groups and they knew what deforestation was. They know what global warming was. They've heard these things. They're worried about the rain forests; they need to worry but they don't need to be scared. (11-1-21)

The complexity of global interdependence. Finally, a number of participants commented on the overwhelming complexity and energy drain involved in trying to deal with global environmental issues:

> Another barrier is just the damn complexity of the world. (2-3-24)

> The system can wear you down; you have a temporary victory and they just wait awhile because they have more money and more resources. (6-1-19)

> Sometimes when you look at things globally they're so overwhelming that you start blocking them out, but when you start to see things locally they seem very, very small and insignificant. (11-1-19)

EDUCATION

Education was another cross-cutting theme that arose in several different portions of the schools' agendas. The areas in which education was discussed included: biggest victories, barriers to change, opposition is vulnerable, strategy to raise consciousness and get people involved, approaches to educating the community, and information and research.

Biggest Victories

The topic of education arose during early sessions in which participants discussed their biggest victories: helping to educate people was seen as a means to increase their motivation to participate in local environmental action.

> All these issues that have been festering inside for years are starting to surface. We tried to show people that it's all right to say this is wrong. And wrong is wrong is wrong. You can't ever change a wrong 'cause it's gonna be wrong 'til you fix it. The fact that you're trying to do what's right then you're fulfilling your purpose in being here. We've been able to encourage a lot of people who had no drive or anything. (2-4-15,16)

Education also was seen as a means to let people know that they had the ability to change the current situation.

> If we've done by exposing DOE will aid any other community and show them that they should check it out before somebody moves into their community, just getting a warning out and letting people know that you can fight back and take on those bastards up there in Washington, and that's what we did. (2-4-14)

Participants emphasized the importance of educating people in situations where they would be comfortable, and in ways in which people would accept the information. Making friends with people was considered an important context for education.

> Every day I took my baby carriage and I stopped, I walked up and down the street; I visited the little

clusters on the porches, and had coffee. We spread our story through making friends and instead of talking about technical issues we sort of gossiped about how we were feeling, spread our story by getting some of the men involved in a community group, on their job, when they were out at the bar or post office, whatever, to spread the word. Our office had a policy, a big sign that said loitering allowed. Our grant money was spent on ice cream for the kids, all kinds of fun things, community dances. And we just thought of anything that a community we ever hoped could be, and we tried to make it happen. (2-4-1,2)

Participants spoke of victories in educating other people as well as educating themselves.

We've learned to read labels, some of us. (6-1-10)

But we have made progress in health and safety. The United Mine Workers has come in and educated us and we've made leaps and bounds in having the company answer up for some of the stuff they've committed. We have NIOSH in there now. We have their evaluation that it is a hazard, so now we can take it one more step further and have them start modifying their regulations to where we can get below the limits and make it a healthier working place. (3-1-22)

Barriers to Change

Although education can be seen as a victory, some participants saw the misuse of education, lack of education, and mis-information as a barrier to change. It was suggested that a lack of education about particular issues can lead to feelings of less control or power over the environment.

Fear comes from a lack of access to the knowledge bank that the power controls. The power itself, the overwhelming power of a big corporation is a barrier. (2-5-9)

It was a year long battle and we fought every step of the way and there were 30 environmental organizations in the battle when it started and a year later it was a woman and me standing there facing Kerr-McGee's 15 lawyers the day they got the permit to dump in the river. But we hollered and griped so much that they did include language in this permit that said it was not a fertilizer but it was a waste disposable, and so we hope to be able to use that language to further the

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issue. (2-4-16)

> The opposition always narrows an argument down to real scientific technical terms and you have to play ball on their field according to their rules. (6-2-26)

There is also a potential for education to be used against community groups. Often this takes the form of being given information that is either incomplete or inaccurate, or that is given in such a way that is not understandable.

> Part of the dis/misinformation process is to get us to look somewhere else instead of looking up at the heavens, at the holes in the ozone layer. It's good to know they're there, but look at the source. (2-2-35)

> We're finding out that these MSDS sheets are not correct. They're enough to satisfy the unions and they're enough to satisfy management, but they're not enough to satisfy the people. First of all, you have to be a very intelligent human being or scientist to read one of them and we're fighting that. We want to change that. (3-5-35)

Participants were concerned about the traditional school system's role in socializing people to distrust their own wisdom, and in socializing people to obey authority.

> Experts create an educational system that taught your kids from day one they entered school that they don't know anything, that we don't know anything based on our experiences and we have to believe experts.

> The educational system, I mean it teaches all these ideals about democracy, and we are the government, and all that but it also teaches us to obey and compete. We're still being taught as an industrialized society, that's the way they were teaching back before the world wars and everything else too. (11-2-26)

> System is not meant to educate, meant to get people to fit in. (6-2-12)

Participants felt that supposed lack of education often was used as a tactic against environmental groups. Companies or the government were seen as using technical terms to convince grassroots organizers and community people that they did not know

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what they were talking about.

