

Update: NewsWatch Canada  
submitted by Jacqueline Mosdell

NewsWatch Canada is a public-interest media-monitoring project based in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University. It is co-directed by Donald Gutstein and Robert Hackett. Our purpose is to assess how well the news media cover issues of significance to Canadians. Our goal is to evaluate, in methodological rigorous ways, the comprehensiveness, independence and diversity of Canada's press, at a time of growing media concentration and declining resources for investigative journalism.

For our first three years we operated as Project Censored Canada. Like Project Censored in the US, PCC publicized an annual list of the top ten under-reported stories in the major news media. In 1996 we broadened our scope to study patterns of under- and over-reporting, and changed our name to NewsWatch Canada.

Each spring, upper-level students in the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University undertake content analyses of major Canadian daily newspapers and (occasionally) television news broadcasts.

They are attempting to assess how well our news media report on issues and events of significance to Canadians. Our work focuses on blind spots -- issues and events overlooked by the dominant media -- as well as double standards, where different

groups or perspectives are afforded unequal coverage. After vetting, the studies are published in report or pamphlet form, and posted on our Web site. Since 1996, we have produced several such research reports. In the near future, we will be releasing a report on a major Vancouver newspaper, which has recently undergone a change in ownership and in presentation style.

NewsWatch Canada plans to release a commercial book in late 1998, which details our research to date. Our research can also be viewed on our Web site at <http://newswatch.cprost.sfu.ca/newswatch>.

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SEND US YOUR ACTIVIST SUCCESS STORIES

Progressive activists tend to focus on the limitations of the corporate media. We want to hear what success you had in getting word out in your local radio, TV or newspaper. Were you on a local talk show? Was your op-ed accepted? Did you hit a home run and get an article picked up by a wire service? Tell us the good news so we can motivate other activists to do the hard work of affecting public opinion. Send your article to CEM at P.O. Box 31847, Philadelphia, PA 19104 or [cem@libertynet.org](mailto:cem@libertynet.org). We'll print your success story in an upcoming edition of the Monitor.

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CEM Clipping Service - You!

In February 1998, Scripps Howard syndicated a 1000 word opinion piece by George Gerbner to over 400 media outlets. A syndicated radio interview by FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) was syndicated to approximately 100 radio stations. Op-ed pieces appeared in the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Syracuse Herald American. We would like to keep track of these mentions, but CEM cannot afford the luxury of a clipping service. You can play an important role by clipping any article you see on our work, whether it be in a newspaper, magazine or newsletter. Date the article and mention where it came from. If you hear us on radio or see us on TV, send the name of the station and a brief description. A postcard is fine. Be sure to include your name and phone number in case we need more information.

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## CEM in the Mass Media - You!

CEM, as its name implies, is a movement. As such, we all have a role to play.

So what can the average person do? There are no magic bullets, but the mass media is more accessible than most people realize.

Let's take a look at newspapers. There are approximately 1600 daily newspapers in the U.S. Each newspaper should have an editorial page. This is a very important section. In addition to the letters to the editor section, you will find editorials and op-ed articles. Editorials represent the opinion of the editor; op-eds are longer issue-oriented articles and are generally written by guest columnists. Each section has an editor that acts as the gatekeeper.

You can play a very important role by identifying these people and sending them material on the subject of violence in media and its effects on children and the culture as a whole, diversity of media ownership, information about pending legislation, or any other area in which CEM is active. See the list of materials available from CEM for some suggested reports.

Who are they and how do you find them?

Call up your local daily newspaper. You will probably get a switchboard operator. Ask the operator for the name of the person

who is in charge of the editorial page and ask them to put you through. When you reach the person in question, introduce yourself and ask if they have a few minutes. These people are often quite busy and under deadline pressure, and will appreciate the fact that you understand this.

If they have the time to talk, tell them that you are concerned about the issue of violence in the media (for instance) and that you would like to send in some material for consideration for publication as an op-ed.

At the same time, you could also ask them to pass your material on to the editorial staff and request that the paper consider an editorial supporting your position.

What will you achieve?

First, you have provided the newspaper editor with information on the issue from the CEM perspective. You shouldn't make the assumption that people in the news world are aware of all the facts surrounding every issue, because they aren't. Information can be very powerful.

Second, you have now started the beginning of a relationship with a reporter or editor by providing them with information. You have provided them with a source (CEM or