

all training programmes undertaken by the corporation.

#### CONCLUSION

In order to ensure that the entire SABC population takes ownership of this policy, it is proposed that the Board publishes this document and solicit input before its adoption.

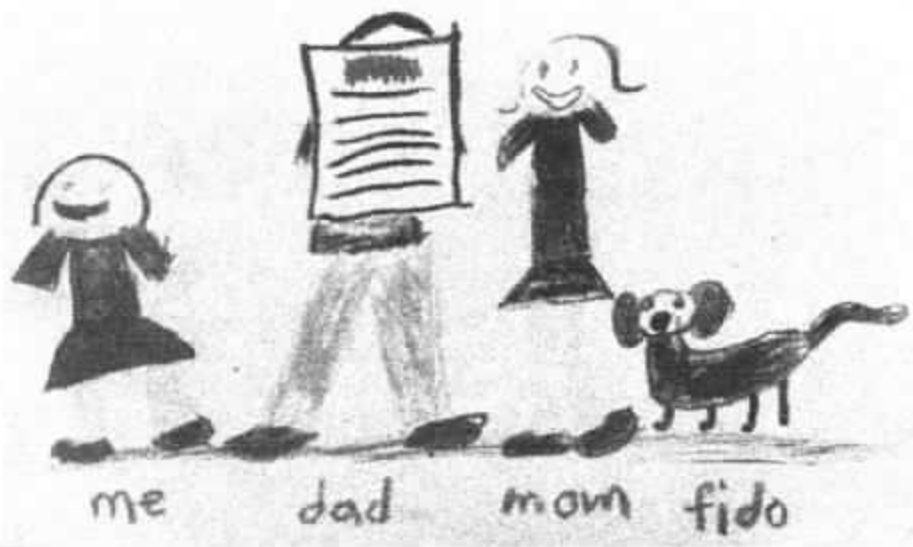
#### WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH COMMENT

We will be monitoring the SABC and see whether they are serious about promoting gender equality in their content and staff and to see whether their advertising is gender sensitive.

#### SEXIST ADVERTISEMENT FOR ARGUS SPORT SECTION

Is a family happiest when the man of the house is stuck away behind a newspaper?

The Argus failed to see the irony in publishing this drawing as an advertisement for their sport section. Women's Media Watch finds it puzzling that the Mother, the Child and the Dog are so pleased in this picture. The Argus obviously intends that their Sport Section should be the exclusive domain of men.



Women's Media Watch membership is open to all people with a commitment to bring the voices, faces and issues of the least visible women and youth into the media. We monitor and respond to the current portrayal of women in the media and work towards access to channels of communication for all women.

#### MEMBERSHIP FEES

To help cover the cost of the production of the newsletters and keep the project running we are asking members who can, to pay annual membership fees. These may be paid monthly.

R240.00 per annum per organisation in South Africa  
R120.00 per individual in South Africa  
US \$50.00 for members in other parts of Africa  
US \$90.00 for members in Europe/USA etc

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTRIBUTE ARTICLES, LETTERS, CARTOONS AND IDEAS TO OUR NEWSLETTER, OR COME INTO THE OFFICE AND BE INTERVIEWED ON YOUR VIEWS ON THE MEDIA.

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WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH IS A PROJECT OF MEDIAWORKS



# MEDIA WATCH

## NEWSLETTER

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

MARCH 8TH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY  
WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH LAUNCHES FIRST ELECTION  
POSTER  
WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH BUS TRIP  
FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER IS FORMED  
SABC POLICY ON WOMEN  
SEXIST ADVERTISEMENT FOR ARGUS SPORT SECTION

### IN THIS ISSUE

# MARCH 8TH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



International Women's Day is not celebrated to the same extent in South Africa as National Women's Day whereas National Women's Day is a public holiday, International Women's Day is not a public holiday.

This issue of our newsletter looks at the election poster that we produced for Women's Day, DEMAND BUDGET BACKED CHANGES, and the event that we took on the road, WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH BUS TRIP.

A group called the FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER (FPB) has had its inaugural meeting and Women's Media Watch has been asked to convene the (FPB) Working Group on Gender Race and Sexuality. Hassen Lorgat describes the aims of the group.

