

CLIPS



AN INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR AUDIOVISUALS
FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

NUMBER 9 - OCTOBER 1995

FIGHTING FOR THE RIGHT TO COMMUNICATE



FROM MISCOMMUNICATION TO MASS COMMUNICATION

After years of resistance struggle and a subsequent focus in public policy work, community media activists are having to come to grips with the real and far more challenging realities of working within a developmental

context in the building of community access television in South Africa. This challenge has been taken on by the newly formed **Open Window Network** (O.W.N.), a national network of twenty-two community based video/television initiatives as well as service organisations working in training, production, distribution and exhibition. O.W.N. is advancing a national program aimed at promoting community access to television in South Africa.

Redressing the imbalance of the legacy of apartheid has to be the first consideration in any movement toward the development of community television in South Africa. This will include human resource development for the broadcasting sector as a whole in a way that promotes an upward flow from communities to the public and private sector. Equally important will be the provision of access to training, production, distribution, exhibition and broadcast facilities in the development of an independent community tier of broadcasting in South Africa.

Community television stands to play an important role in a broader developmental sense. The Government's *Reconstruction and Development Program* recognises that information and an informed population will be vital to the success of the program. Equally important will be people's ability to engage in dialogue about community approaches and solutions to the fundamental challenges still confronting the majority of South Africans. If people don't have effective means to express their needs, they won't have effective control of the development process. In a largely illiterate society, broadcasting has a critical role to play in the development of a participatory democracy.

There is no guarantee that access to video and broadcast technologies contributes to a participatory democracy. If community television is to play this role effectively then we need to take the notion of access a step further. South Africa's unique history has given South Africans a deep sense of participation and ownership of the political process. Communities, or at least sectors of communities, are well organised and coherent. The social foundations

for the success of community television have been sown. Community television can contribute to this by enhancing a community's ability to communicate with itself and the world. Communities as well as NGOs and CBOs (community based organisations) need to be trained as effective communicators. The focus should be on the message and not simply on access to the medium. Community participation must go beyond that of access to community control.

In order to make this possible, community television needs to be developed from the bottom up over a period of time through distinct developmental phases. The first priority is to build production capacity in historically marginalised communities. This will be achieved through the coordination of a national training program involving numerous training institutions around the country and the building of Video Access Centres (VAC) in areas where no such production capacity exists. Training will be integrated with, and partially financed by, production. O.W.N. intends to leverage government funds through the offering of services to the **South African Communications Services** as well as seeking contract work from the NGO sector. O.W.N. is also building a strong relationship of cooperation with the national public broadcaster where a mechanism for the showing or commissioning of community originated programming is presently being negotiated.

When VACs build up sufficient capacity they will apply to the Independent Broadcasting Authority for a community television licence to broadcast. The network is presently debating various signal distribution options, looking into ways in which community television stations can share programming material over the long term. Serious attention is being given to the Consortium model. This model has already been through two test transmissions in the Durban and Cape Town metro-

politan areas. Satellites are also being looked into as a future means of redistributing community programming nationally.

O.W.N.'s aims and objectives with regard to community broadcasting complement the efforts of community radio and print. Hence the organisation works in close collaboration

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● A FEATURE

on many local and international efforts to establish and defend the right to communicate around the world: China, France, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, Nigeria, Norway and South Africa.

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O.W.N.

OPEN WINDOW NETWORK



Founded in 1990, it brings together people from the world of independent and alternative video and television from every continent. Together, its members act to promote the democratic practice of communication. They aim to broaden the participation of communities and movements from the South and the North in sound and image production. The Coalition acts through the creation of fora for debate and exchange amongst the many diverse participants in this broad movement for alternative messaging.

EDITORIAL

THE GREAT CHALLENGE

The right to communicate is a demand that has always been at the heart of social struggle, no matter whether the issue has been "inventing" democracy, defending its original principles, or transforming them into concrete action based on citizen participation. As times change, geographical contexts evolve, and technology progresses, this right has been given different names: freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, the right to information, and, now, the right to communication. Nonetheless, the right to communication remains a part of all freedom struggles for greater dialogue, pluralism, tolerance, and participation — and against all forms of authoritarian, exclusive, and excluding power, be it religious, aristocratic, male, State- or market-controlled.

The struggle for the right to communicate has taken on a new dimension because communication itself has become a central issue in establishing a new world order. In accordance with neoliberal market logic, the "communications era" cannot be dissociated from economic, political, and cultural "globalisation". This same logic applies to the new international telecommunications regulations that the alliance of large multinationals and G7 states would like to implement.

At a time when mere freedom of opinion is scorned in many countries, when national communications policies adapted to the new technological environment remain at a rudimentary level, and when UN institutions established by the international community a half century ago prove to be limited in their power to regulate, those behind the Global Information Infrastructure (GII) are intent on using the **World Trade Organisation** and the **World Bank** to impose their ideological, political, and economic "prêt-à-porter" ([Ready to wear] an expression used by sociologist Armand Mattelart) just as if they were marketing a new toilet soap.

The reactions, demands, and organisational forms presented in this issue of *Clips* (national fora, "citizen observatories", drafting of charters, alternative media organisations, creation of international networks, etc.) vary in terms of their different political and economic contexts and their own particular history of social struggle. However, the same consciousness and the same aspiration toward citizen participation in communication underlie organisational efforts against "mediacracy" in Italy, the creation of a small television station in Ireland, the establishment of a democratic communication network in the new South Africa, and the positions taken at the women's summit in Beijing. In opposition to the logic of the market and the State, representatives of civil society have been increasingly successful in asserting the "democratic logic of citizens" and developing their own criteria and strategies on different legislative, technological, and organisational fronts.

Experience and mobilisation should be pooled, and we must move toward a federation of national and international networks, while respecting the specificity and pace of all concerned. In this way, citizen-derived logic can be expressed and have an influence on the establishment of new regulations for international communications without being drawn into the trap or timetable of globalisation.

The accounts compiled in this issue of *Clips* seem to be unanimous on two points: (1) It is not enough simply to redefine the right to communicate and to entrench it in constitutions and international charters (for example, by amending Article 19 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*); instead, it must be ensured that all social actors can effectively make use of this right. (2) Neither is it enough merely to master new technologies from a technical standpoint; there must also be a guarantee that they can be socially appropriated and made to serve democracy. Neither the global infrastructure project nor withdrawal into a separate identity or other kinds of fundamentalism can provide the above guarantees: instead, they each contribute in their own ways to rolling back rights that have been won over the last few decades. Therefore, the organisations that make up civil society face a great challenge — only by aiming their innovative practices at the long term, learning lessons from past struggles, and joining their efforts will they be able to make use of the right to communicate that they themselves have helped to define.

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NIGERIA

THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

The 1991 Windhoek *Declaration on Communication and Human Rights* did a lot to rekindle the fire of the struggle for a just and up egalitarian society by encouraging those living under undemocratic governmental structures to stand up for their rights to freedom of speech. It also served notice to leaders of undemocratic regimes in Africa to read the "hand writing on the wall" as the winds of change for democracy blow all over the world. It is not surprising therefore that the democratic media movement has gathered such momentum. This article examines some of the factors which play a significant role in the evolution of democratic media in Nigeria.

In the media democratisation exercise, an interesting disparity may be observed in Nigeria between the print and electronic media. Print is older than electronic media and has developed a greater measure of maturity. Since print depends on literacy, it is a natural outgrowth of Western education. Print media was used in the colonial period to promote political enlightenment and eventually became a weapon for independence. During colonial administration, Western education and Christianity went hand-in-hand. The Southern part was predominantly Christian while the northern part remained predominantly Moslem. Because the Southern part of Nigeria had earlier exposure to Western education, the people there were more politically conscious and leaders of the early struggle for freedom came from this area. The development of media followed this pattern.

The colonial government's awareness of the power of the press in the hands of the colonised caused it to exercise stricter control over radio and television. Radio remained in the exclusive hands of the colonial government (Federal) even when regions had been granted self-government status. The government of Western Nigeria, under the leadership of Obafemi Awolowo led the way in establishing the first radio and television stations before the nation became independent. Ironically, the government at the federal and regional (later state) levels continued to pursue the colonial policy of preventing public access to participation in radio and television. Perhaps this trend was continued because of the powerful role played by radio stations in coup events in the country. Any time there was crisis, it was hard for the radio and TV stations controlled by government to tell the truth. They either kept the news away or

distorted it. Unwittingly, they forced the people to listen to the **BBC** or **Voice of America** (VOA) for the alternative information, thus heightening the loss of their credibility.

The sketch outlined above has remained the same even today. Print is more democratic than the electronic media. The South champions the cause of democracy and supports media democratisation more than the North. It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that the area suffers more in the hands of a non-democratic regime which runs the affairs of the country today.

The past ten years have witnessed a consistent clamp-down on the freedom of the press. Even though the promise of a return to civil rule was made by the military regime and a transition program was drawn up, the aborted result of the June 1993 election exposed the grand deceit of the military regime. Ironically, this was the year when a regime opposed to the installation of democracy in the land decided to allow private participation in the electronic media. Naturally, the feeling was that the regime must have reasons other than interest in democratic practices motivating it to open the door to private sector participation. It is speculated that the former Head of State, Ibrahim Babangida, has plans to float a multi-media organisation comprising newspapers, radio and television to be called *Triple Heritage Communications*. A federal agency, *The National Broadcasting Commission*, has been set up to supervise the granting of broadcast licences to private organisations which send in applications. As would be expected, many applications have been submitted but only a few have been approved. Among the few is Ray Power 100.5 FM Radio in Lagos which broadcasts twenty-four hours a day and covers the entire spectrum of program offering. It is already winning the hearts of listeners in Lagos and its environs. The organisation reached out for the best talents in the business and gave them a free hand in using their creativity in meeting the entertainment and information needs of the people.

The only snag in the regulations of access was the specific statement that religious organisations are barred from participation. This has been viewed with great concern and it appears that religious organisations will not take the event lying down. The private sector can be expected to take

advantage of the rare opportunity given them. Since they have succeeded in the print media, it is anticipated that they would do the same with electronic media.

In conclusion, the demand for democratic media in Nigeria, and indeed anywhere else, will materialise when the people are enlightened enough to fight for the installation and continued existence of democratic governments in the land. Only democratic governments will encourage the flourishing of enduring democratic media in the society. ●

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O.W.N.
OPEN WINDOW NETWORK

with fraternal organisations in these related spheres through formal links and structures aimed at joint advocacy. This relationship has been formalised through the establishment of the National **Community Media Forum**. Together we are advancing a vision of community broadcasting during a time in which the future telecommunications policy and regulatory environment is being shaped. Now is the time to enshrine the notion of community access and participation within the new South Africa by linking it permanently to information and communication technologies. ●

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THE HONG KONG EXPERIENCE

The electronic media scene here is vibrant. We seem to have lots of TV programs to choose from but, in reality, they look very much the same because they need to cater to popular taste. Minority interests are ignored and unconventional programs almost do not exist. Expensive air time also makes access prohibitive for the populace.

When the privately operated **Wharf Cable** won a cable TV license in December 1992, there was hope for change. Thirteen media scholars and concerned citizens petitioned the governor for a Public Access Channel (PAC). Our request was denied on the grounds that there were not enough channels at that time but the government agreed to look into the possibility of allocating the free use of up to 3 channels in the future.