> They tried to discredit us in many ways and say, you know, well they're not technical, they don't know what they're talking about. (2-1-3)

Opposition is Vulnerable

Although those in the opposition often speak and act as though they are knowledgeable, participants thought that often the opposition was not really expert at all, that they didn't do enough research themselves, and therefore that the opposition was vulnerable to educational strategies. Some participants thought that polluters should be forced to talk common sense and simply; others thought that even when people insist, polluters couldn't explain things clearly. Although polluters try to control information, knowledge in the hands of the opposition was "there if people want to get it", especially the results of public studies and polls. Polluters' information and their own terminology can be used against them. One participant thought that, because of specialization, managers only know specifics; "if we educate ourselves, we will know more than they know about the whole".

> They think they control the information but the information is there if the people want to get it. (6-4-2)

> When they get up there, "Well now I just don't quite understand every little detail. How about explaining it more and they say more. I just don't understand that. Now make it more plain to me so I know what you're saying." Force them to speak our language. They can't. (11-3-29)

> Force them to talk common sense and simplicity rather than real technical technology. (11-3-30)

> Use their technology back against them: I asked them what kind of uranium, made them break it down. Then I

used their terminology back against them and defined just exactly what kind of uranium was in there, which is big with them. (11-3-31)

<u>Strategy to Raise Consciousness and Get People Involved</u>

Education was seen as a vital strategy to get people involved and to help them stay involved in local group actions.

> It's not apathy. If people see a reason to get involved, they're no longer apathetic. (6-4-18,19)

> It's amazing the good people you can get in an organization once their consciousness is raised, like in the schools and all. You're out in a hay field or something and you start making these connections. I know one thing I'm interested in is more education to share with people. (11-4-9)

> What made a difference? Mainly because all of us involved with it made efforts to continue learning. Now they put us on TV sometimes and that like gives you some credibility even if it's kind of hokey credibility to me. (2-4-16,17)

Education also was used to help people become aware of the consequences to their health of using contaminated products and living in contaminated areas.

> The only paper people want to use is white, and people won't drink from brown milk cartons, so that's another thing that we've been trying to do, is just get general awareness of the problems, you know. If you use white paper you're turning somebody's river into a dioxin bed. You're in contact with dioxin while you're using that, that product, and the scariest thing is the migration of the dioxin from the milk cartons into the milk itself. So when you're eating ice cream out of that real nice white carton you're ingesting more dioxin because it has an affinity for the fats. So it's just we feel real important for the people to take a stand with brown paper. (3-1-25)

> We discovered in the course of this organizing campaign it was a non-union plant, had a work force that was 80% women, 75% black in an eastern part of the state which is a majority black area. What was discovered in the course of the organizing campaign was that the workers had incredible health disorders. None of them knew anybody else had it because they never talked about their health. They considered it personal. There had never been a format that they talked about their work place, and out of the campaign it was discovered that

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the company was also polluting the ground water and they found ethelene, which is carcinogenic. (3-1-31)

> We're trying to change the consciousness of people in our county on a low level nuclear dump site and we can't seem to make any headway on health and environmental issues, so now we're taking an attack from the socioeconomic standpoint, to show them how our choice relates to society and that really the main income producer in our area would be impacted adversely. We are making more headway in this tactic than we ever did trying to talk about health and environmental issues.   (2-1-31)

Participants also thought that education can help people make critical connections between ideas and people, and the work being done in different places.

> We can empower other people to say look over the line here in Mississippi, or right over there in Georgia, this is happening, call here to find out about that. (11-2-8)

> When we don't see our trash anymore we don't have to worry about it, you know, and we're taking industrial waste and dumping it in other countries I think if you can get a lot more cross cultural education, and to realize people in Africa, South America are like us. They're intelligent. They are concerned about the same things. (11-4-7)

Approaches to Educating the Community

Environmental education can take place in the schools for children and young adults. Electing a responsive school board was seen as a good way to help change curricula.

> I feel like the students is the most help for the future, because we are all just learning and we're all adults and we've been living this all of our life and we're just learning. Well how long's it gonna take them to learn, and how many of us are gonna die off, before we pass on what they need to know. They need to know it now without scaring them to death, but it's very important they start now.   Maybe if we start getting the schools, the high schools, the colleges more involved, even grade schools, maybe start thinking about all things that they need to know from very little and they'll figure out a way.   I believe there is a way. (3-3-12)

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For us it's gonna have to be education in our schools as one of the big places to help children and that's one of the goals that we see is to educate the children to some of the problems that we're having as adults so that they won't just feed into a silent society that uses plastics and that type of thing. (3-5-6)

Elect a responsive school board, they set curriculum. (6-2-13)

Some participants felt that creative educational approaches, rather than economic or political strategies, would be effective. Creative demonstrations that use powerful symbols, like posting lists of those dead from pollution, or carrying caskets down freeways, make clearer the effects of hazardous conditions. Some participants thought that thinking creatively frees our minds, and others believed that music, songs, and having fun and joking were creative ways to learn and to change people's minds.