The Friends of the Public Broadcaster found out that the SABC has a little known SABC POLICY ON WOMEN. We know that it is little known as most people working there do not seem to have heard of it or seen it and it took the SABC three weeks to find a copy to send to Jane Duncan at the Freedom of Expression Institute when she requested it. So that you know about it, we are including it in the newsletter.

#### DEMAND BUDGET-BACKED CHANGES WOMEN'S MEDIA WATCH LAUNCHES FIRST ELECTION POSTER

For international Women's Day we felt it topical to put out an election-focused poster to draw public attention to the fact that women are the majority of voters and to call on them to question what their parties are doing for women. Knowing that election is always a time of empty promises by all parties we called for "budget-backed changes" to encourage women to pressure that parties to articulate how their budget planning benefits women.

NO. 3 1999

GENDER AND COMMUNICATIONS

MEDIA WORKS  
COMMUNITY MEDIA





The poster was distributed to a Union rally for Women's Day and two other marches as well as to Parliament and NGOs.

## FRIENDS OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER IS FORMED

*Should South Africans be more involved with supporting and encouraging the public broadcaster to serve their broadcasting needs?*

*Is the public broadcaster sufficiently cognizant of its duties as a public broadcaster?*

*These are some of the issues FXI has been pursuing and which have led them to consider whether it would be appropriate to establish an organisation to serve as friends of the public broadcaster. The concept is not new and similar groupings already exist in a number of other countries.*



**Hassen Lorgat**

*Hassen Lorgat, a unionist with considerable experience in broadcasting, is currently exploring and consulting with the broader community in an effort to establish whether an organisation of this nature is desirable. Update spoke to him about his own feelings on the subject.*

### What is Friends of the Public Broadcaster trying to achieve?

Friends of the Public Broadcaster aims to be a community based non-governmental organisation which would attempt to galvanise / mobilise the opinions, aspirations, of viewers and listeners, that is to mobilise the voice of users of public broadcasters and make representations on their behalf in the SA context. This means dealing mainly, but not exclusively, with the South African Broadcasting Corporation which, according to legislation that is being negotiated through parliament at this moment (the Broadcasting Bill, will formally transform itself from being a state broadcaster into a public broadcaster.

The law making process is filled with a number of opportunities and difficulties. The most difficult challenge for all users is that the SABC is in the process of "commercialising" while becoming a public service. I do not believe this can be achieved without government grants voted for by parliament, otherwise developmental goals articulated by the RDP would be lost to the demands and pressures of making the broadcasters self-sufficient. Thus goals such as nation building, developing national culture, contributing to democracy, development of society, gender equality, provision of education, and strengthening the moral and spiritual fibre of the society will be lost along the way because their delivery would not be profitable.

So users of the service, those who pay licence fees, should have a voice in ensuring that the public good is served by the broadcaster. This is merely a small attempt and we are only at the beginning stage of such a huge task.

### Are you only focusing on the public sector or does public interest broadcasting not go beyond only the public broadcaster?

True - public service obligations, we believe, must extend to all those licensed by the Independent Broadcasting Authority. This means that commercial radio, community radio, free-to-air television, even pay-to-

view television, are all obliged to broadcast in the interest of public and national development. They are compelled by law to conform to local content quotas which are part of their license agreements. They also have to conform to the code of conduct of all broadcasters, good corporate governance, etc.

But we have to start with the SABC which has been undergoing massive restructuring and commercialising at a rapid rate and, as mentioned earlier, at the time when it is introducing itself as a public service broadcaster. In the former process, privatisation is regarded as a key to "turning the corporation around". Thus out-sourcing of various departments' work, and cutting of staff is the norm. Incidentally the SABC has cut its staff by more than 50% over the past few years from about 6 500 to about 3 000. Now most of the production of programmes is done "out of house" by about 30 000 contractors. This must be a nightmare to manage but also raises question of how open and transparent the commissioning of programming process really is. On what criteria are independent or in house producers chosen to make programmes? What should be evaluated if the changes introduced over the past few years are good and effective to meet the challenges for a developing nation.

### But this sounds very difficult for so called ordinary persons to influence the policy making and implementation of broadcasters?

