

the *liberating* alternative

cem
cultural
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movement

P.O. BOX 31847
PHILADELPHIA PA 19104

The Cultural Environment Movement (CEM) is a non-profit coalition of independent organizations and supporters in every state of the U.S. and 57 other countries on six continents. Its over 150 affiliated and supporting organizations and its individual supporters represent a wide range of social and cultural concerns. But they are united in working for freedom, fairness, diversity, responsibility, respect for cultural integrity, the protection of children, and democratic decision-making in the cultural mainstream.

Scotch patriot Andrew Fletcher once said: "If one were permitted to make all the ballads, one need not care who should make the laws of a nation." That was at a time when "ballads" - the myths and stories of a culture - were hand-crafted, home-made, community-inspired. Today, they are the products of a complex mass-production and marketing process. Our children are born into a cultural environment created mostly by a small group of conglomerate storytellers who have little to tell but a great deal to sell.

This has far-reaching implications for human socialization and governance. Communication channels multiply but technologies converge, media merge, staffs shrink and creative opportunities diminish. Cross-media conglomeration reduces competition and denies entry to newcomers. Fewer sources fill more outlets more of the time with ever more standardized fare. Alternative perspectives vanish from the mainstream.

Other distortions of the democratic process include the promotion of practices that pollute, drug, hurt, poison, and kill thousands every day; portrayals that dehumanize and stigmatize; cults of media violence that desensitize, terrorize, and brutalize; stories that polarize and spur the growing siege mentality of our cities but ignore the drift toward ecological suicide, the silent crumbling of our infrastructure and the widening gaps in the richest country that already has the most glaring inequalities in the industrial world.

The CEM Founding Convention in St. Louis, Missouri, March 15 -17, 1996, hosted by Webster University, was the most diverse representation of leaders and activists in the field of culture and communication that ever met in the U.S. It was greeted by George Gerbner, founder and chair of CEM, and heard keynotes by speakers including Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, writer and ecologist Bill McKibben, Washington Post columnist Dorothy Gilliam, Sumi Sevilla Haru, first national Vice President of the Screen Actors Guild, Keyan Tomaselli, University of Natal, South Africa, Riane Eisler, author and cultural historian, and Dr. Cees Hamelink, Director of the Centre for Communication and Human Rights, Amsterdam. All had the same message: people must take control of the cultural environment and shape it to meet human needs.

The Culture Wars are heating up and, exploiting legitimate concerns, are threatening to take us in a dangerously repressive direction. CEM offers the liberating alternative. Join it today. Send your name and address to P.O. Box 31847, Philadelphia, PA 19104, or fax it to (215) 387 1560, or post it to

~~hmesley~~@libertynet.org.

CEMAD

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CEM is a non-profit coalition of independent organizations in every state of the U.S. and 57 other countries on six continents. It represents a wide range of social and cultural concerns united in working for freedom, fairness, diversity, responsibility and democracy in media.

Scotch patriot Andrew Fletcher once said: "If one were permitted to make all the ballads, one need not care who should make the laws of a nation." That was at a time when "ballads" - the myths and stories of a culture - were still hand-crafted, home-made, community-inspired. Today, they are the products of a complex mass-production and marketing process. Our children are born into a cultural environment whose dominant story tellers are a small group of global conglomerates that have little to tell but a great deal to sell.

This has far-reaching implications for human socialization and governance. Media coalesce into a seamless, pervasive, stereotyped and increasingly centralized, homogenized and globalized cultural mainstream that has drifted out of democratic reach. Technocratic fantasies of an "information superhighway" are more likely to speed than to reverse that process.

The Cultural Environment Movement was founded by George Gerbner to confront that crucial challenge. The Culture Wars are heating up and exploiting legitimate concerns such as the irresponsible barrage of media violence that justifies repression, taking us in a dangerous direction. CEM offers the liberating alternative. Its formal Founding Convention March 15-17, 1996, in St. Louis launches a broad movement toward a time when all children will be born into a cultural environment that is reasonably free, fair, diverse, and non-damaging.

The distinguished group of keynote speakers includes The Rev. Dr. Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary, National Council of Churches; Dorothy Gilliam, *Washington Post* columnist and Immediate Past President of the National Association of Black Journalists; Robert McChesney, historian and author of *Telecommunications, Mass Media and Democracy*; Sumi Sevilla Haru, Immediate Past President of the Screen Actors Guild; Riane Eisler, cultural historian, author of *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History our Future*; Lynn Curtis, President of the Eisenhower Foundation; Keyan Tomaselli, Director, Centre for Cultural and Media Studies, University of Natal, Durban, South Africa; Nicholas Johnson, former FCC Commissioner (invited); and Teresa Heinz, Chair, Heinz Family Philanthropies (invited).

Places are limited. For an invitation to the Founding Convention, fax mailing information to (215)-387-1560.

The Founding Convention of the Cultural Environment Movement will be held at Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, on March 15-17, 1996. For more information call 215.387.5303.



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