

Media Recognition for a Freedom Fighter

Marie-Noelle Ferrieux Patterson, Vanuatu's internationally-respected ombudsman, is under increasing attack from politicians whose misdeeds and corruption she regularly exposes. Some are agitating to remove her from her position. But Ferrieux Patterson's work has received welcome recognition from an unexpected source, the region's main news media organization.

Meeting in Port Vila, the Vanuatu capital, for its annual convention, the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) broke from precedent. It awarded Ferrieux Patterson for her fearless efforts to use her knowledge of the law and accounting to bring into the public domain questionable practices by people in public office. She was hailed for her determination to make sure her findings continued to be available to the local news media and the people of Vanuatu.

Ferrieux Patterson herself had praise for the Vanuatu news media. The independent newspaper *Vanuatu Trading Post* had shown courage and determination to publish the truth through the publication of her reports, she said. She also thanked Radio Vanuatu for detailed interviews. The growing role of the *Pres Klab blong Vanuatu* had contributed to letting the public know how important a free press is to the nation, she added.

The convention, hosted by *Pres Klab blong Vanuatu*, saw the association unanimously adopt plans to take it into the new century. They included:

- Setting up radio, television, newspapers and magazines, and national associations groups;
- Electing its first president from Fiji, William Parkinson, the managing director of Communications Fiji, operators of four national FM stations in Fiji and two in Papua New Guinea;
- Launching a major programme to train more Pacific Islanders as journalism trainers and educators;
- Launching pioneering training on the use of the Internet for both print and broadcast media on the region;
- Next year's PINA convention will for the first time be held in the French Pacific, with French Polynesia winning the bid to host it in Papeete. It reflected the growing role both the New Caledonian and French Polynesian news media are playing in PINA.

Women Take Back the Media

A new movement called "Take Back the Media" urges women to consciously support independent and alternative media and to fight corporate image factories which spread disempowering images of women. The campaign describes today's media as "a dangerous landscape of images that work to communicate powerlessness in women by continuing to represent women as victims." Women are trying to flourish in an environment where they are bombarded with negative images. These images don't depict women accurately—whether they are women in your community or across the world. The goal of the "Women Take Back the Media" campaign is to provide an alternative to confusing, misleading, and harmful images of women and to connect media makers producing alternatives. The campaign suggests that supporters use creative ways of showing their support for positive images of women in media. In particular, it asks supporters to:

- Wear a photo button depicting a positive image of a woman to provide an example of a better way to represent women.
- Purchase media with positive images of women—be it video, magazines, newspapers, music, computer, etc.
- Send a photo of a woman to show your vision of the future for women, for use in their video tapestry of women entitled "Beyond Beijing: The International Women's Movement."

(Source: *off our backs*, June 1997)