

Women in Communications Workshop

Birds of a Feather...

The Fifth Latin American and Caribbean Meeting, in addition to social gatherings in cafes and conversations among friends, was full of meetings and various initiatives reflecting participants' interests. One of these was a meeting of journalists and editors, the purpose of which was to devise a common future strategy in the field of communications.

The presence of professionals from the commercial media and the alternative press gave rise to an exchange of experiences and thoughts, brought problems into the open and above all showed just how far the Movement has come in the last ten years.

The overall picture is encouraging. In Latin America there are more than a hundred alternative publications, supplements in important newspapers such as "Doble Jornada" in Mexico and "La Republica de las Mujeres" in Uruguay; feminist magazines like FEM, which has been going for fourteen years, and "Mujer y Sociedad" in Peru, which despite economic problems, has just completed its first decade. Fempress, the feminist news agency, has also been going for ten years and Isis International has consolidated its reputation as a channel of communication and information for and about women.

All this, plus many other examples such as the supplement "Gente" in the Nicaraguan newspaper "Barricada", and the variety of women's pages in newspapers all over the continent. Time

on radio and television complete the picture.

Once they had completed the overall evaluation, journalists participating then asked two important questions:

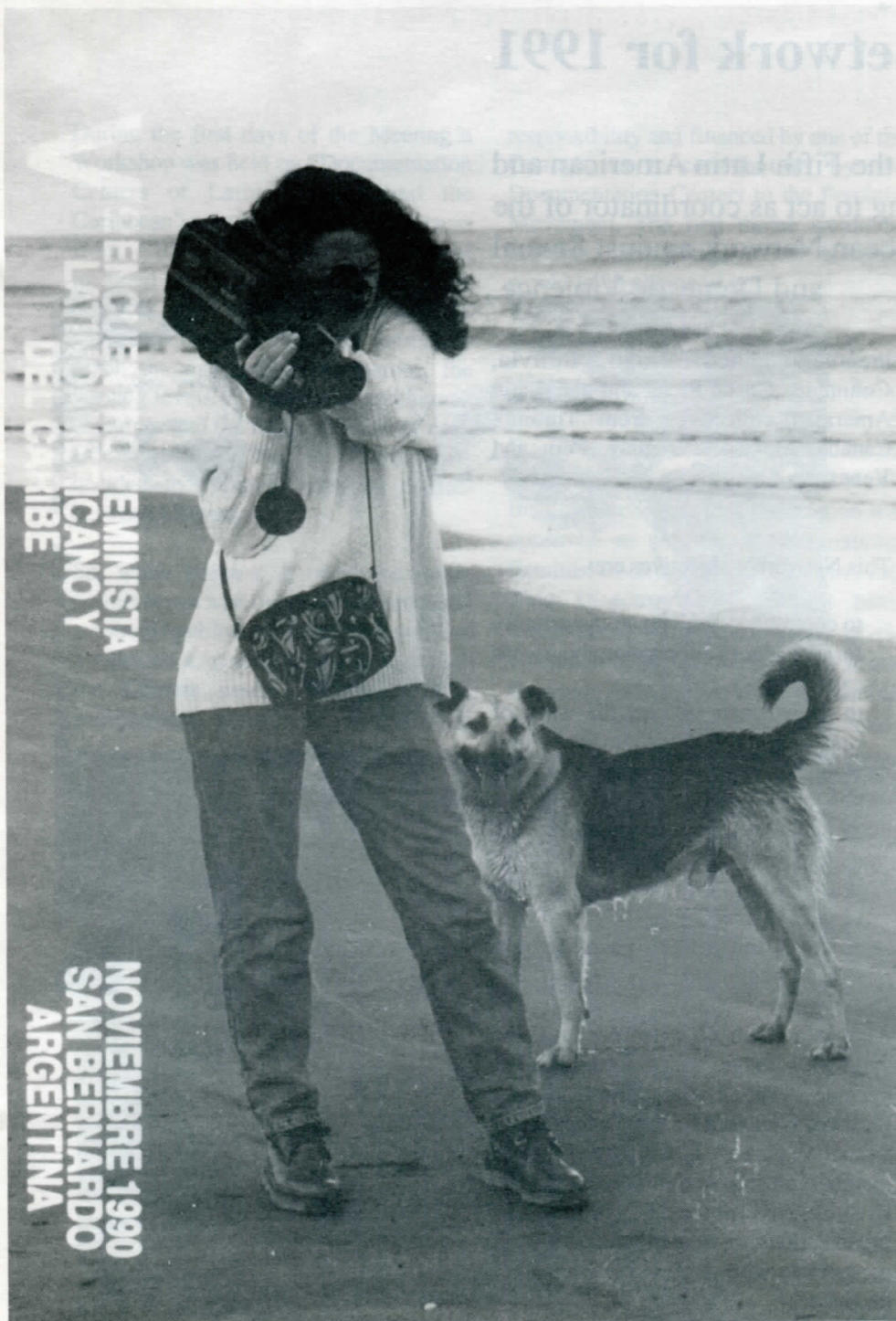
How could they incorporate the feminist proposal into contemporary debate and how could they forge links among the women in the alternative press, those in the mainstream media, researchers, politicians and members of autonomous feminist groups?

A lot of discussion revolved around the idea of feminism as a proposal for fundamental change in society, and therefore of interest to both women and men. This means that a gender perspective should be incorporated into theoretical and philosophical debates, into the formulating of developmental and public policies of each country.

Women as a News Source

For everyday communication, it was decided we needed to create "women's experts" or "women as a news source". This means that every time someone produces a report, they should ask themselves, And how does this affect women? or What would women think of this? or Where is there a women expert in these issues whose point of view we could seek? In this way we can make the presence of women felt in traditionally male fields such as politics and economics, while at the same time giving a wider vision of the





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consequences of each piece of information.

It was also pointed out how imperative it is that women's pages should deal with general themes from a gender perspective, and not typecast themselves in fundamentalist positions. In this sense, it is important to look critically at the style and language we use, and demand greater professionalism from ourselves, based on ethics which take into account various viewpoints.

Closer relations between women who work in different areas was considered essential for enriching the work of journalists, editors and communicators, to favor cooperation and joint action - such as campaigns, public debate, special reports, investigative journalism and wider dissemination of women's initiatives.

The workshop on "Social Communication" went along the same lines. Numerous journalists who were covering the Meeting came and added their thoughts, emphasizing the need to maintain exchange between feminist communicators and set up agreements with journalism schools to train young professionals with feminist awareness. In the end, both workshops agreed to establish September 14 as the "Day of Women's Image in the Media", in commemoration of the Brazilian program "Viva Maria", closed down by the Brazilian government after ten years.

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