This is true. The broadcast medium is generally the primary source of information for the vast majority of people in most countries - especially developing countries. No genuine debate can happen in most democracies on issues that affect us without the use of the public broadcaster, and it is for this important reason that we say: broadcasting is too important an issue to be left in the hands of the SABC Board or the Minister. In part it is like a mirror and reflects and defines who we are as well as providing information and knowledge which impact on social, economic and political matters.

A formation such as FOPB should set up regular communication and meetings with the Board and the Minister to ensure the accountability and transparency as well as to ensure the achievement of transformation objectives in favour of the people.

But what methods of influence will you use, with the move of big companies entering the SA market and the public broadcaster being forced to become competitive?

The push for broadcaster to become "competitive" is not new and not necessarily a bad thing. But when it is part of an ideology that aims to eliminate government involvement in funding public services that are vital for development, then it is negative.

For 50 years the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund tried to impose their structural adjustment ideological agenda on poorer developing nations. In a nutshell, this agenda told countries to sell its national assets/resources to meet its debtors to international financial banks/institutions even if those debts were made or entered into with corrupt kleptomaniacs like Mobutu Seseka of the now Democratic Republic of Congo or Idi Amin of Uganda. A nation's future was sealed - and remains like this - when the dictators continue to rule from the grave.

The 1997 World Trade Organisation Agreement (the organisation formed after the GATT) on trade liberalisation of telecommunications have reinforced the ideology of the market. Thus profit, competition, efficiency are the keys to open the sections of the telecommunications economies of nation states. In most cases they are entering maiden territory - conditions which invite simple solutions to complex problems. They find state propaganda machines of the ruling party, inefficient and corrupt staff, and, generally speaking, poor service.

It is true that liberalisation will inject quick financial investment and upgrade services but experience internationally is beginning to show that that service will not be universally accessible to all.

Furthermore this process of globalisation results in highly increased ownership of the medium and, using "economies of scale" on a world level, the formats/programmes generated by these institutions are regurgitated in most countries with devastating effects on our culture, and development as people. In their pursuits of profits these companies are concentrating the various mediums and are buying up other companies at lightening speed.

Computers, internet, broadcasting, advertising, film, are already integrated and increasingly being owned by fewer and fewer companies. Some of these multinational giants are:

*continued on page 6*



# ON THE BUS

by: Anthea Carolus

On International Women's Day, 8 March, the Women's Media Watch organised an information campaign drive that took the form of a bus ride in a topless bus through the communities of Mitchell's Plain, Khayelitsha and Gugulethu. The aim of the campaign was to inform the community



*On the Women's Day bus*

about the existence of our organisations and the services that we offer. In this way we would be taking the message to the community and not expecting people to know about us, which many people did not know.

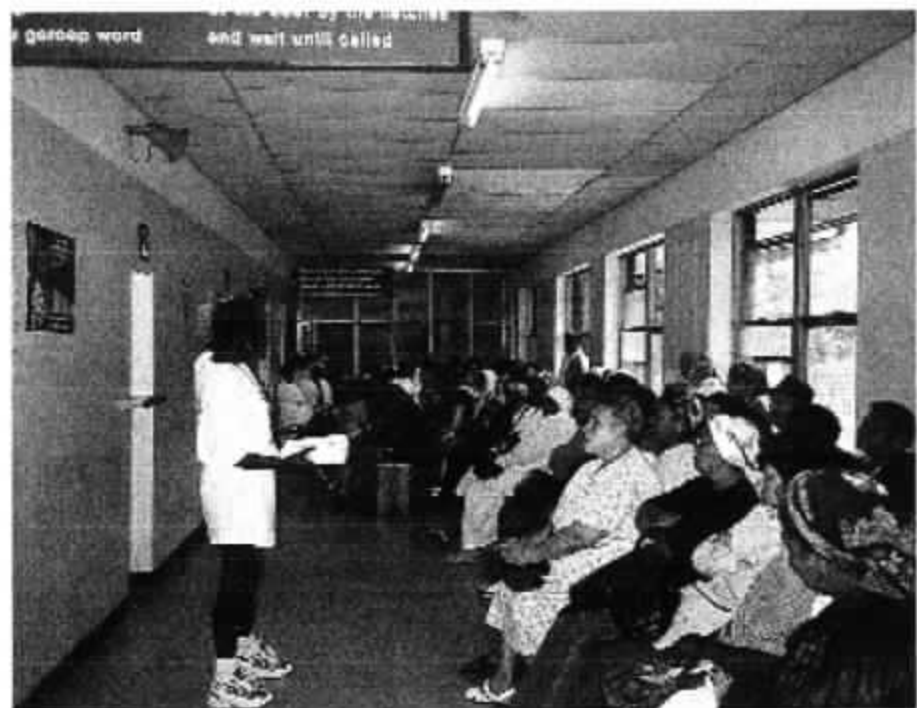
So at about 9.00 on a cold Monday morning, our red topper arrived in Mitchell's Plain and was greeted by an excited group of members. For some this would be the first visit to these areas and so the journey took on an excitement of its own. We decided to visit the day hospitals in each of these areas because of the great number of women that visit them everyday. We were not wrong. At each hospital we were faced with queues of people waiting for doctors or nurses to attend to them or their children. They were glad to have some entertainment and information.