On October 31st, 1993, Wharf Cable started broadcasting with 11 channels. Members of the Legislative Council **LEGCO** (the law making body of the government) asked government to make a plan for the use of the three free channels. Hope was stirred up and a group of video-makers and concerned citizens founded **Media Concern** to pursue the case. At this time, I began distributing to them information from the United States about PAC. In May 1994, a position paper was drawn up and sent to the government. The government ordered a feasibility study and asked the public to voice their opinions. Responses were poor because very few people including media scholars understand what PAC is about.

As a result, Media Concern organised three forums and I set up **Media Access** with a couple of enthusiasts to organise workshops to train activists who could help introduce PAC to the community. But other urgent social issues (equal rights for women and the forced evacuation of roof-top dwellers) tapped all the energy of the handful of activists. We could only manage to draw a new position paper and started a small signature campaign.

Meanwhile, the government's attitude was becoming more and more negative. It began to fall back onto the old excuses: that PAC which carries programs provided by the public might offend public morals and sensibilities; that PAC contradicts the notion that stations should be responsible for what they broadcast. The feasibility study group never

took the initiative to collect public opinion and the promised report never went public.

In May 1995, based on this unpublished report, the Executive Council (the policy advisory body of the governor) rejected the idea of PAC. Our one day signature campaign and protest letters were met with a polite letter of acknowledgement. Being engaged in other issues, PAC advocates have taken no further action. The struggle was a failure. Some of the factors of this failure are uniquely local and yet others would serve as a useful lesson for other PAC advocates.

One of the unique factors is the return of Hong Kong, currently a British colony, to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, resulting in a general sense of helplessness that undermines our efforts to mobilize people. Also, not wanting to enrage China, self-censorship has been spreading throughout local institutions. Government officials actually stated in one LEGCO sub-committee meeting that there would not be any PAC because China might not allow it. That also explains why response to the Executive Council's rejection was mild. Activists knew that it was useless to continue fighting. For me the struggle is just an educational process and is worth continuing.

Factors that might be universal were the lack of knowledge about PAC as advocates should have started spreading the idea earlier. Another has to do with a busy and highly capitalized city like Hong Kong. Because the atmosphere is very money oriented, there are very few activists here. The cost of living, keen competition, a poor welfare system, financial insecurity and materialistic temptation drive everybody crazy and make it difficult for them to find the time and energy to care about broader social concerns. These enemies are not easy to overcome but we must look them in the face and not be frustrated. ●

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Europe

IRELAND OPEN CHANNEL TV BASE

Its brief is to research and develop the infrastructure necessary for community TV in Ireland. It has hosted two national conferences on the subject, all attended by a broad range of delegates representing community groups, video makers, academics and people already active in the field. From them emerged a consensus that the government should legislate for community TV in Ireland, that it should be financed by many sources, that labour should not be subsidised through government work schemes, and that advertising on community TV should be permitted. Also, in response to the government's recent Green Paper on broadcasting, a Statement of Principles was prepared and an Ad Hoc committee was elected to write up a submission. The struggle for the right of access is still new to Ireland and will necessitate much public education about the possibilities inherent in making television an active, as opposed to passive, means of communication. Community access TV constitutes a medium of resistance to global homogenisation, and a means for individuals and communities who are currently voiceless and unrepresented, to have their say. ●

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ITALY

RADIO AUDIZIONI ITALIANE (RAI) : one step forward, two steps back

In 1975 the Italian parliament passed a bill to overhaul the **Radio Audizioni Italiane (RAI)**, which at the time was a public radio and television monopoly. The bill was the result of a battle fought over ten years by left-wing forces to bring about decentralisation both inside and outside the structures of production. The bill introduced a representation of regions and trade unions in the decision making bodies; it provided for public access broadcasts and the total abolition of censorship; and control of radio and television was to pass from the ministerial level to parliament. The underlying strategy of the battle first and then the bill was the same: democratisation of the monopoly was seen as the only way to have a radio and television system that could respond to the citizenry's interests and enable them to participate actively in communications.

But these hopes were short-lived. Between 1977 and 1978, three developments on the country's political scene changed the lot of communications. First the Constitutional Court liberalised radio and television. Second, the RAI was split along the lines of the political forces in government: RAI Uno came under the control of the Christian Democrats (DC) and RAI Due, under the Socialist Party (PSI). In 1979 a third network came into being; it was supposed to be regionalised but, after some ten years of fruitless effort, the regionalisation program was scrapped and the network passed into the hands of the opposition, that is, the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Third, the group of Bettino Craxi took over the leadership of the Socialist Party and changed the organisation's orientation in accordance with certain principles: anticommunism, defence of the market economy and transformation of the Italian social State's culture of solidarity into a culture of ambition and social and professional Darwinism. Then the party and Craxi himself sank into the mire of corruption, scandals and trials. Both the PSI and the DC disappeared from the Italian political scene, but they left deep marks on middle class culture, mostly through the privately-owned media.

In the late 1970s, some of the prominent publishing houses (Mondadori, Rusconi) founded television channels that soon went bankrupt. The channels were sold to a construction entrepreneur who had already created a television chain and had the benefit of powerful political backing and therefore substantial bank credits. His name: Silvio Berlusconi. Since then, a mere ten years after deregulation began and measures were taken on its behalf, the new communications giant built up an empire. The founding editors of the first private national television stations made the mistake of modelling their work on the RAI and trying to provide quality programming with advertising on the side. What

Berlusconi did, however, was to turn this model on its ear and use advertising as the centrepiece ("I am not at the service of the public but at the service of business," he asserted). He surrounded the ads with cultural but functional programming and thereby won over a huge audience. Thus he unscrupulously played all the cards of free enterprise to beat the RAI. The latter, being constrained by its adversary, embarked upon a suicidal course.

In 1992, the Italian parliament passed a new law regulating the radio and television system. The system was accurately described as a two-sided monopoly consisting of the RAI and Fininvest. In addition to having Berlusconi's assets, Fininvest has among its shareholders Leo Kirch, from Germany; Al Waleed, from Saudi Arabia; and Johan Rupert, from South Africa. The double monopoly gobbles up 95% of advertising resources, leaving 3% for the few inter-regional stations and the remaining 2% for the close to 700 local stations. The new law, moreover, ignores the new technologies, thereby leaving Italy on the sidelines of the worldwide circuit for the time being. (In the last few days, the government has declared that cable and satellites will be taken into consideration).

Then last April, the referendum battle ended in electoral defeat, and all the positions defended by the Fininvest group and the centre-right forces in television circles won out. This result is not definitive, though, because the Constitutional Court ruled that the double monopoly should be eliminated. Consequently, the prospects of a new fight tend to widen the field of competition by increasing the number of entities operating on the market; they also tend to regulate democratically the whole information system with the introduction of a strong authority, to balance the advertising market and to address, finally, the problem of the new technologies.

And what about everyone's right to communicate? I think the present state of affairs calls for a strategy review; it is perfectly normal for the battle to move from the arena of the traditional media to the electronic media and the information highway. ●

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ITALY FIGHTS BACK

The term "right to communicate" is practically unknown in Italy: journalists and media operators being afraid of losing their monopoly, tend to use other ancient and ambiguous terms: "freedom of information", "freedom of the press", etc. Others including politicians tend to follow the same trend by ignoring the term and related concepts. These concepts were also criticised during the international debate that took place within UNESCO in the 1980's.

In Italy, only our **DAC Forum** (Diritto A Comunicare), born in Rome in 1990, is fighting for the right to communicate. The DAC Forum, the political expression of a group of social associations like **Agora'92, Altra RAI, Anti, Codacons, Comi-**

THE DAC TV PROJECT

Based on UNESCO guidelines and on Italian Constitutional Law, this project was created to reorganise the Italian TV broadcasting system and **RAI**, the public national broadcaster. The **DAC TV Project** is referred to as the Italian broadcasting subsystem. It is a practical example of a "new broadcasting order" with new rules and principles for public, community and private operators. Its content includes among other things:

- a *Universal Rights Communication Charter*
- a reform of the Italian TV broadcasting system;
- the development of strong public and community broadcasters;
- the creation of institutional and social control units decentralised on a regional basis;
- a strong national and regional communication authority with antitrust rules;
- direct access facilities for social groups;
- public support for social and community operators;
- the reform of licensing rules and others regulations;
- the development of services, video innovations and new technologies;
- sanctions and penalties against violations.



FIGHTING FOR
THE RIGHT TO
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tato per il rilancio della Costituzione, Conna, Crocevia promoted actions and proposals from the local to the international level. Briefly, our proposals are the following:

1. To create and reinforce independent, non-commercial, popular networks as "communication circuits" with large access facilities. To promote independent, local production of programs and services. To reinforce public, collective and social media services.
2. To link the "school world" to the "media world" in order to reach an integrated cultural and teaching system, a permanent modern teaching system for cultured citizens, available for persons of any race and of any age.
3. To adopt as universal basic law a *Communication Rights Charter* (part of the *Human Rights Charter*) in order to guarantee all constitutional communication rights with respect to all communication processes.
4. To suggest, from the local to the international level, laws and rules to develop media democracy and economy. An example of this is the **DAC TV Project** for Italian TV broadcasting reform which is user oriented and based on the UNESCO guidelines and the Italian Constitutional rules. ●

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THE UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATION RIGHTS CHARTER

The Charter, composed of 40 articles, has been presented and accepted at the 1994 international conferences: New Delhi in February, Naples in July and Tripoli in October 1994. The Charter protects the constitutional rights of users and communication operators as well as all types and forms of communication. The main items of the Charter are the following: the value and role of communication in the modern world; the purpose, goals, mission and tools of communication; the people's right to communicate; active and passive communication rights; rules, regulations and sanctions.

FRANCE A NEW STAGE

As *Clips* reported in its June 1995 issue, the magazine *Transversales Science/Culture* and the **Fondation pour le progrès de l'homme (FPH)**, both French organizations, took the initiative of making public a declaration called *Multimedia: Ways to Appropriate Them Socially*. Consisting of a summary of statements received from groups and individuals around the world, it was released to the press just before the G7 ministerial meeting opened in Brussels on February 24 this year. The meeting dealt with projects to develop information highways.

The many comments that followed publication of the statement spurred the magazine and the FPH to continue their initiative. We therefore intend to promote a network of associations and individuals with two main objectives in mind:

- to collect and exchange all pertinent information on developments, initiatives and decisions relating to the introduction and use of the new information processing and communication technologies;
- to facilitate speaking up on behalf of the social mastery of the new technologies, in keeping with the spirit of the February 1995 declaration, and thus to influence and orient political and economic decision making.

To this end, the FPH is publishing a book, in French and English, that will summarize political documents from Europe and the United States. It will contain most of the contributions received when the appeal was put out in February 1995. The book will be published this fall and will be available on request from the FPH.

