

conditions in Colombia was in 1998. As to why this has been the case, she noted the absence of correspondents south of the United States: "We're just not there. Unless there are bureaus and reporters based in these regions, we're not going to have the coverage in our newscasts." She suggested it was time to re-evaluate where organizations like the CBC place their bureaus. She pointed out that CTV is planning to open up to six new bureaus, one of which may be located in Mexico. Participants agreed that this would be welcome news for proponents of Latin American coverage, since competition will entice other news organizations to consider following suit.

What determines foreign coverage?

Kelly McParland, Foreign News Editor at the National Post, challenged the audience to define what is meant by 'good coverage'. He suggested that good foreign coverage might simply follow trade, the economy, or population movement, and that if this is the criteria, Canadian coverage should clearly focus on the United States. Further, McParland suggested that editors "go where the loudest noise is", and the loudest noise has not been in Latin America for some time. It was also suggested that the media cannot and should not generate interest on its own since it is in the business of selling news - society has to develop an interest first.

Stewart Muir, National Editor of the Vancouver Sun, stressed that editors need to believe that their efforts are gaining readers. They tend to look for things that are visually interesting because the audience is more visually oriented. Also important is the narrative structure and the reporter's ability to enhance reader engagement. For example, Brazilians dressed in Mountie uniforms protesting Canada's beef ban entices readers to read on and engage in the dry facts of the story. Newspapers also search for timeliness and exclusivity in order to enhance the paper's self-importance and professional status. As well, geographic proximity and regional interests plays a role; people need to have an affinity with a region in order to seek news about that region. Particularly on Canada's West coast, where Asia runs far deeper in citizens' consciousness, raising a Canadian affinity for the Americas as a region may be difficult.

Evan Dyer, Reporter for CBC Radio, agreed with the assessment of a continuous decline in foreign coverage since the 1970s. Now, in a time of ebbing foreign coverage, he explained, geography must count for something, and coverage of Canada's own hemisphere should increase. Still, the problem remains that Canadians are the only people in the hemisphere that don't consider themselves to be 'Americans'. Dyer compared Canada to a bungalow separated from its Latin American neighbours by the United States high-rise, and felt the United States served as a barrier to information about the Americas.

Conclusions: Challenges to Improved Regional Coverage

The general sentiment among panelists and members of the audience was that Latin American and Caribbean countries, and hemispheric issues in general, have not been a priority for the