

### *Is there an appetite for regional news?*

Paul Knox of the Globe and Mail reacted to the criticism of Canadian coverage of the Americas by asking for a show of hands in the audience of those who had ever written a letter to the media requesting more coverage of the Americas. When very few hands were raised, he suggested that there is a simple lack of demonstrated appetite for regional coverage. If a group such as the symposium's audience—with a vested interest in the Americas—has not voiced its interest to editors and producers, it is difficult to expect the media to make the region a priority.

Knox also challenged participants not to generalize about 'the media' as a whole. "We have to be really rigorous about defining what it is we expect from the different segments of this monster that we call the media." In this way, Knox underlined the importance of directing criticism and comments at specific newspapers and television stations instead of 'the media' in general, and not to bundle every newspaper and television station into one category. Each news organization is a separate entity in and of itself, with interests and goals different from all other news gathering organizations. As such, if we are to reach an understanding between what the audience and the media organizations expect from each other, a dialogue must be formed between a specific newspaper or television station and its audience on a one-to-one basis. Knox also suggested that those serious about the Americas are able to find extensive information on the internet with relative ease.

### **The Quebec City Summit of the Americas 2001: What's to cover?**

Paul Knox introduced three important themes in covering the Quebec City Summit: 1) An assessment of the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) within the context of Canada's current relations with the US and Mexico; 2) A discussion of the fragile state of democracy in the Americas, as well as recent political and economic reforms in the region; and 3) The role of the small Caribbean nations in pushing for trade to be the focus of previous summits. Ironically, the Caribbean is "one of the great black holes for Canadian journalism" despite the fact that Canada has strong ties to a number of countries through the Commonwealth. In covering the Summit, Knox challenged journalists to integrate the coverage of political and economic affairs, instead of separating the two topics and relegating economic news to the business section.

Jean-Michel Leprince of Radio-Canada suggested that summits themselves are of little interest to journalists. In general, journalists are frustrated with the focus on grandstanding during such events and, because of security reasons, the pool systems imposed on reporters that produce the same stories, quotes, and pictures. As a result, the colourful sideshows often become the main topic of interest. The sideshow in Quebec will be the protests—which may overshadow everything else, including coverage of the Americas—mostly because dramatic visuals are irresistible. What will get interest and excitement are "protesters in funny costumes trying to