And maybe there is an evangelical thing - the lessons that we need, the answers that we're looking for instead of, you know, manipulation of the political and economic process as a place to begin. (2-2-36)

Two local newspapers compiled all the names that had died and in an 18 month period we ended up with close to 100 names that had died because of cancers, leukemias, heart, respiratory. What we have done to make an impact was put these on an 8 x 10 plywood board, painted that board white, and in black lettering wrote each one of their names and their ages and we went public with this. We call it the General Motors Lordstown Memorial. 15 years ago it was a joke that because our city is called Lordstown that the cars and automobiles were made by angels. We didn't know it was gonna be literally, and that's what's gonna happen if something isn't done, if we don't stop the chemicals in our plants. There's not gonna be left the angels to make those cars. (3-2-16)

Make music. That's powerful. There's no song that shouldn't go around this country if we've got people working on. There's no one song people can sing everywhere that they all know. I don't know what it would take to generate songs like that for everyone to know them and everybody sings. That's powerful, when everybody knows how to sing. (11-4-4)

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> Need to start a line of jokes. Newspapers won't print what we are trying to say, so fastest travel of information is a joke. (11-4-4)

Information and Research

Participants noted that one of the roles of education entails using information and research. They highlighted the importance of varied sources and outlets for information, such as the national right-to-know database and other community information centers. They discussed gathering their own information, as in conducting their own testing programs, or writing their own editorials.

> I've been able to work with the Southwest Research Information Center out at Albuquerque to focus our concerns on the ways to raise these issues, see if we could be able to have some outside resources, outlets, to find ways to combat this problem. (3-1-19)

> We've been active in a number of networks so we knew about the Midwest Labor Research in Chicago, and they did a social impact study of the plant closing and it showed that 20 million dollars was gonna be costing the community and the workers with all this stuff coming out. We had just no response except from any kind of public officials. (3-1-32)

> We come up with a health and safety instant report. This report asks you your name, where you're working, how long you've been there, what kind of chemicals you're working around, what does the warning label say on the cans, how are you exposed by breathing, skin contact or other, how many number of people, how many times you were exposed, one time or repeatedly, blank in minutes and hours or whatever, and what are the symptoms at the time of exposure, how long did the symptoms last. We put out these instant reports to let these people know and to get a jump on the unions and management. It's a slow process for everyone, but every day you call health and safety out or you smell those fumes, write it down, because four months from now when you've gotta go see your attorney or your doctor and they ask you then you can say, oh I have it all right here. This is even good for people that aren't even sick, if you have health and safety out in the plant. (3-5-34)

Thus, participants identified a general lack of education, lack of access to information, and mis-use of information; as well as the use of educational strategies to raise consciousness, to demystify science and professional knowledge, and to get people involved; as a major area for consideration in addressing environmental problems. The ability of people to use the Highlander-STP schools as a place to become personally educated, and as a setting in which to share or invent strategies to educate others, was an important antidote to these concerns.

DIVISIONS AMONGST US

One issue that arose throughout the STP schools was the divisions among environmental activists and between them and the people or groups with whom they worked. Participants identified a number of ways that people were divided or separated from one another, and the effects of these divisions on the environmental movement. The divisions most discussed by participants were: 1) local vs. national/international struggles, 2) local groups vs. national environmental groups, 3) rural vs. urban differences, and 4) class, race, and gender-based differences. These differences are also the bases for cultural and economic differences among people, such as in the use of language, and in amount of education, and available resources.

Local versus national/international struggles. One particular issue around which some participants felt tension was the choice of whether to organize primarily at the local or the national level; or stated differently, whether individuals and groups should fight local battles, work within the framework of a

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wider, national environmental movement, or seek a balance between a focus on a local level with awareness of a national strategy.

> We keep talking about national strategy and about a movement to serve our communities. There's nothing wrong with that, okay, it has to begin in our communities and we have to win those battles. But it's important for us to speak to the national movement. The way we're going to win this local battle is to win all the local battles through the national movement. (3-6-14)

> Coming here I always have a conflict, which is also in my organization, about how much to do just helping local people win their local fight, which is critical, versus having local people join a national grassroots movement to really transform this country in some basic ways. That's a tension, it's a healthy tension, I think. (2-6-10)

> I fear that I'll worry too much about one small specific thing that I will block out the broader game plan here and miss opportunities to change the world, because I'm focusing too tightly. But I also fear that I'll get so abstract, philosophical, or intellectual about the whole thing that I'll forget that you're supposed to be doing specific things and you can win specific battles. Reaching a balance is one of the hardest things I feel like I ever have to do, and my fear is that I won't reach that balance. (3-3-10)

Relation between local groups and the "Big Ten" national environmental groups. Participants indicated that there were many differences between small, local, grassroots groups and the large, national environmental groups. Some called the large groups traditional, and characterized their differences on political, social, and economic grounds. Some participants felt that they and their local groups were "at the heart of the matter" and that the traditional organizations did not agree with what many grassroots groups do any more than grassroots groups agree with most national groups' actions.

> There's a real difference between what we're doing and the traditional, environmental community. Certainly we're at the heart of the matter and they haven't

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> really gotten there yet. They are embarrassed by us
> because we're being people. Some of the more
> traditional environmental groups are not at all in
> favor of the work that we do. (2-2-36,37)

> Traditional environmental groups have played the game
> to allow pollution, and just set standards for
> pollution to happen. (2-2-37,38)

> A contradiction in the relationship is that local
> grassroots democracy is calling for a fundamental
> change in society while the national groups are trying
> to reform the current system and work with it - two
> different goals. (2-6-1)

One participant recognized a specific, economic conflict of
interest between the larger organizations and local groups.

