

DRAFT FOR COMMENT
(Revised 2/24/91)

A CULTURAL ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT? WHAT, WHY AND HOW.

3 "Media" are no longer separately produced and selectively used local communications. They are coalescing into an integrated system transcending local and even national boundaries. Most new technologies proliferate channels but further concentrate control and content. Massive systems of messages and images dominate the common cultural mainstream. ~~That historic change requires an environmental approach. The Cultural Environmental Movement provides such an approach to a freer, more diverse, and more democratic cultural policy.~~

2 Until recently the common culture was hand-crafted, home-made, community inspired. It is now largely mass-produced and mass-marketed. It is driven by increasingly restrictive industrial policy. Creative effort and local citizen action can enrich and occasionally even challenge it but only a change in cultural policy can free it.

START HERE → 1 For the first time in human history, a child is born into a cultural environment largely independent of the home, the school, the church, the community, the local culture, and often even of the native country. Most of the stories most of the time are brought to most children (and their families) not by parents, teachers, clergy or community with their own stories to tell but by distant conglomerates with something to sell.

4 This astounding development frames what we know, think, and do in common. It cultivates conceptions of reality according to its own image. It guides the making of publics and the shaping of public policy. It defines life's choices as profoundly as the physical environment decides life's chances.

The new story-telling is financed by a "levy" added to the price of goods we buy. We pay that levy whether we like it or not. It subsidizes -- and channels -- the entire cultural mainstream with all its news, information, and entertainment. For the advertiser it is a tax-deductible business expense -- deducted from the public treasury. For the consumer it is a hidden tax. For the citizen it is a denial of alternative perspectives and of participation in cultural decision-making.

Taxation without representation triggered the first American revolution. The same process on a larger scale and with a deeper human impact inspires the Cultural Environmental Movement.

Education without representation (?)

The Cultural Environmental Movement is concerned with vital issues of human socialization and action and do not fit marketing priorities. These include the cultivation of mentalities and behaviors that drug, hurt and kill thousands every day; portrayals that stereotype, marginalize, dehumanize, and stigmatize; the cult of media violence that desensitize, intimidate, terrorize and, when called upon, incinerate or pulverize; the drift toward the inevitable environmental crunch; the silent crumbling of our infrastructure; the costly neglect of vital institutions such as public education, criminal justice, the arts; the financial responsibility system; make-believe media politics ~~masquerading as democracy~~; the growing siege mentality of our communities and nation; and the ~~appalling~~ waste of human and natural resources concealed by slogans that wage "war" on everything except injustice and Third World conditions in our own midst.

The challenge of today's ^{information} cultural environment requires the building of a new coalition and a broad constituency to promote media literacy and education, place cultural issues on the socio-political agenda, and develop ways of participation in national and international cultural policy-making.

^{AGAINST}
The movement is to ~~counter~~ existing censorship and ~~efforts to extend it~~. It is to ~~join~~ ^{support} workers in the media fighting for creative and journalistic freedom and against the pressures and constraints that compel them to present life in the most saleable packages. ~~The movement is not for dictation but for liberation.~~ ~~more broadly~~

→ The Cultural Environmental Movement strives to encompass people and groups with a variety of aims and perspectives but a shared interest in the common culture and its freedom from centralized dictation - private as well as public.

We propose to build a new coalition and organization representing local media councils; teacher's and parents' groups; groups concerned with children youth and aging; women's groups; sexual, racial, ethnic and other minority and advocacy groups; educational, health, environmental, legal, and other professional associations; consumer groups and agencies; associations of creative workers in the media; and other citizen's organizations and individuals committed to broadening the scope and diversity of our cultural ~~values~~. ^{inclusive}

We intend to set up a steering mechanism that is ~~gender~~ ^{balanced}, ~~has significant minority representation~~, and provides a broad basis for exploration, consultation, coordination and action.