

Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

# World Citizens Assembly

Lille – December 2<sup>nd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001

Thematic Group

## **Independant media which facilitate understanding of the world, democratic control and civic action**

After introducing themselves, the members of the group coming from diverse workshops, tried to share the information they have gathered about media during their previous sessions.

### Socioprofessional Group's information:

#### 1) Inter-religious college

According to an Indian monk who is militing for the lower cast in India, mainstream media does not take into account fightings in favor of citizens. He is hoping for alternative media and wants to highlight the importance of the audiovisual network for people from the lower class.

The inter-religious college has also worked on media from an ethical point of view; It underlines the importance of spiritual values.

#### 2) Artists and publishers

It is difficult for small newspapers to survive. Press companies are big and they only have commercial interests, they don't really care about social issues (maybe those do not sell enough copies ?). Advertisers lead the system.

Censorship exists in numerous countries, for the press as much as for publishers.

Each and every aspect of the intellectual and artistic creation should be attributed a better place in the media, therefore it would permit to make scale savings. Though, is it necessary to use lobbying methods to reach this goal ? This is one of our proposals.

#### 3) Scientists

States and multinationals finance the scientific research. It is crucial to finance the popularization of the scientific research through media in order to create a "citizens'science".

#### 4)Business leaders

In our college, we insisted on the importance of communication in order to develop companies' strategies which are linked to the "social responsibility" issue. In fact, if companies take their decisions alone and secretly, we can expect abuses. That is why the media have an crucial role to play with companies: they have the possibility to be informed on what happens in that world.

One of the participants is actually director of a company which owns a press agency in order to give information to the media about the alternative and interdependant economy.

## 5) Women

Women are really concerned about their image in the media, they talked about it several times. The speaker of this college who is a journalist and a member of the women's journalist association, reports three main points:

- 1) In the journalist field, women find it difficult to obtain key jobs.
- 2) The media do not always respect women when they talk about them.
- 3) Unfortunately, women are not very interested in media because they are not well represented: in the subjects treated and even in the way they are treated.

The analysis of the maps made by the different colleges is surprising: many of them didn't talk about media, even the ones which were expected to: the NGO's, the business leaders, unionists, academics, scientists and philosophers. The military and the lawyers ask for "free, autonomous, local and continental media". Financiers want media to be given the power of "writing on financial problems in an impartial way"; Farmers and fishers want consumers to be correctly informed on food, while health professionals want to "inform people on hygiene and healthy habits". Local authorities are in favor of creating a local information network and a social control of media. International civil servants want media to be "responsible and able to contribute to the understanding of the world" while politicians want media to be "more independent and respectful of ethic issues"; young people underline a lack of interest from the media concerning themselves. The inhabitants is the most interested college in this subject, they want media to feel concerned by social and environmental issues, to reduce the information gap between southern countries and northern countries, to inform "people on international problems", to respect ethic, in brief to provide information for all as a symbol of the democracy.

### Proposals of the journalists college

Current challenges for media are:

- to create an alternative press, among existing media or in parallel.
- media's role in the society, in the development of southern countries, in the establishment of a culture of peace.
- find a balance between the journalists' freedom of speech and the information right of the population.
- the training of journalists (better knowledge, open-minded vision)

The most important proposal of this college deals with the creation of a global media network, "by the people, for the people and about the people".

### Debate of the group concerning the journalists college proposals

-one of the participants would like to know more about the "transforming word - writing to make a difference" project (cf. CPPP 47 bis and [www.firewords-press.org](http://www.firewords-press.org)), which inspired the proposals. A Lebanese journalist who is taking part to this project talks about languages problems: only French and English are used. For example, she writes only in arabic and don't have time to write in another language. There is a lack of translators.

-What about the financial working of the press ? Why the paper is so expensive ? (Why the information is merchandised ?) It is necessary to ask colleges which talked about media, to give some proposals.

- One of the possibilities is to reform the existing media, or to create an alternative press. For the first proposal, the legislation is concerned. For the second proposal, we need to talk about funding.

-If we reform it from an internal point, we should talk about a new way of working for the press. What is not effectively working ?

An analysis proposal is made:

- 1) To define the financial obstacles (especially about taxes), the legislative obstacles, the ideological obstacles and the habits of the public.
- 2) Introduce rifts in it. For example, give awards to the best war report (and also an award for the worst one).
- 3) Create a press

-We don't have to recreate it all but to redefine it. There are some previous experiences which could help us in this task. Concerning the legislation and the ratification of the civic rights treaty (press freedom, right of information), the example of India is symbolic: It has ratified all treaties but it changed nothing for the press.

### Other proposals

- create press agencies ( one or several)
- become stockholder of a press company
- try to use the radio and the television in order to give a chance to lower classes to be informed.