> When we speak at universities or schools we talk about
> local problems and how young people's parents who have
> money are supporting national groups. Talk to them
> about the benefit of channeling that money into their
> local grassroots group. (2-6-2)

While acknowledging these political and economic differences,
participants tried to find ways for local groups to work with the
large organizations without compromising local goals and
philosophies.

> We could use national groups as resources, breathe some
> new life into them, but maintain our own independence.
> We should make a commitment going into the group
> project that we might get into with their help. We
> should not compromise and not support any compromise
> legislation which they may oppose or agree to stress
> education by national groups. They should be involved
> in education about the total picture of toxics, not as
> isolated incidents. (2-1-6)

Rural versus urban differences. Some participants saw divisions
amongst people because of rural versus city antagonisms.

> People in rural areas are put down by people in cities,
> even though we both might consider ourselves
> environmentalists. (6-2-17)

<u>Class, race, and gender-based differences</u>. Sometimes overlapping the rural versus city distinction were those differences amongst people based on class, race, and gender. These differences also are the bases for cultural and economic differences, such as use of language, amount of education, and available resources. They sometimes cause divisions amongst people who are in the same local group.

> We've got divisions within the troop - black, white, Hispanic. So just getting them all together saying one thing is an accomplishment. Race is real important, we had a phone call from a black radio station and went in and did this three-hour talk show and it was amazing. Tons of people said, gee we live about 18 miles from you, but we are concerned about you, your children, your health, safety, and it's just so hard with segregation. At the very next meeting many black people showed up and we just worked through that whole issue. The people just realized they're here to help us and you just all work together. You could just see it light up in their eyes that, yeah they're not your enemies, that they want to help us. (2-4-17,18)

> These people fighting each other keeps them from getting together to work on causes. (6-2-24)

Participants also discussed divisions between the "educated" and "uneducated".

> We've a problem, it's more of the educated/uneducated problem, where the educated people will sit down and decide, like should it be done, and then you send the uneducated people out to raise funds. The educated people that do these things don't really want to get their hands dirty, wouldn't picket, how would it look for my ongoing career. It's like the social class thing, I mean we're only commoners. (2-4-22)

> Uneducated are equated with ignorance. I know a lot of educated people that are just as ignorant than those of us that are not educated. They're just narrow-minded. (6-4-18)

And the use of language was discussed as a divisive force:

> You can't do something TO poor people. If I start talking Cherokee to you, it does not make you dumb because you can't understand me, so just be careful how

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you speak with people.   (6-2-17,18)

Talk so people can understand you.   If you're with
people that understand social theory, talk that way.
If you're with people who can't understand that, it's
not because they're dumb.   (6-2-17)

PART III: STP SCHOOLS EVALUATION

As stated earlier, one of the aims of this report is to document participants' assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the STP Schools. The purpose of this evaluation is to guide changes in the design of future similar schools, as well as to plan other schools to meet additional identified needs. The following evaluative comments are based upon participants' remarks and suggestions drawn from the verbatim transcripts of four STP schools (#2, #3, #6, and #11), from the comments documented in summaries of the other schools, and from the responses to three questions on the mailed survey (i.e., How has the STP School been helpful? What have you done differently because of STP? and What topics would you like for future STP Schools?). The two most common kinds of benefits that people reported as a result of their participation in the STP schools were: (1) personal or emotional support, characterized by feelings of connectedness, encouragement, and inspiration, and (2) new and creative ideas about how to think about their work. In addition, participants commented favorably about the structure and format of the schools, and specifically about the use of music.

SUPPORT

Although many participants mentioned more than one kind of personal or emotional support received from the workshops, and the kinds of emotional support overlap with one another, these benefits can be characterized as 1) feelings of connectedness and renewal, 2) feelings of strength and encouragement, and 3)

feelings of friendship.

Feelings of connectedness and renewal. Some participants said they had felt isolated in their own areas, with a lack of a sense of community or people who care. In the STP schools, they found they were not alone; they were energized and felt connected, joined together with people of similar beliefs doing the same work in the movement.

> My greatest gratification is that there are people out there, because we feel so isolated, feel a certain lack of community. Coming here is revitalizing, kind of a rite of intensification by seeing people from all over dealing with the beast. (6-5-19)

> I go out and talk to people who just flat out tell you they don't care. Here you're surrounded by these people who've all gone through the same experience, people all of whom care very deeply. It's just energizing. (6-5-20)

> Whatever the barriers, blacks and whites, Yankees and Rebels, can't work together, and the more we come and see each other as people, well I'm not alone, it's been good and I appreciate it. (11-4-27)

> I felt lonely before I came. And now I don't. (11-4-28)

> Like the mothers of the disappeared down in Argentina. You show for me and I'll show for you. You tell me something's going on for you, and I'll be there to make sure that you're OK. And when something's going on for me I'm going to call you; and I'd like you to show up for me and make sure that I'm OK. (7-Summary-12).

> There is a way out and that we're gonna find it by networking and sharing with each other. (11-5-1)

> One thing they take away from us, besides our health and our lives, is our communities. A lot of what happens here and what happens with our groups is rebuilding those communities. (3-Summary-7).

