

**WORKSHOP REPORT: CANADIAN MEDIA COVERAGE
OF THE AMERICAS**

March 2, 2001

Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada

The public workshop on Canadian media coverage of the Americas was organized by the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL) and co-sponsored by Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication. The meeting was made possible with the generous support of the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (CCFPD). The event was held less than two months prior to the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, and thus presented a timely opportunity to bring together journalists, editors and producers from the Canadian and Latin American media, as well as policy analysts and academics specializing in Latin American affairs, to discuss past and present Canadian media coverage of the Americas, and to look ahead to key upcoming regional issues.

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Nobina Robinson, Executive Director of FOCAL, introduced the primary goals of the workshop: to further interest in the Americas in order to nurture more dynamic media coverage, and to identify strategies to overcome the obstacles faced by journalists in reporting on the region. As an organization dedicated to deepening Canadians' awareness of hemispheric issues, FOCAL has identified the Canadian news media as a key potential ally, but, at the same time, has become increasingly concerned with its relative lack of in-depth coverage of the Americas. In conceiving and designing the event, FOCAL hoped to bridge the gap between the Canadian news media and the work of independent organizations focusing on regional issues. Steve Lee, Executive Director of CCFPD, also underlined the importance of the workshop in meeting his organization's mandate to help Canadians contribute to foreign policy development, a relationship that depends to a large degree on the news media as a source and distributor of information pertinent to policy-making.

This report is a synopsis of the key themes discussed during the workshop. Note that in this report, the term 'regional' refers to the western hemisphere (i.e. the countries of Latin American and the Caribbean). The key themes addressed at the meeting included:

- Coverage of the Americas in the Canadian media: Does it meet the demands and needs of Canadians? How has it evolved in recent years?
- The driving forces behind coverage of the Americas within the Canadian media: What types of stories are covered and why?
- What are the challenges to deepened and expanded coverage of the Americas, and what

2