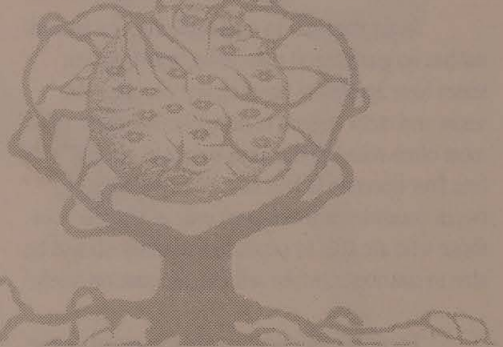
At the same time, in its July-August issue (no. 34), *Transversales Science/Culture* announced it was setting up a project called **VECAM: Veille européenne et citoyenne sur les autoroutes de l'information et le multimédia** (European and citizen watch over information highways and multimedia). The watch will centre around respect for citizen rights and new democratic uses of these technologies. "VECAM is an attempt to respond to a need for information and especially for experimentation. A data bank listing these experiences will be made accessible to all members of the network and will enable them to trade experiences in appropriating the new technologies for social purposes. VECAM's aim is to link up people and institutions in

Europe involved in the social application of the new technologies and to facilitate the development of networks of social actors, scientists, business people, legislators, consultants, NGOs, etc." ●

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON VECAM WRITE TO:

STÉPHANE MARTAYAN AND VÉRONIQUE KLECK, TRANSVERSALES SCIENCE/CULTURE, 22, BOULEVARD DE GRENELLE, PARIS, FRANCE TEL.: (33 145) 78 34 05 FAX: (33 145) 78 34 02 EMAIL: EUR99@GLOBENET.GN.APC.ORG

NOTE: IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED A COPY OF THE DECLARATION, PLEASE REQUEST IT AGAIN AT: FONDATION POUR LE PROGRÈS DE L'HOMME, A/S ALAIN HIS, 38, RUE SAINT SABIN, F75011 PARIS, FRANCE TEL.: (33 143) 57 44 22 FAX: (33 143) 57 06 63 EMAIL: AHIS@FPH.RIO.ORG



WELCOME TO THE NEW MEMBERS OF VIDÉAZIMUT

Centre for Democratic Communication-TV and Video Unit,

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Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
Tel.: (27 11) 403 2750 Fax: (27 11) 403 1510
Email: cullis@cdc.org.za

Union des groupements agro-pastoraux pour la Promotion Sociale,

Boubacar Fofana, BP 03, Koungheul, Sénégal
Tel.: (221) 46 71 19

Asmita Women's Publication House

Media and Resource Organization,
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P. O. Box 4795, Baghazar, Kathmandu, Nepal
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Email: pradhan_mr@npl.healthnet.org

Melbourne Community TV

Steve Spangaro,
247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne 3000, Australia
Tel.: (61 3) 650 5610 Fax: (61 3) 650 6924
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Zakir Hossain Raju

c/o Protishabda Alternative Communication Centre,
342 North Shahjahanpur, Dhaka 1217, Bangladesh
Tel.: (880 2) 509 215 /409 467
Fax: (880 2) 863 060

(continued on page 9)

NORWAY

ABOUT INTERNATIONAL LAW

To what extent is the right to communicate advocated and restricted in international law? There can be no doubt that the core of the right to communicate is the right to participate in the communication process. If a democratic political system is to evolve, it is crucial that the electorate be allowed access to the means of communication. The general public has to be directly involved in setting communication and information policies. Today however, international law is focused on human rights, and not necessarily on economic and thus political rights.

As for the right to communicate, the individual has no guaranteed right to be heard. Nation states have agreed on banning war propaganda, sexist and racist speech in principle, but these rules most often relate to the mass media in general. This free flow doctrine (a free flow of information between countries and cultures) only guarantees that those who are able to produce a message should be able to distribute and/or sell the information freely.

There are four documents that make up the *International Bill of Human Rights*. One of the main criticisms against the philosophy embedded in their human rights conventions is that individual but not collective rights are stressed. Another is that they do not seek to secure the rights of individuals or groups to produce information. Only the right to seek or receive already produced information is promoted. This philosophy of information transfer can be traced back to the foundation of the **United Nations**.

There exist thirteen commonly accepted principles of international communication law; among them are:

1. Communications media may not be used for war and aggression.
2. Communications media shall not be used to intervene in the internal affairs of another state.
3. All dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or hatred and incitement to racial discrimination are punishable by law.
4. The direct and public incitement to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group is punishable by law.
5. Peoples enjoy equal rights and self-determination in communication and information.

6. States enjoy sovereign equality in the communication and information structures.
7. Communication and information demand global co-operation.
(Frederick, H. H. (1992). *Global Communication & International Relations*. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.)

In the early eighties, the information debate culminated in what became known as the MacBride report. It critically reviewed the state of international communications and raised questions about democracy and the right to communicate that went beyond the democratic ideal of "freedom of speech" and the free flow doctrine. As defined by the MacBride report, communication is not a one-way flow, but an exchange of information. The report's idealism regarding a balancing of the North-South information flow did not find favour in the industrialised countries.

But the problem of conceptualising the right to communicate is how to merge different concepts of what human rights are and how to define a right to communicate. The MacBride report argued that in a democratic country the right to communicate includes the right both to give and receive information and to participate in public communication. The question is how does one accommodate these rights in an economy where receiving information is expensive, and the expense of giving information to a large number of people is prohibitive?

The trends of deregulating telecommunications and commercialising broadcasting that are sweeping through both industrialised countries and less industrialised countries are tying communications closer to economics. The problem in Western democratic countries is the assumption that individual rights and a pluralistic model of government will actually bring political rights to the great majority of the population. As long as the means of communication are controlled by commercial and government interests, the flows of communication can never be free. Another disturbing trend in information and technology industries is the steady move towards monopolies. If the global information flows are controlled by half a dozen multinational companies, the debate on the right to communicate seems futile. If this right is to be implemented,

alternative information structures have to be erected. The key to the right to communicate is not to be found in the principles of international law, but in the ownership structure of national and global information networks. Without universal access to the means of communication in today's world there cannot be an effective right to communicate.

The reality of modern communication is that access to mass communication is restricted by economic and political barriers. Neither individuals nor sovereign states are equal in the world of communication. If a general concept of a right to communicate is to be developed, it has to include how the structural impediments to communication can be removed or circumvented. The right to communicate is restricted in international law, in that the laws fail to guarantee equal and universal access to the means of (mass) communication and because the international system does not have any means of enforcing international laws or agreements.

It is possible to work through the UN and its specialised agencies to extend human rights conventions to include the right to communicate. The question is whether a declaration will have actual effect on individual's or peoples' ability to communicate. Without support of the world community it seems difficult to improve access to the means of communication for underprivileged groups.

The first item on the agenda to implement a right to communicate should be to build consensus among communication practitioners and scholars that the right to communicate is the next step in human rights legislation. Building consensus on this issue will take time and will face strong opposition from many governments and the commercial media. The goal of this struggle must be for democratic communication to become an integral part of political reality. ●

Based on an article published in *Media Development* (2/1995, Journal of the World Association for Christian Communication, VOL. XLII).

KNUT SVENDSEN IS CURRENTLY A RESEARCH ANALYST AT TELENOR THE NORWEGIAN TELECOM. WRITE HIM AT:

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CHINA OUT OF BEIJING

In recognition of the fact that communications and information play a strategic role in every realm of social, political, cultural and economic activity, the women communicators and media organisations participating in the communications caucus of the *NGO Forum on Women* held during the *Fourth World Conference on Women* reaffirm that the right to communication and information is a human right, which requires adopting a global policy that will guarantee women's democratic access to all communications systems and media. Communication processes with a gender perspective must be open, pluralistic, and respectful of diversity and freedom of expression and thought. In order to guarantee access to information and means of expression, a multi-media communications initiative is required, adapted to different languages, cultures and visions, and to women's diverse access to communications channels.

Consequently, as a follow-up to the Conference, we propose the following communication strategy designed to support the dissemination and implementation of the resolutions of these events and to increase women's access to the means of communication and media. This strategy will promote:

- Women's alternative media—their development is fundamental to this initiative because of their links to grassroots movements and their experience in building a communications process that responds to the needs of these movements.
- Access to information—it is a basic human right and therefore a women's right without which women cannot adequately participate in democratic and decision-making processes.
- Access to the means of expression particularly in mainstream media—women's absence and marginalization in mass media means social disenfranchisement and a weakened civil society.
- Networking for coordination and information exchange—women's organisations must be able to network, coordinate actions and exchange information nationally, regionally and globally.

Actions to be taken include:

- Increase women's community radio and television programming, adapted to local needs and

languages, in both urban and rural areas.

- Produce visual printed materials in comprehensible language that shares information on issues that affect women's daily lives.
- Make sources of documentation which relate to the decisions and progress of the Conference's *Platform for Action* and other related issues available via printed and electronic media.
- Monitor consistently, globally and regionally, the portrayal and employment of women in the media to ensure greater gender equality and non-sexist portrayal.
- Employ different types of media for women to network which incorporate traditional community circuits, alternative media, computer networks and others.
- Seek to network with women's organisations and the media to broaden and deepen media coverage of women's issues.
- Encourage and support the development of media literacy programs at all educational levels in order to develop among citizens critical analysis and monitoring skills.
- Develop gender-sensitive training programs for women trainers in the field of communications. ●

Based on a document prepared at the *NGO Forum on Women* held in Beijing on September 14, 1995 by the following organisations:

AGENCIA LATINOAMERICANA DE INFORMACION (ALAI)

ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS (APC)

CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS DE LA MUJER (CEM)

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S TRIBUNE CENTER (IWTC)

MEDIA ADVOCACY GROUP (MAG)

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY RADIO BROADCASTERS (AMARC)

NEW MEMBERS OF VIDÉAZIMUT (continued)

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Communication for Change

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Necessary Illusions

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For information on membership, contact the secretariat (see address on page 2).

IRELAND

GLOBAL UNIVERSAL SERVICE: A ROLE FOR NGOS

Two currents dominate the global telecommunications agenda - and indeed media more generally - today, especially as far as public debate is concerned: liberalisation and the information society.

They overlap, symbiotically, on a twin-theme running as follows: the information society looks to liberalisation to provide the driving force that will generate investment, stimulate innovations, and sweep aside the inertia of the ancien regime. The liberalisation process, on the other hand, looks to the information society to provide a "vision", or a legitimating ideology, that can simultaneously capture the imagination of the public and offer reassurance that the benefits will reach to all parts of society, and indeed the globe.

Universal service is at the fulcrum of this overlap. On the one hand, the universality of the information society, a defining characteristic, must rely, in the current public penury, on the dynamism of liberalisation. On the other, liberalisation as a naked concept is held in suspicion by many. Combined with universal service, however, competition seems to offer all the benefits with none of the risk.

Thus declarations on the information society, from Gore's *Global Information Infrastructure* (GII), to the **G7** and the European Union (EU), loudly proclaim the centrality of universal service as indeed do the apologists for liberalisation.

Yet beneath the surface, liberalisation is charging ahead full-steam through the **World Trade Organisation** (WTO), the **World Bank**, the **International Telecommunications**

Union (ITU) and others, but, despite the promises, only a few crumbs are thrown towards universal service in the form of direct public investment or of obligations on the

private sector. Indeed, an analysis of the European Commission's actions in the area reveals that the information society, with its promises for a better life for all, was ushered in largely as a smoke screen for the final heave to liberalisation and it succeeded.

But those making such rash promises are faced with something of a dilemma. For, far from being complementary, competition and universal service are antagonistic. Even neo-liberals admit that regulation must be introduced alongside liberalisation to prevent radical and rapid deterioration in service and hike in tariffs for much of the population, especially in rural and peripheral areas.

Furthermore, the pressure under liberalisation is to offer new services only to larger users and those in urban areas. The dilemma is how, after building up the information society's expectations, to deliver on the promises.

Of course, politicians hope the issue will gradually disappear from public view as it is just another broken promise to a population lulled into soporific cynicism by a liberalised media. However, there are ways forward at the national level. The debate in the USA is already quite intense and in the EU the issue of universal service and the effects of liberalisation is making itself heard. Indeed, at the national level, although governments are compromised by liberalisation and hence will only act under duress, the political and administrative mechanisms in terms of regulatory authorities are, at least, in place. Thus, with sufficient public pressure (and NGOs can play a central role here), a redistribution can take place to ensure that universal service is addressed.