Results from the questionnaire sent to participants show that networking was most often cited as the specific way that STP was useful. For some, meeting people confronting similar issues

was helpful; for others, networking was the act of sharing ideas, information and experiences. Networking was important for some who exchanged substantive information about environmental issues, and for others who shared strategies and tactics that could be employed to fight "the opposition". Many participants found networking expanded their field of individual perception and helped provide linkages, either to the national environmental effort or to others who eased individuals' feelings of isolation. These responses included those which assert that STP provided "good contacts to link local struggles with national struggles", and that they "met others fighting against the same opposition". Many participants also reported that the schools provided moral and emotional support and that following STP they felt less isolated.

Feelings of strength and encouragement. Participants talked about going back to their communities feeling stronger and better able to fight and stand up for what they believed. They were encouraged, invigorated, and felt generally more able to continue their work.

> One of my hopes was that we would be here feeling encouraged and emboldened to step up our duties. I think that certainly looks like it's gonna be true. (2-6-21,22)

> I went home feeling much stronger and better able to fight and stand up for what I believed in and hearing other people with the same problem. I just have no fears. (11-1-4)

> I've gotten a whole lot of courage from you for not only what we're facing right now but just in my life and we're really all a part of each other. (11-4-28)

Feelings of friendship. Some participants said they felt friendship, kinship, or love as a result of being with people and

sharing experiences at the STP schools.

> I felt something this weekend that I don't think I've
> ever shared and I know I've never felt it in a church.
> There's a lot of love here.   (11-5-13)

> We could put chairs in a circle and we could just steal
> Highlander ideas and do them at home. I think it gives
> you kinship.   (11-4-24)

> One thing I hope to take back to my community is the
> spirit of this whole meeting, and I think that spirit
> comes from the compassion that we've shown each other,
> and the understanding and empathy, feeling each other's
> pain, and the circumstances that our problems are
> different, and listening and love. That's one thing,
> I've been regenerating in the spirit of the fight.
> (3-7-34)

STIMULATE THINKING

A second major way participants indicated that they had
benefitted from the STP schools was that sessions stimulated
their thinking in many different ways. Some noted that ongoing
sharing of information was valuable; some stated that new and
creative ways of thinking and seeing problems and strategies had
been generated in the sessions; and others pointed to specific
ideas and techniques that they had learned and would take back to
their own groups and communities.

Information sharing. Some people pointed to ongoing information
sharing as an important outcome of their participation.

> I will be glad to try to provide any kind of
> information that might help any of you all the time.
> We do get a lot of resources from a lot of different
> areas and those that would like to do it,   write up
> little things that are going on in their area to put in
> our own newsletter. (11-4-22)

> Hope in coming here was to try and learn to use the
> knowledge and experience I've gathered over the years.
> I've got all this data but I didn't know what do do
> with it, but now others have agreed to team up.
> (2-6-20)

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Most participants who responded to the questionnaire reported that the STP schools were useful as a source of information and education. They said, for instance, that "they learned a lot", that "the meetings were an education", that STP helped them develop "new ideas on communication, fundraising tactics and networking", and that they "learned more about pollution problems and about toxic wastes".

Creative ideas and strategies: New ways of thinking. Some participants felt they could take away new and creative ways of thinking and acting that had been generated by the whole group.

> Coming out of this meeting, personally it's provided new ways of thinking of the problem, what we're doing and where we're doing it. (3-7-14)

> We're always looking for new ways and new ideas that are real creative because I think you burn out and you need just somebody to pump you up and give you some new ideas on how do deal with the real meaning of the problem and the issues, and I certainly got a lot of those here. (2-6-15)

> I've gotten some excellent ideas for strategies I'm taking home that I couldn't have gotten if I hadn't been here. (3-7-26)

In addition, some participants indicated that they had broadened their perspectives and learned more comprehensive ways to view problems and issues.

> It gave me a feeling of more responsibility for what goes on that I can't separate myself from. In Kansas, strip mining is not my problem. It's real clear to see that it is my problem in so many ways. (6-5-19)

> I guess one of the things I've known but wanted to deny was the extent of the problem. (2-6-5)

> Realize that most polluting is going on in poorer communities. (6-5-19)

<u>Awareness and confidence</u>.   In response to the questionnaires,
many people noted that their awareness and confidence had
increased.   Awareness was verbalized in several different ways.
Since STP participants had varying levels of experience in group
organizing and in the environmental movement,   it expanded some
people's views of their own issue: "opened eyes to breadth of
crisis in waste generation and disposal".   For many, however,
awareness was raised regarding all of the other myriad of
environmental issues being addressed by other groups around the
country.   STP "helped broaden knowledge and understanding of
problems faced by groups in other states" and provided "exposure
to new ideas".

Several participants also noted that they were more
confident after the STP school.   Some reported that the schools
were motivating and that their sense of commitment had been
renewed.   While STP inspired some to "work harder and smarter",
for others it was more a time to "think and evaluate our
position", or to "analyze our own role as an environmental
activist".   Some found that the STP schools provided them the
opportunity to step back and evaluate the problem: "STP helped
frame the issue", "put the struggle into perspective", or
"provided a sense of main relationships".