At each venue we handed out newsletters and flyers and also put posters on the wall. As this was happening, women went around and started talking to women and men about their organisations and more importantly what abuse is and why it should not be tolerated. What became clear is that many women out there still don't know what abuse is and where to find help. With the help of members we were able to answer all their questions and queries and left contact details. We received very positive feedback from

the staff at hospitals who congratulated us for doing something to spread the message about abuse and International Women's Day.

Towards the end of the journey a tired group made their way back to Cape Town and so we spoke amongst ourselves about the day and what it meant to us. Everybody agreed that our campaign was a positive and necessary activity and that it should become an annual event. Some of the organisations even pledged to continue this work outside of the event. It makes sense after all, if people don't know that you exist how can they come to you for help? This has always been a debated issue within the Women's Media Watch and we hope that all those organisations who could not make it this time will join us on our next information drive through the other communities who need and deserve our services.

Many thanks to Mitchell's Plain Crisis Line, Mitchell's Plain Network, Nicro Women's Support, Ilitha Labantu, Mosaic and Rapcan for joining us. A special thanks to the Community Video Education trust for assisting with the video of the event which is now available.



*Old time Women's Media Watch Member and co-ordinator of the Mitchell's Plain Crisis Centre, Michelle Galant talks to women at a day hospital on Women's Day*



*Bringing the youth on board*



*Anthea in the centre and Michelle, left distributing posters*



Time Warner Inc. now a backer of eTV; Rupert Murdoch's News International; Sony; Finvest; Betelsman. Each of these multinationals reportedly have annual sales well in excess of 10 billion USD, an increasing percentage of which is generated outside the US. It is for this reason that South Africans must limit access of foreign ownership in our broadcasting as their pursuit of profits in effect would deny us achieving our goals of national development which I referred to earlier.

The chase for profits in broadcasting (in TV) especially means that global networks will concentrate on what is profitable: sports, entertainment and as CNN and BBC world are showing, the NEWS. What a friend calls "merit good" i.e. not the first propriety of users such as health care, education, culture and not directly demanded may fall to the foul tackle of the market fundamentalists. Scholars such as Shippers argue that users of the B services will increasingly become fragmented "more than they really wish", will watch inferior programmes than is collectively desirable and individuals will perhaps under-invest in their long term development because the beneficiary effects are only recognised in retrospect".

#### **But how will you influence the powers that be?**

The constitution and our history provides the right to lobby, protest, picket, petition, negotiate - in fact all lawful forms of making the powers that be to listen to the hitherto silent voices in the arena of broadcasting. But for this to be effective means that we need to build the organisation or a network of people committed to public service broadcasting.

#### **How are you linked to the Independent Broadcasting Authority?**

There is obviously no official link. The IBA is the referee if you like - it is there to judge whether all the broadcasters which are licensed through it, play by the rules of their licences.

It will need an active public to ensure that the public broadcaster plays by the rules as well. So we will attempt to be one of the voices of the users, in this aspect both of us will be watchdogs, but we will be a friend as well. The IBA, however, has to be impartial.

