

have learned. Then they move on to the next unit. The whole program takes two years.

The most important element in this process is the dynamics of the group. The coordinators only guide the discussion, encouraging people to talk about their own problems and then to draw conclusions.

Radio provides continuity

In an unimpressive building on a side street of the town of Osorno is an organization that is perhaps as important as the coordinators' work. This is "The voice of the coast", a one-kilowatt radio station that sometimes seems more like a post office or a community centre. This radio station was set up by Capuchin missionaries from Holland.

One of the services operated by the station is the Radio School Foundation for Rural Development, known by its Spanish acronym, FREDER. FREDER is a partner with CIDE in the south of Chile, and without its services the PPH program would have been much more difficult to implement. For the last few years the scattered households on the hills west of Osorno have been united by at least one thing, FREDER. The people consider the station to be theirs. Besides running instructional programs over the airwaves, the station operates a community service which takes the place of telephones. Messages are left in alphabetical slots in FREDER's reception room by people wanting to communicate with isolated friends or relatives. Announcements of an urgent nature, such as illnesses and deaths, are broadcast. So are important community events and communications between different communities. If the FREDER flags and T-shirts displayed in the communities are any indication, it is a popular service.

Perhaps one of the most valuable contributions of FREDER to the project is continuity. PPH has completed its two-year program in the first 44 communities and has moved on to new ones. FREDER still has a presence in the original project area. People can still relate to it. In fact, one of the criticisms of the project has been that the centres should have been called "FREDER centres" since the radio is the institution which remains.

That criticism and a host of other issues are discussed in a report on the project by Dr. Howard Richards of the University of Indiana. Richards helped to start the original PPH project in 1972, and returned to evaluate the program near Osorno in 1980. The study was funded by the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) and Richard's report, entitled *The Evaluation of Cultural Action*, is to be published this year.

This report is no orthodox piece of work. It will cause some educators and social scientists to jump for joy, others to pull their hair out in despair. For Richards displays from the start a determined disregard for many of the established practices of research evaluation. And he writes in a style that is clear, almost devoid of jargon, and is often as entertaining as any good novel.

From the beginning he sets out to tell the reader what the study is *not*. It is not a systematic evaluation of PPH — a rigid cost-analysis that would measure the "efficiency" of the system. Many social scientists, he says, are "prisoners of the problematic" for whom "efficiency cannot possibly not be a good thing." Evaluating the PPH project in the usual systematic way would be like wearing contact lenses

when you shouldn't. You would be "blind to the way the world would look if you were not wearing them".

The social scientist who comes to evaluate PPH with the usual systems approach will first ask for the objectives of the program, the desired outcomes. At this point she might return home, write a negative report and collect her fee, for nowhere in the project documents can one find a clear statement of objectives, Richards cheerfully admits. The social scientist might pack her bag because she believes that "every program should be efficient". But efficiency is measured by cost per desired outcome, and if the desired outcome is unknown, the program cannot be efficient. And if it is not efficient it cannot be a good program.

Measuring "non-objectives"

The problem, as Richards points out, is the loose participatory framework of the project itself that does away with the traditional division between researcher and subject. The subjects are not only aware of the research, they are encouraged to participate in it. In such a project the objectives are generated by the people as the program gathers momentum. But the conventional systems approach to evaluation would ignore these objectives; because they were not specified from the outset, they could only be considered "non-objectives".

These non-objectives would include the parties and dances which Jorge Zuleta, the PPH Osorno coordinator has termed "spaces of joy" in the peasants' otherwise hard life. But these are only the emotional peak of a mountain of PPH activities: community fundraising events such as sports tournaments, bazaars, raffles and craft activities such as knitting, textile painting, embroidery, making children's clothes, woodwork and sisal weaving. In addition PPH fosters such activities as making a community first-aid kit, organizing funerals, singing and composing songs and poems, aiding old people or needy neighbours, planning and building a community centre and repairing a school or chapel. The PPH committees have also begun to take grievances to the authorities — for example the lack of health clinics in their communities and the broken-down bridges.

The key to determining if PPH is cost-effective, says Richards, is the study of attitudes. "If attitudes change, it is," he states simply. And the key to determining if attitudes have changed is something that Richards and the staff at CIDE call the "illuminative approach" to evaluation. It is a long and complex process that involves a great deal of participation by the research "subjects".

The first step was to elect 10 "informants" from each community. These people travelled to Osorno where they were interviewed as many as seven times each. From these interviews, a "verbal image" of the project was built up. This image was then taken back to community meetings where it was reviewed by the others. The people were asked to verify whether or not their communities participated in the "non-objectives" mentioned above. They were also asked to verify some of the less tangible statements of the informants which were abstracted from the interviews. For instance: "One learns (through PPH) in what form to give food to a child, and one learns to take advantage of legumes and fruits that perhaps the peasant has mistakenly disregarded." All but one of the 44 PPH centres agreed with this statement, and in this case no centres