<u>Specific ideas and techniques learned</u>.   Some participants pointed
to particular ideas and techniques that they learned, such as
organizing techniques, networking, and their own role in the
organizing process.

> I got some good ideas: certainly the circle is a good
> beginning, it was real helpful. (2-6-18)

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> I'm going to take back the idea of the network. (2-6-14)

> The biggest thing I've gained - I had a very rude awakening and it's that you cannot trust a politician and you cannot trust the government to take care of you. I need to worry about what I'm doing. (2-6-14)

> Found a couple of leads on the garbage problem and my toxic twin working with recycling - feel like I've gained a lot. (6-5-21)

Local group process. Several participants indicated on the questionnaires that the STP schools had been helpful to them in terms of learning about group process. This meant either that their own leadership skills had changed or that relationships within their group improved because of STP. Participants who indicated that STP was useful for their own group's process felt that they had learned to know other group members better, or that they had learned how to structure their own groups better. The implication was that group unity and cooperation were benefits for members' participation in the school. Some responses supporting this belief stated that groups "learned to organize and pull together", or that STP "helped to realize the importance of building an organization".

STRUCTURE AND FORMAT

In addition to the benefits described above, some participants commented that the structure and format of the workshop was appropriate and freeing, and fostered creativity.

> This structure is ideal because we don't want to be so structured that we become like the bureaucrats that we have to deal with all the time. (11-5-6)

> I appreciate the freedom for folks to say, well, if you feel like saying something now, or don't feel like saying something, you know, or I just kinda need a corner now, it's OK. (11-4-26)

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> I like the basic brainstorming. All of our ideas coming into the center and creating this, creating our reality, our possible realities. (11-4-29)

Furthermore, many participants indicated that the music was a valuable part of the school.

> I heard a lot of songs I never heard at church. (2-6-7)

> I really enjoyed that song. (11-4-25)

> I also thought the songs were really good. I just love when people sing together and I wanted to suggest we think about having the people sing more songs together. (11-5-1)

PROBLEMS

In addition to discussing beneficial outcomes of the schools, participants were encouraged to critique the experience itself. Several comments were made regarding the kinds and effects of group conflicts that occurred, and how they were handled; the extent to which sessions met personal expectations; the cultural and ethnic diversities occurring in different sessions; and the effects of STP group size and program length.

Conflicts. Some participants talked about the conflicts that occurred at some of the schools, for example, between workers and environmental group members, between members of different racial and ethnic groups, and between local-oriented and national-oriented participants. Participants saw these conflicts as frustrating but generally constructive, because they pinpointed important issues that needed resolution.

> Conflict isn't necessarily negative. Conflict is what many times moves us forward. The resolution of that conflict, the constructive synthesis of that conflict, moves us forward. Sometimes when there is conflict and there is that tension we need to not look directly at it but respect it and then look at areas that we have

as common ground and take the road to the common ground to the resolution of that conflict. (3-7-15)

I've seen a lot of frustration in the last couple of days and some pain, but you know you kind of take those as indicators of education. Sometimes it hurts to learn things. (3-7-26)

We're seeing here, a cross section. These tensions we're feeling here are acted out out there, okay, and racism exists. Rifts between different classes of people exist. The rift between labor and the citizen exists. Between labor and management. That's real life we're facing. We're all affected by it, so therefore we bring all of those things in: a room without conflict is hoping for too much. (3-6-23)

There was, however, concern expressed that these conflicts were not addressed as effectively as they might have been.

A lot of times maybe we were too polite, too caring, didn't want to offend each other, and that's not the process by which we move forward. I think that can be resolved if in fact there is more consistency and continuity developed in the STP school. Maybe if we had a few more days to spend together as a group we could break down some of the barriers, some of the mistrust, and open up with each other a great deal more and maybe push forward in terms of defining goals and exactly what we want to do as a group. (3-7-36)

Expectations not met. Some participants were disappointed that the sessions did not meet their expectations, that they did not go far enough in terms of the issues and strategies discussed.

I was disappointed, I really was. Not so much in people or anything, but in the fact that I felt real unable to really move as far as we could in the time. I'm definitely going to think about it the whole way home. (3-8-5)

I think that reiterating a lot of things we said is unnecessary, there is sufficient information. We really know what the problems are. If we keep waiting for more information before we do anything...we should talk about acting. (2-6-8)

I don't want to say lazy or laid back this afternoon. When people talk about trust I think we need to trust each other enough to disagree with each other and to focus. We've been letting a lot of sloppy thinking go by not challenging ourselves and each other

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sufficiently. Not be impolite but more rigorous with one another. We've really been skirting around the whole issue of confronting power. Let's really push one another. If this problem is so serious as what we're saying we can't be sitting and be so gentle. We can still be polite but we don't have to be gentle. (3-5-28)

Lack of cultural and ethnic diversity. Participants addressed issues of cultural and ethnic diversity; some workshop sessions had greater diversity than others and some used that diversity better.