#### **Are there other organisations doing work like this in the world?**

Yes! The friends of the Canadian Broadcasting Association exists, and similar organisation exists in New Zealand. We intend to make contact and hopefully learn from them. But we have to crawl before we walk or run ...

More than organisations overseas, we are beginning to talk to theatre workers and actors, trade unions organising in the broadcast sector, NGO's concerned with human rights and development about the importance of the broadcast medium for a just and equitable society. The feedback thus far has been overwhelmingly in favour of such a project - but there is still much work to be done.

#### **What is your programme of action?**

We are busy talking to those who provide the service directly (labour and management) and some of those who use the service (organisations who use the service for developmental goals and those action groups who believe the media can be fairer/more just to them or their cause). How to canvas the views of so-called ordinary households at this stage is difficult.

If we are to be a friend and watchdog then we need to get to know who the SABC really is. Get the SABC to say what it stands for on the points raised above so we can measure their performance. If we don't know we cannot measure. So the battle for greater transparency and greater public accountability is necessary. For example the broadcaster says it will deliver accessible broadcasting services of equal quality to all its audiences. How is this practically done - without hiding behind the cry: we have no money? But for now it means that we can use the law making process to get a clearer picture of the role and function of users of the services like FOPB is. We may get clarity regarding what its campaign activities, objectives, as well as the structure should be. But this is a process and it must begin somewhere.

In part this means we must begin with knowing the institution (SABC and the workers as I said earlier). At the same time we must be reading the policy making documents and relevant legislation pertaining to the sector (IBA Act, Broadcasting Bill, Batho Pele, etc.) and contributing to the debate. Our voice should not be silent. A number of meetings will be held to clarify matters.

We are exploring - for practical activities and campaigns - how to involve so called ordinary people through inter alia, workshops, conferences, monitoring of local content and bias, etc. We are also looking at taking up so called consumer issues - license problems, access to the services maybe even poor reception in some regions.

But by beginning to involve users of the services in a critical manner - more clarity will prevail. To begin with it would mean demystifying the media and all the regulations that govern its work. We have to simplify and develop a strategy on using the regulator (Independent Broadcast Authority Act) and to ensure it is user friendly to all users as well as workers in the broadcasting services, and licence payers.

*By Hassen Lorgat*

## **SABC'S "HIDDEN" POLICY ON WOMEN**

Ask anyone at the SABC whether they have heard of the SABC's policy on Women and mostly you will be told that they have not. Here it is, a little-known document that would do well to be implemented.

#### **PREAMBLE**

The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) recognises that men and women are equal.

The corporation also recognises that due to factors related to the country's past dispensation, different people were portrayed in an unequal manner in programmes broadcast by the SABC's radio and television services. Women, in particular, have been portrayed in a manner inconsistent with equality with men.

In order to reverse the status quo, the Board of the SABC has seen it necessary to institute a policy to ensure that all persons are presented and portrayed in a manner that is not denigrating in all programmes, including advertisements, broadcast on the SABC's radio and television.

The policy will be observed by all employees of the SABC, freelance and temporary staff, decision-makers at all levels and entities that do business with the SABC.

The SABC Management will be empowered to develop guidelines and codes of conduct from time to time, to ensure compliance with this policy.

Management will also enforce compliance with the policy or subsequent guidelines and codes of conduct as well as adjudicating in instances of different interpretations in the application thereof.

#### **PROGRAMMES AND ADVERTISEMENTS**

In all its programmes and advertisements, the SABC must:

- \* Reflect in a non-stereotype manner the place that South African women occupy in society, recognise their role in the various spheres of life, their intellectual and emotional equality;
- \* Reflect cultural and historical circumstances in a manner that does not encourage perpetuation of wrong-doing;
- \* Ensure that notions of "women's and men's issue" will not be perpetuated;
- \* Ensure that sexist language is not used;
- \* Develop training programmes to sensitise and educate all its employees, particularly those occupying decision-making positions, on ways that will ensure successful implementation of this policy.

#### **CORRECTIVE ACTION**

In order to ensure that the composition of SABC staff reflects the corporation's endeavour to achieve gender equality, a target of 40 percent of its staff being women, at all levels, will be achieved by year 2000.

#### **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The SABC will institute special training programmes aimed at empowering women and will ensure that women are adequately represented in