The problem at a global level is much greater for here the distribution required is not within countries but between them. Worldwide liberalisation means that telecom operators can act on a global scale with virtually no restrictions in the name of "free trade", offering services only in the most profitable areas and balancing tariffs to maximise profits.

Yet, there are no global institutions to ensure that redistribution, essential to universal service, can take place. And, there are no global political structures on which pressure can be

put. The existing ones, such as the ITU, the WTO and the World Bank, are all controlled by business and governments with narrow development objectives.

This is where NGOs enter in. NGOs alone represent the development needs of civil society and hence, of universal service. Several ideas can be developed and are afoot:

1. Devise and agree on a common agenda among NGOs involved in communications issues, especially NGOs working internationally, in order to develop strategic coordinated action on communications.
2. Demand the right for NGOs to be involved in multi-lateral organisations such as the ITU and the WTO (formerly GATT) in order to bring about institutional change.
3. Bring pressure on the other main actor: the private sector.

Liberalisation, in all sectors, has essentially meant a loss of public accountability, abrogated to faith in profit maximisation. The most effective pressure that NGOs and the public in general can bring on the private sector is in terms of those profits. Thus, the mobilisation and politicisation of consumer movements around the world to bring pressure on the private sector to provide universal services could be high on the agenda of NGOs. ●

A copy of the longer version of this article which was presented at TELECOM 95 in Geneva can be obtained from the author.

SEÁN Ó SIOCHRÚ IS VICE-CHAIR OF THE MACBRIDE ROUNDTABLE AND A MEMBER OF:

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MEDIA FOR CITIZENSHIP IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE: NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND COMMUNITY TELEVISION



Vidéazimut International Conference and Screenings — Rio de Janeiro, June 5 - 8, 1996

Vidéazimut's next international conference will take place in Brazil in June of 1996 in collaboration with the Brazilian Association of Popular Video. The event will bring together practitioners of audiovisual communication for democracy and development from around the world and will provide a forum for an exploration of the current practice and future of community oriented television broadcasting in the era of global communication.

In today's world, there are two simultaneous trends that have enormous implications for the building of citizen participation through communication so essential to democratic development. We can see increasing diversity in broadcasting in the ever more frequent disappearance of state controlled broadcasting monopolies and the proliferation of channels, be it over the air or via satellite or cable or in future by other technologies. We can also clearly see the rush of very powerful transnational broadcasting enterprises to fill the newly opened spaces. The conference will provide a forum to rethink the role and possibilities of community television and new media for the reinforcing of local and global citizenship within this context.

Community television has existed in some countries for many years. In other countries as diverse as Brazil, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Hong Kong, community television is an idea that has only recently begun to be recognized and promoted by media activists. By the end of 1995, regional or national gatherings of community and local television broadcasters will have taken place in Latin America, North America, Eastern Europe, Western Europe and in South Africa: evidence of the new found vitality in this sector of participatory media. The conference aims to highlight the issues crucial to the continued flowering of this form of democratic audiovisual communication and to enable people from all corners of the planet to learn from each other's experiences. Also, as was the case during its last gathering in New Delhi in 1994, Videazimut will invite representatives from other democratic communications networks (radio, information technology, research) to discuss future common actions and strategies at the international level.

The 1996 VideOlympiads Celebrating Local Television and Video Creation will take place concurrently in Rio de Janeiro, allowing people to participate in both events at the same time and place for further sharing of our work and experiences. For further information about the Vidéazimut International Conference, please contact:

Vidéazimut Conference Coordinator
Associação Brasileira de Vídeo Popular,
Rua Treze de Maio, 489,
01327-000 - São Paulo (SP), Brazil
Tel.: (55 11) 284 7862 Fax: (55 11) 287 2259
Email: abvp@ax.apc.org

OR the Vidéazimut General Secretariat (see address on page 2)

For further information about the VideOlympiads Celebrating Local TV and Video Creation, please contact:

VideOlympiads Secretariat,
c/o Dirk Koning, Community Media Center,
50 Library Plaza NE, Grand Rapids,
Michigan 49503, USA
Tel./ Fax: (1 616) 459 4788 ext. 123
Email: koning@igc.apc.org

Please note that video entries for the VideOlympiads are to be sent to:

Film/Video Arts c/o VideOlympiads/
Helmerson, 817 Broadway, 2nd Floor,
New York, New York 10003, USA

CURATORS ACROSS CONTINENTS: EXHIBITING MEDIA IN A CHANGING WORLD

Recently, the **University of California at Los Angeles Film and Television Archive** in association with the **Rockefeller Foundation** organised at Lake Como in Northern Italy an international workshop of people involved in curating and exhibiting film and video programs. Participants included representatives of several international film festivals, archive and media centres as well as independent critics and distributors. Over the five days, difficult questions on cross cultural curatorial collaboration were raised. These included: Does the notion of programming based on national cinemas continue to be a useful way to present the moving image? How might diverse audiences be encouraged to respond more broadly to films and videos crossing national and ethnic boundaries? How might communication among curators in different cultures be encouraged? How do these concerns relate to the threat represented by the global satellite systems as well as the particular needs of local communities?

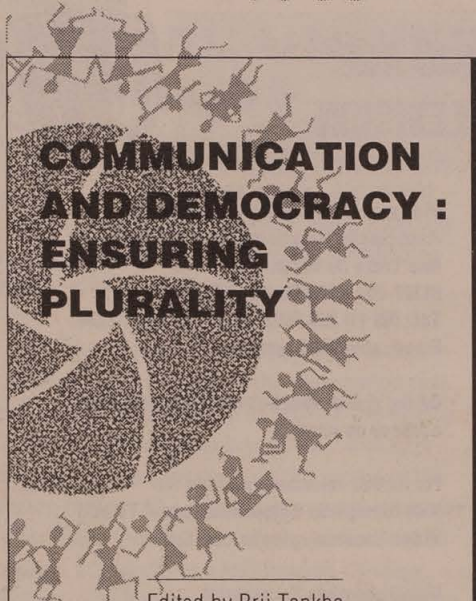
Coming from South Africa, these debates were valuable. As a new nation, the imperative of nation building tends to augur uncomfortably with globalisation. South Africans have, however, developed the notion of collaboration into a fine art and the development problems which we experience in the

Southern African region as a whole makes it necessary for us to develop strategies addressing the most pertinent issues in the region. For example, **The Film Resource Unit** distributes films from all countries in the region, to all countries in the region. Currently, we are putting into place a program to develop video communication in order to strengthen the distribution capacity in those countries.

The instinctive message of this workshop is that democratic media workers need to strengthen themselves. Several plans were put into place. For one, recognising their professional roles, curators will begin to interact more regularly. They will investigate the creation of an Internet Web site to share information. They will also look into creating financially sustainable methods of cooperation (for example, a subtitling fund). Participants resolved to meet again at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival. Most importantly, they agreed that collaboration only comes about when ideologically like minded partners get together. All participants saw the need for working on projects which will jointly enhance their capacity to deliver innovative programmes to their respective audiences.

Richard Ishmail is Coordinator at: Film Resource Unit, P.O. Box 11065 Johannesburg 2000 South Africa Tel.: (27 11) 838 4280 Fax: (27 11) 838 4451

..... Announcements



COMMUNICATION AND DEMOCRACY: ENSURING PLURALITY

Edited by Brij Tankha

The new communication technologies are rapidly changing the context in which audiovisual communication takes place. They present great challenges and opportunities to people working for democratic communication. Maintaining and widening the public communication space that has been gained so far will require media activists and progressive communicators to seize the initiative. In 1994 Vidéazimut and CENDIT brought together people from around the globe for a symposium in New Delhi on "New Communication Technologies and the Democratisation of Audiovisual Communication". This book contains contributions from 19 internationally recognised authorities on the subject who participated in the symposium. Themes include defining the right to communicate, using the new communication technologies, and past experiences and future directions from the point of view of indigenous broadcasters, women's media groups, and people in the so-called developing world, among others. Available from Vidéazimut and CENDIT (see addresses on page 2) or the publisher. Price US\$ 25 (includes shipping and handling), 213 pages, 1995.

Southbound Publishers,
9 College Square,
10250 Penang, Malaysia
Tel.: (60 4) 228 2169
Fax: (60 4) 228 1758
Email: chin@south.pc.my

● PUBLICATIONS

AUDIOVISUAL GUIDES TO AFRICA

The Pan-African Film Makers Association has embarked on a project surveying the audiovisual scene in African countries. The books on each country will contain information on state organisations, production and distribution companies, laboratories, cinemas, film libraries and clubs, documentation centres, festivals, training, actors, technicians, directors, etc. The books on Burkina Faso and Tunisia in French and English are out and another 14 are soon to be edited. FEPACI correspondents in each of the countries will be responsible for the yearly updates. For more information write:

Claude Tarpilga, Chef documentaliste,
FEPACI, 01 BP 2524,
Ouagadougou 01,
Burkina Faso
Tel.: (226) 31 02 58 Fax: (226) 31 18 59

CYBERSPACE FOR BEGINNERS



Written by Joanna Buick and illustrated by Zoran Jevtic. This book traces the development of the communication technologies which have led to the cybernetic revolution. It describes the growth of the information industry and points out the social and political implications of identity and control in an electronic order. It is also an amusing and interesting guide to

what the future might contain now that we have arrived at the threshold of a parallel electronic universe. Price: UK £7.99, 176 pages, 1995.

ICON Books Ltd
52 High Street,
Trumpington,
Cambridge CB2 2LS, England
Tel.: (44 1223) 847474 Fax: (44 1223) 844884

EUROPEAN TELEVISION

Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities
Edited by Claire Frachon and Marion Vargaffig.
Is an updated and extended version of the original edition published in French in 1993. The authors continue the debate by seeking to respond to questions like: How does television in Europe portray immigrants and ethnic minorities? What programs are specifically targeted at these groups and how much space is given to them? Can television in Europe influence whether foreigners are accepted or excluded? Can it increase or even create prejudice, or help to overcome it? Price: £20.00/32\$ US, 320 pages, 1995.
John Libbey & Company Ltd, 13 Smiths Yard,
Summerley Street, London SW18 4HR, England
Tel.: (44 181) 947 2777 Fax: (44 181) 947 2664
Email: libbey@earlsfield.win-uk.net

● INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS

NEXT 5 MINUTES: TACTICAL MEDIA CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

January 18th to 21st, 1996
Amsterdam & Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Tactical Media is a conference and exhibition which will bring together producers from mainstream companies, activists from social movements, theoreticians, media artists and computer activists from different parts of the world. Conference topics will include tactical research, public domain and access, metaphorical languages, and net criticism. In a series of public presentations, workshops and exhibitions, critical areas, dilemmas and fault lines in contemporary media will be examined.

Andreas Broeckmann & Sjoera Nas,
De Balie, Production Team,

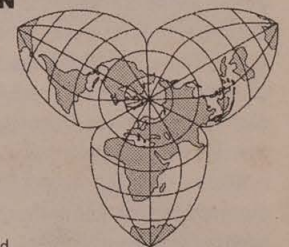
Next 5 Minutes,
Kleine Gartmanplantsoen 10,
1017 RR Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Tel.: (31 20) 62 33 673
Fax: (31 20) 63 84 489
Email: N5M@dds.nl

THE 1st INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF LOCAL TV BROADCASTERS

November 1st to 4th, 1995
Kosice, Slovakia
The festival will include workshops and competitions and will bring together participants from local TV stations from over 20 countries. Professional local TV broadcasters will have a chance to exchange expertise and technology and to discuss future directions. The festival will help create links between local broadcasting stations and promote the exchange of programmes.
c/o MAC TV LTD,
P. O. Box G-128,
04001 Kosice, Slovakia, EU
Tel.: (42 95) 62 22 664 Fax: (42 95) 62 21 027
Email: kekids@ccsun.tuke.sk

VIDEOLYMPIADS OF LOCAL TV AND VIDEO CREATION

June 1996
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
The third VideOlympiads will bring together video and television producers from around the world. Participants will have a unique opportunity to screen numerous local and international videos and through workshops learn about the overall experiences involved in their production. This gathering will take place concurrently with Vidéazimut's next international conference. For further information see addresses on page 11.



