

A Strategy for Change

Women must devise an overall strategy for change in the information and communication order of the world, says Marilee Karl of ISIS. Our goals are clear, she adds, we want media which are responsive to our needs as women, which enable us to communicate with each other about our lives and experiences, which give us the information we need to make choices and decisions, which do not

distort, belittle or demean women or confine us to stereotyped behavior and roles; media in which women participate and share in determining the content, in decision making and in control.

How can we obtain these goals, asks Karl? Is it through reform of existing structures, radical change, creation of alternative networks or through work on several levels at once?

Some voices are now calling for women's participation in the New International Information Order in what seems to be a process similar to that of "integrating women into development". This call declares Karl must be carefully analyzed, otherwise women may end up being "integrated" into a new international information order as detrimental to themselves as their "integration" into much of "development" has been ...

According to the writer, the "integration" or participation of women in a male-dominated system is not sufficient, other basic changes are needed as well. These changes involve trying to get more media coverage about women, more stories and positive images of women in the press in order to help change public attitudes as well as women's self-images.

But, warns Karl, attention must be given to the quality of the coverage as well as to the quantity. The media could very easily increase the amount of information about women without becoming any more responsive to their needs. Moreover, pressure should be exerted on the media to discontinue those practices most damaging to women — like

sexist ads, the use of sexist language in journalism, etc ...

Hand in hand with these efforts, says the writer, is the patient work of research and documentation of the anti-women bias of the media and the collection of data on the negative image of women in the media, on the lack of appropriate information and on discrimination of women in media jobs.

This is the new material for consciousness raising and changing public opinion, declares Karl. Awareness that media images are taken for granted and accepted even by women themselves is a first step for enlisting support and organizing to bring changes in the media's treatment of women.

* The following article is an abridged version of a piece written by Marilee Karl for **ISIS, an International Women's Information and Communication Service**. It was published in 1983 (p.189) in their Resource Guide for Organization and Action. Entitled "**Women in Development**" this Guide has sections on Women and Multinationals — Rural Development — Health — Education and Communication — Migration and Tourism — Latest Resources.