

6-1-1989

Brazil: Notes On Paulo Freire's Plans As Education Secretary For Sao Paulo State

John Neagle

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

Recommended Citation

Neagle, John. "Brazil: Notes On Paulo Freire's Plans As Education Secretary For Sao Paulo State." (1989).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/3179>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Brazil: Notes On Paulo Freire's Plans As Education Secretary For Sao Paulo State

by John Neagle

Category/Department: General

Published: Thursday, June 1, 1989

After the 1964 military coup, 43-year-old professor Paulo Freire, was arrested as a subversive and exiled for 15 years. During the two decades of military rule, his education theories, known worldwide, were banned in Brazil. Recently, Freire was appointed education secretary for the state of Sao Paulo. The state's public schools number 654, with enrollment of 550,000, making the system the largest in the country. In response to questions regarding his plans for the school system, he told the New York Times: "We want to create schools where questioning is not a sin. It's no sin to make a critical study of Brazil's reality. A small percentage own land. Most people don't." During Freire's exile, he lectured at Harvard and in Havana. He set up literacy programs in Chile during the presidency of Salvador Allende Gossens, in the new nations of Portuguese-speaking Africa, and in Nicaragua after the 1979 revolution. During his travels, Freire refined education techniques first developed in the late 1950s in literacy campaigns in the Brazilian northeast. His techniques, published in the best-selling "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," are based on the use of everyday vocabulary and concepts to teach illiterate people to read while simultaneously raising their consciousness to question the political and social status quo. Freire told the Times: "We want to impart a critical understanding to students, not just the transfer of an accepted body of knowledge." He said the most serious problem he has faced during the first 100 days as education secretary is the physical condition of Sao Paulo's public schools, e.g., exposed wires, leaking roofs, broken furniture, blackboards without chalk. Freire said, "The military government mistreated public schools. We have repaired 4,000 desks. When second semester starts in July, Sao Paulo's 50 worst schools will be repaired." After criticizing what he called Brazilian politicians' "mania for inaugurations and disinterest in maintenance," Freire said the secretariat would not build, but repair. For the 250,000 school-age children in Sao Paulo who, according to estimates, do not attend school, he proposed setting up classes in existing structures such as community centers and parish halls. Freire said he wants to create "democratic" schools where students, teachers, parents, and staff, such as custodians and cafeteria workers, will discuss ways of making schools "happier, more open" places. In November, candidates of Freire's party, the socialist Workers Party (PT), were elected mayors in three state capitals, including Sao Paulo. In November 1989, Brazilians are to elect a president via direct vote for the first time since 1960. Recent polls indicate the top two favorites are leftists Luis Inacio da Silva, a PT deputy, and Leonel Brizola, a former governor of Rio de Janeiro state who was also exiled in 1964. (Basic data from New York Times, 05/29/89)

-- End --