CLIPS



AN INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR AUDIOVISUALS
FOR DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

NUMBER 8 - JUNE 1995

ORGANIZING FOR DEMOCRATIC MEDIA



IN THIS ISSUE

● A FEATURE

...on the many efforts
to democratise media
around the world:
South Africa, Brasil,
Canada, France,
Ireland, the
Philippines, the
Netherlands and the
United States

PLUS

● Announcements

GREATER DURBAN TELEVISION

Television in South Africa is changing drastically and in the process a new participatory TV culture is emerging. These new directions include the introduction of public access television which will allow the public to not only watch TV but also to make it. New opportunities for community media will be highlighted at the **Visual**

Voice Confest '95 to be hosted in June by the **Centre for Cultural and Media Studies** at the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa. During this event, the Greater Durban Television (GDTV) will operate what could probably be the first test transmission of community TV in South Africa.

The planned experimental broadcast of GDTV marks the culmination of years of struggle by numerous oppositional community groups to democratise the airwaves. It was a bleak period dominated by an apartheid regime which controlled the media with an iron fist and restricted television to a virtual propaganda station for government ideology. One of the major agitators for the introduction of public access television in South Africa is the community based **Film and Allied Workers Organisation (FAWO)** which began developing community television during the early years of its work in restructuring the film and broadcasting industries.

FAWO acts as the central facilitating body in the development of a **Community Television Network** in South Africa through a process of consultation and networking. A basis of support and co-operation has also been established with international community television structures. This community networking has enabled FAWO, in the role of joint-convenor of the GDTV test broadcast, to bring considerable grassroots support to the volunteer groups participating in this pioneering attempt at community access television.

The aim of the experimental broadcast is to provide a technical model for a public access station, as well as to make people in the Greater Durban area aware of the potentials of such media. The organisers hope this will eventually lead to the establishment of a public access television

station in Durban. Negotiations are underway with the **Independent Broadcasting Authority** for the granting of what is termed a "special events short-term licence" for the experimental broadcast.

The experimental broadcast is being run on an entirely voluntary basis with a small amount of funding from the convening organisations. The equipment required for the ground breaking transmission has been sponsored by various video companies, the university and community based organisations. The GDTV conveners believe that community access media have a vital role to play in "Giving Voice to the Voiceless" and in aiding the government's *National Unity Reconstruction and Development Programme*.

Lumko Mtimde, of the **National Community Radio Forum**, has stated that: "Our communities have been deprived of a fundamental right to education, to talk to each other and listen to the truth... Community radio is a community voice. It can begin to address imbalances through facilitating debates and discussions, linking them up with other community radio stations, assessing such debates and discussions at the regional level and networking them nationally. This will ensure upward mobility instead of downward mobility of important community needs and demands... community radio can be used to develop a culture of human rights at the grassroots level and can be a valuable medium for informal education." These objectives are in line with the aims of the broader spectrum of community access media and effectively describe what GDTV sees as the role of community television in society. ●

MIKHAIL PEPPAS IS THE COORDINATOR OF THE VISUAL VOICE CONFEST '95 AND PRODUCER OF THE GREATER DURBAN TELEVISION EXPERIMENTAL TEST TRANSMISSION.

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**Greater Durban
GDTV
Television**



Founded in 1990, it brings together people from the world of independent and alternative video and television from every continent. Together, its members act to promote the democratic practice of communication. They aim to broaden the participation of communities and movements from the South and the North in sound and image production. The Coalition acts through the creation of fora for debate and exchange amongst the many diverse participants in this broad movement for alternative messaging.

EDITORIAL

OUR HOPE LIES IN ORGANIZING

In this issue we explore projects and initiatives coming from all quarters. All are searching, one way or the other, to organize for the purpose of democratizing the media. You will discover a developing community television network in South Africa, a brand-new TV broadcaster in the Irish language, neighbourhood television destined exclusively to the residents of a huge low-cost housing complex, the work of groups thinking hard about communications, an electronic network for NGOs, and many others endeavours. All are looking for the same outcome: to give the many who have no voice the chance to be heard and to take part, on an equal footing, in the progress of the society they live in. This is the very essence of democracy.

Organizing to democratize the media is not an easy task, however. On the one hand, the commercial media are not known for their democratic leanings but for their penchant to make profits. On the other hand, governments, who are very aware of the media's power, have a tendency to censure and control. Any work done outside these parameters is not likely to amount to much if all of us remain isolated and unaware of the need to pool our efforts, and especially if we do not identify the means to achieve our goal. For, although all the projects and initiatives described in this issue are educational, full of hope and a source of inspiration, theirs is a context that is all too fragile. Many of them are on their own, with no financial support, and some are even threatened by the authorities who, in turn, feel threatened by them.

If we talk about the democratization of the media and especially if we believe in it, we must make sure that a place is reserved and guaranteed for alternative communications at all levels. We must demand from international bodies that they recognize and defend them. The appeal made to the ITU in this issue and the invitation to be a co-signatory of the charter on communications are a few of examples of what we should do in the future if we want to defend democratic principles in communication.

Sylvia Roy

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THE PHILIPPINES

ALTERNATIVE MEDIA MATTER

In the Philippines, the process of democratizing the media is more than a decade old, an uphill and sometimes to many advocates a frustrating battle. The process itself stems from varied initiatives: one called for limiting media ownership to Filipino nationals; another battled for keeping free competition among private firms and outside government interference. However, the growing concern is to make media available to the public on the premise that freedom of information and of expression is after all every citizen's right. The movement to democratise media has as its main concern the following: democratising media ownership and press freedom.

The media industry is primarily under the hands of the country's traditional elite and the newly emerging "taipans" (Chinese-Filipino business tycoons), government and church groups. Until about the '80s, the media industry was predominantly owned by the traditional elite, a few "ilustrado" families whose fortunes are founded on large landholdings amassed during three centuries of Spanish colonial rule. After the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in '86, it was the turn of the "taipans" who bought or revived newspapers to rival the well-entrenched "ilustrados".

This tiny group of "ilustrados" and "taipans" separately own or maintain interlocking interests in all the country's vital industries and services. They have increased their assets by forging strategic alliances with American, European and Japanese multinationals and, increasingly, with investors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and other Asian neighbors. Next to them is government. Aside from operating a national news agency and several state information bureaus, PTV-4 and radio stations, the Philippine government continues to lord over sizeable radio and TV networks and national newspapers that were seized from business and political associates of the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos. Church groups led by the Catholic hierarchy also run a number of radio stations and programs as well as, increasingly, TV religious programs.

The proprietary interests of these media owners dictate what comes out and what is fed to consumers. Media is used primarily for entertain-

ment therefore serving narrow political and business interests. Although there is no brazen state censorship, there still is widespread self-censorship practiced by journalists - a remnant of the Marcos period when the commercial press was under authoritarian control.

The results of this institutionalised elite ownership and the threats of government censorship are appalling to a country that prides itself at having restored democracy from a long authoritarian nightmare. Only about 20 percent of the country's population of 66 million have access to the media. (Although, radio is listened to by 70 percent.) However, this minority of consumers have very little access at all. The limited space allotted, for instance, to letter-to-the-editor contributors is regarded by publishers as more of a privilege than a right. Critical views, especially anti-government, hardly ever surface in the media. Critical views in fact only draw violent responses from politicians, drug lords and military authorities. For a country that used to call its press the "freest" in Asia, it has over the past 15 years acquired the biggest graveyard of journalists killed in the line of duty in the region.

Among active advocates for the democratization of media in the Philippines, it is widely believed that such advocacy should assume political dimensions. Lobbying for reform in the media industry is good, but the 120-member Congress and the Senate chamber remain, as they have for 50 years, dominated by landlords and wealthy associates of the tiny economic elite. The present pack of legislators are more concerned with muzzling the press rather than doing away with restrictions.

The future of advancing the movement to democratise media in the country lies in the hands of grassroots organisations and non-governmental service agencies. In this community, alternative media is growing. Small publications, radio programs, video documentaries, media work and other indigenous forms of communication produced by this growing network of advocates and service volunteers build critical awareness and lead to a community of interests and aspirations.

The real process of democratising media starts where people participate in creating ways and means of expressing their concerns and addressing the problems of poverty and social injustice. The process may be long and tedious, but that is how an idea begins and grows. The idea should start with the people themselves. ●

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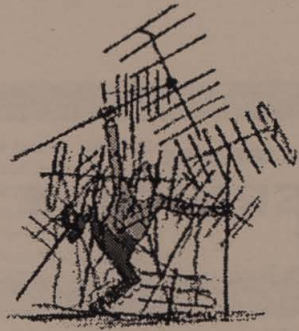
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(continued on page 11)



INTERESTING INITIATIVES

The **Fédération nationale Les vidéos des pays et des quartiers** (France) has struggled for the last ten years to develop alternative television which integrates community television and "audiovisual ecology". Among the federation's 20 member organisations, the following three illustrate this diversity perfectly.

TÉLÉ MILLEVACHES

... is a non-profit organization that was set up in April 1986 around a local news video magazine. Its aim is to disseminate information to people scattered over a large area and to foster ties between them. Télé Millevaches has become a pioneer in rural communication. With the help of two paid professionals, a journalist and trainees, ten volunteers do the reporting and run the magazine's editorial committee. Since 1986, they have produced over 100 issues, each about an hour and a half long, which are shown on VHS tapes in close to 100 public venues in the area, such as coffee shops, dance halls, etc.

Télé Millevaches recently received some help from the European Union. With this funding, the group was hoping to introduce a novel way of broadcasting: the idea was to upload, during the night outside usual broadcasting hours, the 100 VCRs dotted around the area by sending a signal via the airwaves of the third French network. So far, this interesting project has met with a categorical refusal from the network in question, and so Télé Millevaches continues to make 100 VHS copies every month and take them to 100 different public venues.

CANAL NORD

... is the first and best known of the French "neighbourhood television" channels, but it is not like any other. First of all, it broadcasts to a very specific area: three disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city of Amiens, in Picardie, which comprise 8,000 low-cost housing units equipped with collective antennas. At present the apartment blocks are illegally interconnected but the impact of the experiment is so great and the service it provides so obvious that the illegal aspect is not a major problem. Second, Canal Nord does

not broadcast regularly; it organizes two or three "television festivals" every year consisting of some 16 hours of original programs broadcast over a period of several days.

The content is also original. To make its programs, Canal Nord sets up in an apartment similar to the 8,000 others around it, thereby creating a place for expression, for social communication and a meeting place for people from different ethnic groups who would not meet otherwise. The purpose is to reflect the worth of a neighbourhood that the media tend to disparage. Canal Nord is also a unique place to learn for the many volunteers and trainees who assist the permanent staff of three. It is puzzling to see that the experience has hardly been repeated elsewhere in France.