If there's anything I would change or see added is that there could be a little more ethnic diversity. (2-6-6)

I think we have a good diverse group here and I think if we had broken up into smaller groups more often I think we could have reached some of that critical consciousness. (3-7-24)

I think it's good we do have cultural diversity here but if we're gonna do that I think that you'd better be, you better have an understanding, as to how to do cross-cultural communications. (3-7-25)

I'm a little bit sorry that we weren't able to dig out as much of the experience we have, in terms of how we're building a real multicultural network that is bringing together different organizations to overcome a lot of superficial differences that exist. (3-Summary-8).

Group size and program length. Some participants indicated that the large group size and relatively short time frame made it difficult to share ideas and get to know and learn from one another.

It's kind of hard to maintain a thought when you start talking twenty minutes after you throw your hand up in this crowd.

It seems like we're just getting started, and we break up. (11-5-7)

I mainly feel bad about the people I didn't get a chance to meet. It's just like an infinite resource here. We can't all do face-to-face relationships. (3-7-29)

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<u>Food</u>. Participants also commented on the food from an environmentalist perspective.

> The meals are wonderful. I would try to offer an option of more in the low end of the food chain. (11-4-31)

> Great as this place is, I see things that I'm astounded that a group of environmentalists tolerate. When are we going to stop barbecuing? That was delicious chicken last night, but this system, this institute should be more aware. (6-Summary-7)

WHAT PARTICIPANTS WOULD DO AND DID DO DIFFERENTLY

At the end of each STP school participants were asked what they planned to do differently once they were back in their own communities. Several participants indicated that they would place more emphasis on communication and would work with different groups.

> When your organization's been successful, and knows how to fight one issue, and has had good feelings about our ability to do that it, takes a lot of courage to try to undertake a new issue, but I think that probably members feel a lot better about being able to do that now. (2-6-7)

> You have conflict in your community and I think that possibly what I'm gonna take from here is to go home and open up the dialogue. (3-7-20)

> I want to write more with respect to Latinos and the anti-toxics movement. Cross-cultural communication needs to be raised. (3-7-27)

> I need and our people need to work with the workers, the proposed workers of our mining operation, and we hadn't considered that before. It's very important. (3-7-34)

The questionnaires, mailed after participants returned home from the STP schools, solicited information regarding what changes actually had been made. Participants reported that following the workshops they made changes in two distinct areas:

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the way in which they or their group acted or thought on environmental issues; and the way in which the organization changed as it accomplished discrete tasks.

Changes in Group Actions and Thoughts

Several participants reported that following the STP their group felt less isolated and more a part of the environmental movement as a whole. One group responded that they "stopped thinking that we were on the cutting edge of the movement", which reflects a greater appreciation for the diversity of issues being addressed by others, and also for the progressive nature of others' work. Others stated that their groups were empowered to "stay in the fight for the long haul".

STP also had an effect on some groups' internal dynamics. The school seems to have promoted greater unity and coherence. Two participants stated that following the STP their group had more "inclusive relations amongst the group members" and that those who participated in STP "became better team players". In addition, some individuals changed their listening behavior and either listened differently, better, or more.

A great number of participants remarked that the STP changed the way in which they personally felt about themselves in the environmental movement. Increased confidence inspired participants to demand better and more answers, and to present their findings more aggressively and with greater conviction. Participants described themselves as having "courage", "more confidence", or as being "bolder" and more "aggressive".

Many participants stated that they changed their leadership style. For example, one person remarked that the "controlling

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position as leader is a poor way to go". Along with the changes in individual "perspectives on leadership", STP also led to changed participant perspectives on the nature of the environmental movement; as one person commented, STP "reframed the debate".

Organizational and Individual Changes

As reported in the questionnaires, the organizational changes accomplished by groups included redefining both group structures and the relationship of the group within the local community. Structurally, several groups changed their approach to leadership and decision-making, some expanded the scope of their organization, and one organization introduced a new "standing committee on the environment". Others changed strategies and tactics, drawing from the ideas and suggestions of other participants.

Because many participants recognized anew the importance of local community involvement, various groups worked actively to secure broader support. They reported that their "work incorporates community fears..." and that they have sponsored workshops on participatory research. To facilitate community involvement and broad support, one organization offered its center as a meeting place, and another helped and supported other groups organizing in their area.

Several informants reported greater efforts to address waste management in the group itself. One person started a recycling program at work, and others have prohibited the use of styrofoam products by their organization.

Some changes made by individuals focused on both the home and the community. Many participants stated that they changed their personal consumption and disposal practices. After STP, several people reported that they began recycling in their home, that they no longer purchased plastic or nondegradeable products, and one person "analyzed how we pollute and can stop pollution". Individual initiative and action may have been inspired by many factors, though one person reported that it was out of a "sense of urgency".

Many reported a greater sense of perspective and broader vision following the STP. They either joined a group for the first time, joined more groups, or stepped up their commitment to the groups of which they were already members. Since group activity was increasingly directed toward their community, individuals also reported that they "shared technical expertise more freely" and "spread information about STP techniques for working on problems". Community consciousness raising seemed to be the new or strengthened focus of these people's efforts, and one person stated that she "preaches to anyone who will listen, and screams to those who don't listen"

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of their participation in the STP Schools, people's comments show that they benefited greatly from feelings of connectedness and sharing of experiences, and from the ways in which they were stimulated to think about issues and strategies. Most people felt a renewal of spirit; they felt encouraged and strengthened to continue their work at home. Most felt they had learned a great deal from sharing information and brainstorming

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new ideas in their sessions. The cultural aspects such as music, food, and atmosphere were noted and appreciated. In the context of these positive evaluations, some room for improvement was noted.

