

To: "BigAlph" <bigalph@mindspring.com>
From: George Gerbner <ggerbner@nimbus.temple.edu>
Subject: Re: Your Invitation
Cc:
Bcc:
X-Attachments:

Dear Alan:

Thank you for your consideration, and very gracious response. I regret that you cannot accept the invitation to the digital conference, but am taking the liberty of trying your patience once again with another invitation.

I am founder and president of a nonprofit educational coalition. Here is a one-page description:

THE CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT

The Cultural Environment Movement (CEM) is a non-profit coalition of independent organizations and individual supporters in every state of the U.S. and 57 other countries on six continents, united in working for gender equity, general diversity, and democratic decision-making in media ownership, employment and representation.

Scottish 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 global mass-production and marketing process. Our children are born into a cultural environment created mostly by conglomerate storytellers who have nothing to tell but much to sell.

This has far-reaching implications for human socialization and governance. Channels multiply but technologies converge, media merge, staffs shrink and creative opportunities diminish. Fewer sources fill more outlets more of the time with ever more standardized and globalized 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; images that narcotize; 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 income gaps in the richest country that already has the most glaring inequalities in the industrial world.

CEM offers the liberating alternative, working for freedom, fairness, gender equity, general diversity, and democratic decision-making in media ownership, employment and representation.

Knowing your work and ideas since before as well as during and after Bellagio, I would like to nominate you to our Board of Directors at the next Board meeting. This is not a formality but, I hope, active (though

not time-consuming) participation in shaping the policies of the only grass-roots organization I know whose purpose is to address the issue of media monopolization and its implications for democracy. I think it is a fitting challenge for a leader in the arts, . I know you are overcommitted (who isn't -- of those who are doing anything...) but I hope that you will agree to discuss it further. I will be glad to visit you again in New York during intermission; that will at least give me another reason to see "Art" again. Any other time is fine, too.

Please let me know.

With best regards --

George

Dear George,

I'm embarrassed that I've taken so long to get back to you on your request, but I've really given it a lot of thought and I'm sorry to say that I just can't take on a new project at this point.

I know that you suggested a fairly ceremonial role, but, as you probably could tell from my involvement at Bellagio, I make it a habit not to enter into anything in name only. Instead, the projects I take on are those I can devote myself to actively. Unfortunately, I'm over my head right now with projects, and , in fact, you catch me at a time when I'm trying to simplify my life.

So, please forgive me, but I'm going to have to respectfully decline. I wish you all good things as you pursue equity and justice in the difficult area of media control, and, of course, I send you warm personal regards.

Sincerely,

Alan Alda

3620 Walnut Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6220

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