TRÉGOR VIDÉO

In order to experiment with fibre optics technology, the **Centre National d'Études des Télécommunications**, in Trégor, built a net-

work reaching several towns in the later 1970s. There were no subscribers but rather a group of five public halls linked together by the Trégor video communication network. Trégor Vidéo did not confine itself to running the network and began to serve the region. It is a production and broadcasting centre for community video programs. It is also a resource centre with growing training activities and, in partnership with the national education authorities, it is developing classes on scientific discoveries in telecommunications. This is without a doubt a unique undertaking in France.

In late 1992, Trégor Vidéo presented a broadcasting project to reach all residents. The project was turned down merely because it was not connected with an important local event such as a festival or fair. Yet the local event was in fact the arrival of new television programs closer to the residents. ●

OLIVIER PASQUET IS A BOARD MEMBER OF VIDÉAZIMUT. (SEE PAGE 2 FOR THE ADDRESS.)



IRELAND

Irish Language TV

In 18 months time, a new television channel begins transmitting in Ireland to exclusively promote and support the Irish language. Ireland may be divided, the British sector in the North, the Irish republic in the South but the airwaves know no borders. In Belfast, the Irish speaking community is determined to have its voice heard and is learning the skills of making television by and for itself with the help of the **Northern Visions Media Centre**.

The struggle of the Irish speaking community to represent itself symbolises much about Northern Irish society. The Irish language has been seen as a threat to the very structure of the Northern Irish state since it was created in 1921. British culture was to be the norm and the Irish language was not considered to have any part to play within that culture. Irish language speakers have been excluded from the social, political and cultural debates. They have been ridiculed and activities such as the setting up of their own schools resulted in threats of imprisonment by the authorities in Northern Ireland. As each hurdle has presented itself, the Irish speaking community has persisted and today hundreds of children attend nursery, primary and secondary schools where teaching is done in the Irish language.

The community has its own newspaper, its own pirate radio, theatre, publishing house and various cultural centres. At present they are developing their own TV production unit which will feed into the new national television station.

However, it is recognised that a national language broadcasting service, although welcome and long overdue, cannot meet the cultural and social television needs of local neighbourhoods because even the language, which has not been standardised, has variations from region to region. Belfast Irish language speakers are also exploring ways to produce a more locally based and locally controlled television, one which all their communities can be involved in, and which will represent their culture and identity in their own language. ●

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CANADA

REINVENTING TELEVISION - IT'S ALL IN THE ORGANIZATION

Despite the rapid evolution of the television industry in the last decade, the financial base has not changed much over the years. Television is either publicly owned, with a dedication to public service objectives, or is driven by commercial interests and ruled by advertising ratings. As public funding has become scarce in recent years, even public television has been forced to carry more and more advertising. In prime time, there is little distinction in programs between profit making channels and those which are partially tax supported.

Now, one television channel is devising an alternative approach designed to let it respond to the public's interest while being almost free from dependence on tax-generated revenues or advertising. **WETV**, the Global Access Television Network, is the creation of a consortium of groups with an interest in creating a new model of television. It includes government agencies in several industrialized countries, private sector investors, NGOs and broadcasters in both North and South. WETV began as a project of the **International Development Research Centre**, a Canadian government funded development agency. Its goals are ambitious: to create a new television channel which will provide access to diverse voices throughout the world while raising awareness of issues of sustainable development and the environment. Laudable objectives, but can WETV succeed where other developmentally oriented television initiatives have failed? For the past 20 years, U.N. and related fora have called for the creation of a global television network devoted to international understanding. None has succeeded because of the daunting costs to the agencies involved and the certainty that a channel run by international civil servants would be doomed.

The WETV model is unique in several ways. First, its structure: a not-for-profit corporation will control the service through a Board of Directors chosen for their dedication to the principles of development and their professional achievement in communications. It will operate the network through a for-profit management corporation which can attract private sector investors, although only modest profits are foreseen. Most of any surplus will be ploughed back into programming and support to independent producers in the South. Funders will have a say through an advisory committee which will also monitor the quality of programs and the network's achievement of its stated developmental objectives.

A second unique aspect is its financing. WETV intends to draw a major portion of its revenue from the sale of program time to public service agencies. For the first time, international organizations which produce or co-produce television programs will have guaranteed exposure to audiences in both developed and developing countries. Point of view positions will be encouraged when controversial, and balance will be provided in the network's own productions. A stiff code of ethics and program practices is being devised.

The payoff for this almost audacious initiative could be great: public service agencies will benefit from sure international exposure of their expensive audiovisual productions. The burgeoning television industry in developing countries will have a new source of low-cost, high-quality programming, much of it originating in the South. Independent producers will be a main source of WETV programs. The network plans to work with international organizations, the broadcast indus-

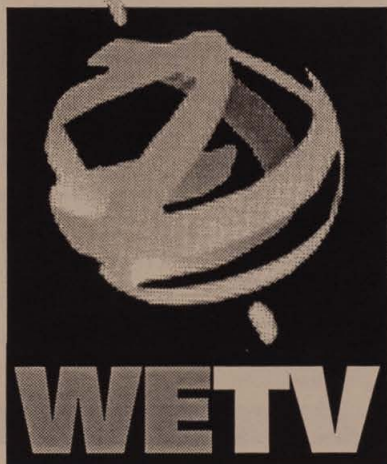
try and professional organizations to provide financial and other support to independent Southern producers. An independent producers' fund to support both research and development and production is under discussion with **UNESCO** and the **Television Trust for the Environment**.

Following a two year development phase, WETV plans to start in 1995. A network preview will be offered in September to coincide with the **4th United Nations Conference on Women** in Beijing, China. Up to two weeks of daily programs originating partly in Beijing will be offered free and unscrambled on a network of communications satellites. Regular programming will start later in the year. Eventually, WETV hopes to go direct to homes, as direct broadcasting services become affordable and more widespread.

At start-up from the studios in Ottawa, Canada, WETV anticipates its affiliate broadcasters will have a potential "reach" of 1 billion viewers. So the return could be great if we have the creativity and energy to work together to seize this chance to help democratize, even in a modest way, the medium of broadcast television. ●

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THE NETHERLANDS

THE PEOPLE'S COMMUNICATION CHARTER

is an initiative of the **Third World Network** (Penang, Malaysia) and the **Centre for Communication & Human Rights** (Amsterdam, the Netherlands). Basic to the initiative is the observation that across the world people face pervasive forms of censorship, distorted and misleading information, stereotyped images of gender and race, restricted access to knowledge, and insufficient channels to communicate their ideas and opinions. The reality of our communication environment reduces the capacity of ordinary men and women to control the decisions that others take about their lives. This 'disempowerment' violates the human entitlement to dignity, equality and liberty.

To defend human integrity against this, communication should contribute to the 'empowerment' of people. This implies the need to improve the quality of our communication environment. This is a tall order. Communication is an arena largely controlled by very powerful interests. The media moguls and their political friends will not voluntarily put their stakes at risk. The information industries, the telecommunication operators and their large clients, the intellectual property industries and the supporting governments are not likely to act against the disempowering impact of communication.

Moreover, in most societies, people are at present not seriously concerned about the quality of their communication environment. So far the arena of communication politics has been ignored by people's movements! People are more worried about the killing of whales than about the disappearance of minority languages. However, since our communication environment is as essential to our common future as the natural ecology, it is time for people's movements to focus on the production and distribution of information and culture.

If people do not want to be surrounded by electronic surveillance, political propaganda, or the incessant appeal to their consumerism, they cannot be complacent about the existing communication structures. If people refuse to be silenced and do not want to live with a massive choreography of televised violence, they cannot trust states and markets to accommodate their communication needs. They will have to take responsibility themselves.

An obvious problem is that information consumers are not normally organised in representative associations. They are a diverse community, geographically dispersed and ideologically fragmented. It will be no easy matter to design effective mechanisms to articulate and defend the needs of such a heterogeneous community.

A first step in this process could be the worldwide adoption by individuals and movements of *The People's Communication Charter*. This Charter provides the com-

mon framework for all those who share the belief that people should be active and critical participants in their social reality and capable of governing themselves. *The People's Communication Charter* can be a first step in the development of a permanent movement concerned with the quality of our communication environment. In the Summer of 1995, the latest version of the Charter will be distributed to all those who are interested. All these individuals and groups will be asked to indicate their support for the provisions of the Charter. After this 'ratification' process, all the signatories will be consulted about the possibilities for implementation of the Charter. One of the ideas that has already been launched is to organise an International Tribunal that would receive complaints by signatories and invite the parties involved to submit evidence and defense upon which the Tribunal could come to a judgment. The establishment of such a Tribunal could contribute to the awareness that the quality of communication matters.

The Charter is not an end in itself. It provides the basis for a permanent critical reflection on those worldwide trends that determine the quality of our lives in the third millennium. ●

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The People's Communication Charter - Article 3
People have the right to receive opinions, information and ideas. This implies that people have the right to be informed about matters of public interest. This includes the right to receive information which is independent of commercial and political interests, and the right to receive a range of information and cultural products designed for a wide variety of tastes and interests.

The People's Communication Charter - Article 6
People have the right to distribute information. This includes fair and equitable access to media distribution channels and to adequate resources and facilities.

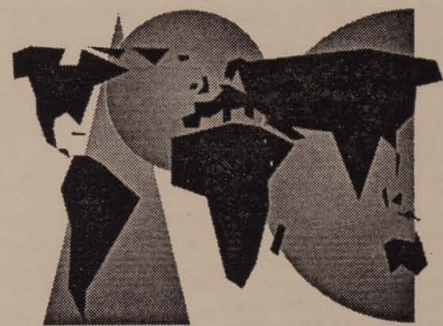
The People's Communication Charter - Article 9
People have the right to protect their cultural identity. This includes the respect for people's free pursuit of their cultural development and the right to express existing cultural variety through the media as well as to receive a variety of cultural expressions. People have the right to the protection of their local cultural space and provisions for the protection of cultural heritage should be established.

BRASIL
NGO ELECTRONIC NETWORKING

While publicity about the **Internet** and its various uses continues to skyrocket, the **Association for Progressive Communications** (APC) keeps busy trying to ensure that NGOs in both Southern and Northern countries develop the capacity to fully use the many tools offered by the ever expanding world of electronic communications. APC must not only stay abreast of technological developments but must go beyond to ensure that its members and partners in areas of the world where the Internet is not available can be full participants in this new technological era.

APC is an international NGO composed of 18 member networks including NordNet (Sweden), **Web** (Canada), **AlterNex** (Brazil), and **Pegasus** (Australia) whose shared mission is to provide effective and efficient electronic communications and information-sharing tools to other NGOs worldwide. Serving over 30,000 activists, educators, nonprofits and NGOs in over 133 countries, it is the largest computer communications network in the world dedicated specifically to NGOs and to enhancing their effectiveness, organisational ability and capacity.

Many NGOs have recognised that an efficient communications infrastructure is fundamental to their efforts to adequately address the →



issues of the day while also building their own capacities for action. NGOs throughout the world are increasingly aware that timely communication and exchange of information with other like-minded groups play a fundamental role in furthering their goals. Among other things, NGOs use APC to avoid duplication by learning about what other NGOs are doing, to lessen the feeling of isolation for people working in remote areas and to educate themselves about the expertise other NGOs may have. Also, APC provides the technical and administrative backbone for the member networks who, in turn, have developed technical and collegial relationships with over fifty smaller networks in developing countries. These fifty partner networks are local host systems with whom APC exchanges information on a regular basis.

With all the recent publicity about the Internet many NGOs know that they should take advantage of this communication and information tool, but don't know how or don't have the capacity to do so. Increasingly, NGOs worldwide look to APC to provide them with access to the Internet, to advise them on how to use the Internet effectively and, in countries where there is still no Internet access for NGOs, to help them locate up-to-date information in a timely manner.