In some STP schools, participants indicated that some of the benefits were impeded by the standard process, the large number of participants and the relatively short amount of time set aside for sessions, and they suggested changes accordingly.

> You know, maybe this is too big a group to try to do that in. Maybe we ought to divide up. (3-4-39)

> I think if we had broken up into smaller groups more often I think we could have reached some of that critical consciousness. (3-7-24)

Specific recommendations also were offered about the need for name tags:

> Something that might be helpful is a name tag with no plastic. (2-6-17)

> The only suggestion I have is that I'm not very good with names. I'd like to get this earlier so I could know, match the names and faces. (2-6-5)

Another participant thought that people need more technical information.

> It sort of reinforced my understanding of peoples' needs and I think these people also need some basic technical information, basic science, 'cause the government can't be trusted. So I'm just trying to make sure that we can provide at least that much. (2-6-10)

There was conflict in some sessions, but that in itself was not seen as a problem; rather some saw it as a way to further group goals by pointing to issues that needed resolution. The problem about conflict for some was that the harder-to-consider issues (such as strategies and building multicultural

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organizations) were not addressed - that participants did not push one another hard enough to resolve difficult conflicts. As an example of one such problem, some members pointed to the lack of resolution of tensions felt between needs for local versus national organizing.

People responding to the questionnaire indicated topics they would like to see future STP schools cover or emphasize more. Based upon these responses, three broad categories of interest were apparent: content, organizational process, and strategies and tactics. As Figure 2 indicates, each broad category was in turn broken down into more specific sub-categories. Content issues are related to topics such as toxics/hazardous chemicals, pollution control, solid waste, and social justice. Organizational process issues focused on the development, administration and management and funding of the grassroots organizations. And finally, strategies and tactics issues included the broad spectrum of ways to influence and provoke change.

Even this much generalization is deceptive because of the diversity of issues comprised within each sub-category. For example, within the sub-category of solid waste, two groups were interested in alternatives to incineration, two concentrated on landfills, two on reduction and recycling and one each on out-of-state waste and radioactive waste storage. No single issue predominated, so it might be difficult to construct an entire STP school around a single specific content issue.

FIGURE 2

Recommended Topics for Future STP Schools

Content
>   Toxics/Hazardous Chemicals
>   Solid Waste
>   Control and Prevention
>   Pollution Control
>   Restoration/Reclamation
>   Economic Conversion
>   Environmental Conversion
>   Social Justice
>   Wildlife and Habitat

Organizational Process: Intragroup
>   Developing Strategies and Tactics
>   Organizational Development
>   Handling Stress and Burnout
>   Fundraising
>   Leadership and Empowerment Training

Strategies and Tactics
>   Strategies and Tactics
>   Direct Action
>   Legal Action
>   Lobbying
>   Reviewing Legislation/Regulations
>   Writing Legislation/Regulations
>   Effective use of Media
>   Education
>   Networking/Intergroup Communication
>   Outreach/Organizing
>   Disseminating Information
>   Doing Research

Under the Organizational Process category, the most frequent response was an interest in examining group dynamics and topics related to the functioning of the local group. But even in the eight different groups interested in concentrating specifically on organizational development, there was no strong group characteristics which may have motivated their response, i.e., years as an organization, size, having paid staff or not. Five of these groups had existed for one year or less, one was three years old, and two were five or more years old. Some of the groups were small (less than 25 people) whereas others had in excess of 1,000. Neither does it appear that totally volunteer organizations were more in need of such assistance than were those with paid staff.

A majority (77%) of the questionnaire informants expressed interest in Strategies and Tactics as a future STP topic. However, Strategies and Tactics also is a broad category, encompassing topics as different as direct action and education in schools. Fifteen people stated that they would be interested in learning about direct action, which includes non-violence training, civil disobedience and legal action. Other common foci of future schools were the effective use of the media and outreach/organizing.

Finally, a number of process comments and recommendations that were made at a second level STP school (all participants had participated in a previous school, held October 20-22, 1989) is presented here:

> * music is a critical part of the process, it is
> a form of fun and expressiveness that creates a

"community" feeling
*   some changes of format would help, such as more
time in small groups
*   we need better representation from black and
other communities
*   we might consider longer schools
*   STP schools could be built around particular
themes or regional issues
*   we could add a skills training component
*   it's important to keep track of the actions
  each STP and each person pledges to take
*   we could hold the schools in other places, to
reach more people.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report has identified the different issues and topics covered at the STP schools, and several cross-cutting themes in some depth. In addition, participants at the STP schools have indicated numerous benefits for themselves as individuals, as well as for their groups. Areas in which the workshops could be improved, and topics for future STP schools also have been presented. This information only begins to capture the wealth of ideas generated at the STP schools; all of us who have written this report know that only through actual participation can one experience the wisdom, energy, commitment, and hope that STP represents.