

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF INTERNATIONAL REPORTING

Negative portrayals of visible minorities occur most commonly in local and foreign news reporting.

Images: As for foreign news, the perceptions of Asia and Africa as places of poverty and filth, inculcated in the Canadian school system, carry over easily into the reporting of these places. Charitable institutions have perpetuated these images of destitution in their appeals for aid money, with posters of emaciated and ragged children.

Impressions: The cumulative effect of such international reporting is to make Canadians very negative about persons of Asian and African descent in Canada. Sometimes the press itself connects foreign and local events in a very impressionistic way. For example, the Federation of Sikh Societies of Canada told the Committee of a newspaper report on violent rebellion in the Punjab, placed beside a report of a Sikh male allegedly raping a white female in Canada. The same size of type was used to headline both stories.

Overtones: Another concern identified by some witnesses was the tendency of the media to portray some foreigners in stereotyped fashion. For example, the Canadian Arab Federation complained bitterly about the overtones of fanaticism and violence which characterize reporting from the Middle East. They pointed out that Arabs who carry out raids were termed terrorists, while Israelis engaged in the same activity were termed commandos. Partly reflecting Western resentment of the oil cartel headed by Arab nations, newspaper cartoonists indulged in their penchant for caricatures by drawing greedy sheiks and bomb-throwing guerillas. On the other hand, there has been criticism of the allegedly biased media coverage of the Israeli incursion into Lebanon in 1982.

RECOMMENDATION:

Media institutions should expand their international reporting as recommended by the recent Royal Commission on Newspapers and improve the quality by broadening the perspectives of their editors and correspondents.

RECOMMENDATION

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