APC is uniquely poised to develop strategies on how to ensure that the information and communication tools gap between North and South does not grow wider between Internet and non-Internet countries. Since the activists and organisations working for social change worldwide are the most affected by this problem, it is imperative that APC members and partners from both Internet and non-Internet countries work closely together in order to find a solution. ●

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RUSHING AND THE LONG VIEW

Ever since U.S. Vice-President Al Gore's famous speech in September 1993 about his plan for a *National Information Infrastructure* (NII, better known as the information highway), not a week goes by without his statements being echoed by one or another of our heads of state, no matter what their political persuasion. Gore is becoming more precise as time goes by. Now he is talking about a *Global Information Infrastructure* (GII). (He mentioned it for the first time in March 1994 when he addressed a meeting of the **International Telecommunication Union** (ITU).) The GI, as we might have suspected, is modelled on the NII. What did this speech tell us? Basically, four things:

1. That the new information and communication technologies (NICTs) are the answer to the worldwide problems of development, ecological balance, and inequality between North and South; they will even correct the limitations and excesses of western democracies by enabling everyone to participate.
2. That we should act quickly because those who miss this new boat of progress will be left standing on the pier, lonely and "poor in information" i.e. excluded from the world system. (The next landmark announced is a meeting of the brand-new **World Trade Organisation** in April 1996, which will no doubt ratify all of this.)
3. That the cost of NICTs is too high for States and their citizens to defray and therefore must be entrusted to private business.
4. That individual States should facilitate the task of private business by speeding up the privatisation of telecommunications and the deregulation of markets.

And here we go again! Leave it to us; we have the solution to all your woes. It is true that we have all made mistakes in the past, but we now believe in "sustainable development", "participatory democracy", "cultural pluralism", "partnership", etc.

In contrast to Mr. Gore's impeccable speech, democratic communication practitioners have other things to say, perhaps not in such perfect sentences, but they translate into very concrete action:

1. We know that NICTs are the purveyors of more democracy: we experience this in our every day activity, and our work, albeit modest, is proof. We also know, through the history of our parents and grandparents, that technology in itself has never solved

anything and never will. Thus we know that to effect deep social change these NICTs must be appropriated by citizens and be put at the service of a blueprint for society shared by the majority. This is not what you are proposing to us.

2. We know these technologies cannot solve the crucial problems of international development so easily when so many of us don't even have access to a telephone ("us" represents half the world population, according to the latest ITU report); when over 90% of the world's computers are concentrated in the countries of the North, as are research, diplomas, communications multinationals, news agencies, control of the geostationary orbits of satellites and many other keys to this "development" you promise us.
3. We know from the images and sounds you feed us on our television screens and radios that you do not take into account our cultures or our aspirations. Each day we become more aware that communication as merchandise and the homogenization of messages are a permanent affront to pluralism, tolerance and real democracy.
4. We know from experience that a genuine public television service cannot be provided by the State nor by the market alone when they both deny the fundamental rights of citizens by blocking access and effective participation in a plurality of media.

This is why we, the practitioners of democratic communication, counter your speech and your agenda with our own action and program. In our local organizations as well as in our regional, national and international ones, our achievements are long term. We know that the long view is the key to beginning a dialogue that will guarantee real pluralism, the key to consolidating alliances and partnerships that will respond to the needs and wishes of the majority. You can be sure we also know that, to ensure the survival of the long view, we must be active on all fronts, right away, and put out our message. This is why you hear about us and will continue to do so a little more each time and in different quarters. Read *Clips* regularly to keep up to date! ●

ALAIN AMBROSI IS A BOARD MEMBER OF VIDÉAZIMUT. (SEE PAGE 2 FOR THE ADDRESS)

BRASIL

IS DEMOCRATIZATION A BUSINESS?

Like most countries in the Americas, Brazil is restructuring its information, communication and telecommunications systems to conform to the demands of globalization. The changes are visible in the stepped-up implementation of technology in the country's developed areas; in the amendments to the constitution and legislation to bring them in line with the privatization of telecommunications; and in civil society's bargaining power.

The **National Forum on the Democratization of Communication** (FNDC) falls in the latter category. It is a movement of telecommunications workers, mainstream media journalists, communication students, artists, intellectuals, women, trade unions, political parties and NGOs. In all, approximately 44 regional committees with the support of social institutions of great importance in Brazil's recent democratic history are represented in the FNDC.

Initially, the FNDC spearheaded a national debate on the communications monopoly and the significance of TV Globo's control of the mass media. In the last two years, the reorganization of communication and information systems has raised new challenges. In response, the FNDC proposed the modification of constitutional regulations (to guarantee the setting-up of a National Council on Communications), a law on cable broadcasting (to guarantee media access), a law on democratic information (protecting citizens' rights in the face of mainstream media) and a community broadcast law (to guarantee the right to communicate locally).

Thanks to organizational progress and the FNDC's quality data, presently some talks are being held between the Ministry of Communications, legislators, media business people and the sectors represented by the Forum.

Of course, the process becomes more complex with the rapid development of telecommunications, the need for lobbying and the impact that these openings have on society. In the case of Brazil, there is a particular historical twist: the appearance of cultural industries, the development of telecommunications, the legal appara-

tus, TV, radio, cable TV and pay TV concessions, the use of domestic satellites and international and microwave links, all occurred under the military regime (1960s to 1980s) for the sole benefit of the market. The situation is further complicated by the fact that 98 of the 513 politicians and legislators in the Congress today (including ministers and state governors) own those concessions. That is why, for these people, it is meaningless to talk about public or state communications and to argue for the right to information and public and private funds so that citizen's can be present within the telecommunications sphere.

Some say that the FNDC's endeavour is a

contemporary version of the fight against Goliath. The truth is there are progressively more negotiations, discussions, research, lobbying, more voices being heard and, most importantly, youth participation is taking part. Though the future is uncertain, knowledge and information are growing by leaps and bounds. ●

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NATIONAL FORUM ON THE DEMOCRATIZATION
OF COMMUNICATION
FAX: (55 61) 223 700

FRANCE

HARNESSING THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES

A G7 ministerial meeting was held February 25 and 26, 1995 in Brussels to discuss the technical, economic and financial aspects of projects to implement the information highway. Since the social implications of this undertaking are considerable, the **Fondation pour le progrès de l'homme** (FPH) and **Transversales Science Culture** launched an appeal to the effect that scientific and technical advances be placed at the service of social and cultural development. A declaration entitled *Multimedia: Ways to Appropriate Them Socially* was released at a press conference to draw the G7 countries' and public opinion's attention to the subject. The declaration is a summary of statements received from groups and individuals the world over who are involved in different ways in the issues raised by these new technologies. Among invited guests were Rajive Jain (**CENDIT**, India), Lavinia Mohr and Alain Ambrosi (**Vidéazimut**, Canada), Joachim Tankoano (**Higher School of Informatics**, Burkina Faso), Alain d'Iribarne (**LEST/CNRS**, France) and Amalia Souza (**APC International Secretariat**, Brazil). Over 50 organizations signed the declaration.

The signatories wanted to show their concern to the G7 and stress to these governments, to big business media and to public opinion the importance, at both the national and international level, of the issues and the principles that should govern mastery of the technology. Since citizenship and democracy are closely linked to the nature and advancement of communications systems, no one really knows exactly what the economic, social or cultural effects of the new communica-

tion technologies will be. The basic principle of responsibility toward the future means that the accompanying risks must be weighed in the decision making process: risks such as an exclusively commercial approach, the marginalization of diversity, heightened inequality, segregation and social isolation.

At the same time, however, the new information technologies open up opportunities to strengthen social bonds and citizenship and to provide an inexhaustible source of individual and collective enrichment. This is an approach that would incorporate the social and cultural into the new systems; in which forward-looking forces would be involved; exchange and sharing of information, ideas and practices would occur; public interest services would be provided; and local networks at the service of democracy would emerge.

By signing the declaration, participants committed themselves to facilitate and support collective experimentation, to gather and exchange their knowledge and practices concerning the new technologies, and to help organize relevant international meetings. ●

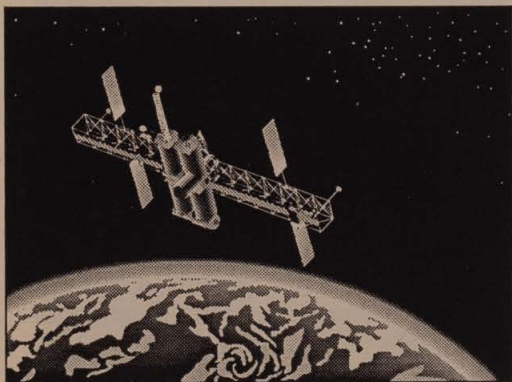
Copies of the declaration are available from:

FONDATION POUR LE PROGRÈS DE L'HOMME
38, RUE SAINT SABIN,
F 75011 PARIS, FRANCE
TEL.: (33 1) 43 57 44 22
FAX: (33 1) 43 57 06 63
EMAIL: AHIS@FPH.RIO.ORG

UNITED STATES

THE RIGHT TO THE SKY

In the 1970's the **International Telecommunications Union (ITU)** was the forum for a debate about communication equity: many countries in the so-called "developing" world had banded together, as part of the Non-Aligned Movement, to demand parity of access to information resources for a "New World Information Order". The ITU debate at the **World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC)** of 1978 centered around the reservation of radio frequency spectrum space, especially satellite paths, for the "developing" countries. At that time there were few entities in the world that had the technical ability to utilise this global resource: the US, USSR and France were the only countries with full capacity to launch communication satellites. However, other countries were afraid that if they did not reserve space they would be hampered as to future development. They were especially concerned about leaving open the possibility of having their satellites in the highly desirable equatorial orbit, called "geostationary", which was needed to have a stable signal for specific regions.



The staid ITU which had been designating global telecom slots for years without any one taking notice was rocked with charged discussions that cut to the real issues: the commercialization and militarization of space resources by large and powerful countries and multinational corporations. This put into question the right to communicate and the need for justice on techno-

logical issues. These discussions found a voice in the MacBride Report, *One World, Many Voices*, a report resulting from **UNESCO** research into information distribution. The **MacBride Commission** was so controversial that the United States virtually stopped payment to the **United Nations (UN)** for several years in protest. The result was a shift at UNESCO away from such "controversial" projects.

The debate about information justice took place fifteen years ago, before many countries had either satellite launching capability or programs and information to distribute. It is only now, with the implementation of Murdoch's **Star TV** in India, Latin America and almost every corner of the world and with the global marketing of **GAP** and **Coca Cola** through **MTV**, that we realise how important those discussions were. Both the ITU debate and the UNESCO/MacBride intervention were the opening salvos in a continuing struggle for information justice that will only grow in importance. Because of increased access to consumer-priced information tools by individuals and groups at the grassroots level, regional producers of small format video and communicators are beginning to understand the potential for democratic exchange of ideas and culture that is possible with this technology. When the MacBride Commission talked about community communication, they did not have the examples of **TV Maxambomba** from Brazil, or the **Video Farm** in Malaysia, or the use of the Internet by the Zapatistas in Chiapas. In a sense, those discussions happened too early, too soon. It is important, at this time, to rethink that struggle in the light of the impressive evidence of regional work.

The question is how can the grassroots use of information technology be cultivated in the "vast wasteland" of global commercial (and military) hegemony of technological resources? Perhaps it is time to look at the ITU and to reinsert the public into their agenda. The ITU was organised before the United Nations, as a global agency to assign radio frequencies to prevent interference between nations. It has the task of designat-

ing both global spectrum and satellite paths. Both of these resources are essential infrastructure for any telecommunications project. At the current time, most of this supposedly global resource has been assigned to commercial entities and military users. With the collapse of the Eastern Block, the demise of the Non Aligned Movement and the privatisation of national telecommunications agencies there is no organised resistance to the commercialisation of the world telecommunications infrastructure. This is why the Murdochs and the MTVs of the world can have free access to their target "markets". We are in the bull's eye.

An example of how communities can successfully "tax" corporations to reconfigure communication infrastructure is the public access movement in the United States. Begun in the early seventies, community groups and visionary city officials were able to extract from cable corporations provisions that ensure public access to cable channels and equipment. Although this movement has been ridiculed in the popular press in the US (a press for the most part owned by cable corporations!) it has flourished in many cities and provides a model for the rest of the world as to how excess communication profits can be directed into "affirmative action" for information equity.

As community organisations around the world wake up to the importance of communications issues, perhaps we can look to unions and NGO's to become involved in this important struggle. Multinational corporations are exploiting workers across borders, so it is self-preservation that will force workers in these industries to begin to communicate with each other. Several unions now have pilot projects in this area. Workers in Brazil are communicating via pictures of working conditions and workplace safety with Japanese workers in the same corporation. Environmental organisations are realising that they need the global reach of the Internet to track down such things as rain forest destruction and toxic waste. Environmental and worker organisations need to take up the banners for global non-profit communication resources. They can be important allies in the future

information struggle.

We need an international forum to formulate possible structural modes that could address our rights in this area. What better forum than an International Telecommunications Union, chartered to oversee the global infrastructure? As nation states have privatised their communications systems, ITU regulations on transborder transmission have held little consequence and the corporations have jumped into the vacuum in this international forum. However, it is not too late to re-assert the need for an authentic public participation in this crucial forum. What better representatives to these organisations than those of us who daily work at the community level to foster grass-roots communication? The local and regional models of collaboration and participation can be re-formulated to design a global system of information resources that sees humanity not as markets to be exploited, but as participant citizens. Global deliberations have come to agreement on such issues as saving the whales and on ozone depletion. Can a global standard of participatory communication be addressed by asserting the public nature of global information resources, such as earth orbits and spectrum?

A research project such as the MacBride Commission would have quite a bit to study these days. World communications have expanded so quickly that we have hardly had time to understand what is going on. In this rapidly changing environment we need to think of ways to protect democratic communication. We need to examine those models of participation and think about whether there might be ways of encouraging and subsidising them by regulations imposed in the global arena such as the ITU, UNESCO, or perhaps even the World Court. ●

DEEDEE HALLECK IS A BOARD MEMBER OF VIDÉAZIMUT. (SEE PAGE 2 FOR THE ADDRESS)

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

- Readers of the New York Times consume more newsprint each Sunday than the average African does in one year.
- While India is the world's leader in total feature films produced, five countries—the United States, France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany—account for 80-90 percent of all exported films.
- While every two to three people in most developed countries have a television, in Latin America there are seven persons per set, in Asia more than eighteen, and in Africa thirty six.

Taken from: UNESCO Statistical Yearbook (Paris: UNESCO, 1990) pp. 6-14 to 6-15, pp. 9-9 to 9-12, pp. 10-9 to 10-14.

NEWSLETTER EXCHANGE

Would your organisation like to exchange newsletters? Vidéazimut invites any group interested in an exchange to simply add our address (see inside front cover) to your mailing list and send us a note so that we can do the same.



NEW MEMBERS VIDÉAZIMUT (continued)

• **Mario Fernando Gutiérrez O.**
• Av. Waldemar Ferreira #4
• Apto. 53, Butantã,
• CEP 05501-000 São Paulo, Brasil
• Tel.: (55 11) 814 8924
• Fax: (55 11) 287 2259
• Email: mariofgo@cat.cce.usp.br

• **Dr. Myungkoo Kang**
• Department of Communication,
• College of Social Sciences,
• Seoul National University,
• Silim-dong, Kwanak-gu,
• Seoul 152-742, South Korea
• Tel.: (82 2) 880 6473
• Fax: (82 2) 701 8983 Email:
• masskang@chollian.dacom.co.kr

• **Labor News Production**
• Myoung Joon Kim
• 326-12, Sangdo 1 dong,
• Dongjak-gu, Seoul, Korea
• Tel.: (82 2) 817 9798
• Fax: (82 2) 826 0151

• **Southern Africa
Communication for
Development (SACOD)**
• a/s Jorge Ferrão, Coordinator,
• P.O. Box 366 Causeway,
• Harare, Zimbabwe
• Tel.: (263 4) 757 637
• Fax: (263 4) 756 255

• **Videopress (People's
Media Network)**
• Akira Matsubara,
• No. 403, 2-22-17, Mukaihara,
• Itabashi-ku, Tokyo, Japan 173
• Tel.: (81 3) 3530 8588
• Fax: (81 3) 3530 8578
• Email: mgg01231@niftyserve.or.jp

• **Cadre of Media Resources
and Action (Camera)**
• Philip Padachira, Director,
• 19, Hazarimal Somani Marg,
• Bombay 400 001, India
• Tel.: (91 22) 284 4992
• Fax: (91 22) 642 2110

..... Announcements

INTERNATIONAL GATHERINGS

INTERNATIONAL GATHERING IN CELEBRATION OF THE 45th ANNIVERSARY OF CUBAN TELEVISION

November 20th to 25th, 1995
Havana, Cuba

An international meeting for television and video professionals in honor of the 45th anniversary of Cuban television. The program will include a television and video competition, a conference on Cuban television, a seminar on the production and distribution of Latin American and Caribbean television series and a market to promote independent productions.

Movimiento Nacional de Video Cuba

Calle 26 #301 esq. a 21,
Vedado, La Habana, Cuba

Tel.: (53 7) 31 1723 or (53 7) 30 9970

Fax: (53 7) 33 3107

NORTHERN LIGHTS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

August 1st to 6th, 1995
Anchorage, Alaska

The festival will present films exclusively from northern regions including Alaska, the Russian North, Lapland, the northern regions of Sweden, Iceland, Canada, Japan and China. The topics of these films will cover all aspects of life in the Arctic and the North, including the people, nature, traditions and customs, folklore and crafts, religions and history.

c/o Marina Moukhamedianova

1101 Cordova Street, Building 2, #321,
Anchorage, Alaska 99501, USA

Fax: (1 907) 277 7925 or (1 907) 561 6645

EL CINE Y EL VIDEO DIDACTICO, 100 ANOS DESPUES DE LOS LUMIERE

October 17th to 20th, 1995
Camaguey, Cuba

This international gathering in honor of both the centennial year of cinema and the Lumière brothers will bring together directors of film, video and alternative television. Lectures and workshops on experimental productions, North-South communication projects and others topics of interest to participants will be part of the agenda.

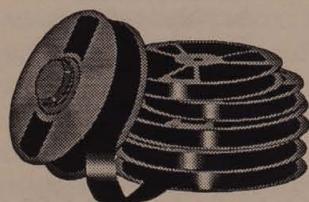
Instituto Superior Pedagogico "Jose Marti"

c/o Eugenio Santana Acosta,
Carretera Circunvalación Norte km 5 1/2,
Camaguey, Cuba.

CP 74670

Tel.: (53) 322 62232

Fax: (53) 322 61587



GRAN FESTIVAL DE LA RADIO Y TELEVISIÓN COMUNITARIA Y POPULAR DE AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE

November 20th to 24th, 1995

Quito, Ecuador

Sponsored by several Latin American regional communication organisations, this gathering features debates, workshops and an exhibition on many aspects of the day to day operations of community and popular radio and television.

Casilla 17-01-1171,

Quito, Ecuador

Tel./Fax: (593 2) 226 648

PUBLICATIONS

FILM, VIDEO AND TV PRODUCTIONS

Written by Leonard M. Henry et Jaimie Hartzell, 165 pages. A guide on distribution and financing for film, video and TV productions which provides an essential tool for independent film and video makers to market their films and find funding sources for new projects. This guide has been tailored to the interest of filmmakers particularly from developing countries to help them gain access to the European market. Includes a listing of the major distributors, broadcasters and festivals in the countries of the European Union.

Third Horizon Foundation,

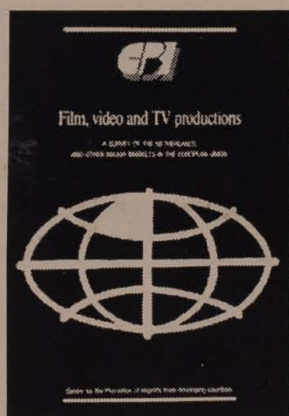
Mijndensedijk 74,

NL-3631 NS Nieuwersluis, Holland

Tel.: (31 29) 43 34 59

Fax: (31 29) 43 18 77

Email: cimr@antenna.nl



TRENDS IN WORLD COMMUNICATION

On Disempowerment and Self-Empowerment

Written by Cees J. Hamelink, 168 pages.

This book aims to clarify some of the key issues in world communication and what they imply for ordinary men and women. It provides a fact filled and thought provoking analysis of our so-called global village and describes the historical development of world communication with its four major trends. The book includes a provisional version of the People's Communication Charter.

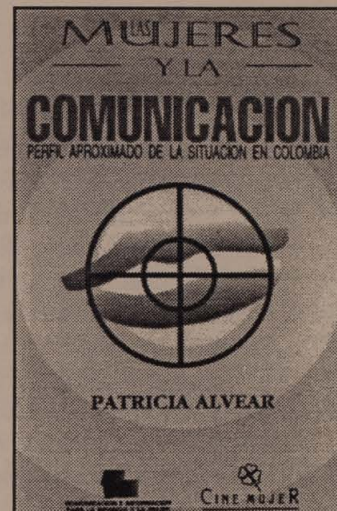
Southbound,

9 College Square,

10250 Penang, Malaysia

Tel.: (60 4) 228 2169

Fax: (60 4) 228 1758



LAS MUJERES Y LA COMUNICACIÓN

Perfil Aproximado de la Situación en Colombia

Written by Patricia Alvear, 106 pages.

A profile of an ever changing situation and a tool describing the progress, proposals and resources for developing new communication strategies. Among others, the themes include: the present state of communication research and training, women and communication, alternative communication by and for women.

Cine-Mujer,

Avenida 25 C # 4A-24, Oficina 202,

Santafé de Bogotá, D. C. Colombia

A.A. 2758

Tel.: (57 1) 342 6184

Fax: (57 1) 286 7586

Email: cinmujer@hemeroteca.icfes.gov.co

WHO RULES THE AIRWAVES?

Broadcasting in Africa

Edited by Article 19 and Index on Censorship, 155 pages.

A study of the role of broadcasting during and after the process of political transition. Focuses on the struggle to transform government radio stations into genuine, independent public service broadcasters and establishes the framework needed to ensure pluralism and independence in broadcasting.

Article 19,

33 Islington High Street,

London N1 9LH, United Kingdom

Tel.: (44 1 71) 278 9292

Fax: (44 1 71) 713 1356

CONNECTIONS

Newsletter on Communication, Environment, Rights of People and Sustainable Development

Published by the Mihikatha Institute, 12 pages.

Aims to link individuals and communities concerned with communication and sustainable development. Reports on the links between communication and political, social and environmental issues and presents case studies of communication campaigns by disadvantaged groups.

Mihikatha Institute

11, Sri Saranankara Road,

Dehiwala, Sri Lanka

Tel.: (94 1) 725 072

Fax: (94 1) 500 544