

## The Cultural Environment Movement

### THE FOUNDING CONVENTION AND ITS MANDATE

The Cultural Environment Movement (CEM) is a 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, united in working for freedom, fairness, diversity, responsibility, respect for cultural integrity, the protection of children, and democratic decision-making in the media mainstream.

CEM was launched in the fall of 1991 as an educational non-profit tax-exempt corporation. The first years were devoted to assembling a diversified Board of Directors and Advisers; disseminating information through direct mail, personal appearances, regional meetings, publications, and the news media; developing a database of organizational and individual supporters; and preparing for the Founding Convention.

The Founding Convention was held in St. Louis, Missouri, March 15 -17, 1996, in cooperation with Webster University and other co-sponsors and supporting organizations (see list below). A pre-Convention event, the first International Broadcast Standards Summit, heard from Sophie Cathelineau of the Conseil de l'Audiovisuel, Paris, France; Friedrich Ebert, media researcher, Berlin, Germany; Jill Hills, Professor of International Political Economy of City University, London, U.K.; Robert McChesney, historian at the University of Wisconsin; Matko Mestrovic, a consultant to Croatian radio and television; Colin Shaw, Director of the Broadcast Standards Council of Great Britain; Keith Spicer, Chair of the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Council; Marc Raboy, Professor of Communication at the University of Montreal; and Janos Timar of the Hungarian National Committee on Radio and Television. The moderator was Jeffrey Cole, Director of the Center for Communication Policy at UCLA, and the chair of a Summit panel was Mark Crispin Miller, Professor of Media Studies at Johns Hopkins University.

The Convention itself was an invitational working assembly of 267 delegates and other supporters from 15 countries gathered to consider the agenda for action. Keynote speakers included Joan Brown Campbell, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches; Riane Eisler, author and cultural historian; Fred W. Garcia, Acting Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy; *Washington Post* columnist Dorothy Gilliam; Sumi Sevilla Haru, First National Vice President of the Screen Actors Guild; Cees Hamelink, Director of the Centre for Communication and Human Rights, Amsterdam; Robert W. McChesney, Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin-Madison; writer and ecologist Bill McKibben; Colin Shaw, Director of the Broadcasting Standards Council of Great Britain; and Keyan Tomaselli, University of Natal, South Africa. All had the same message: people must take control of their cultural environment and shape it to meet human needs.

The program also featured storytellers, Native American dancers and musicians, Latin American singers and other artists, and representatives of women's, ethnic, labor, disabled persons and other groups, giving live demonstrations of CEM's aim to have all liberating voices speak for themselves and to share stories that have something to tell instead of only things to sell.

The delegates debated and approved The Viewer's Declaration of Independence, an international People's Communication Charter, and an organizational structure for CEM. Meeting for a full day in 15 Working Groups, the delegates also recommended an action program in various areas of concern, including media monopoly, independent production, education and media literacy, health promotion, religion, technology and ecology, labor, cultural diversity and integrity, children and family, aging, women and gender issues, racial and ethnic diversity, media violence, storytelling, and problems of media reform and advocacy.

Three documents present the mandate of the Founding Convention. They form the basis of CEM's policies and programs. *The Declaration* sets forth the compelling reasons for the coalition. *The Charter* spells out standards for cultural policy-making worldwide. *The Agenda for Action* makes strategic recommendations.

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Co-sponsors of the Founding Convention included Webster University, the host institution; the American Humane Association, Children's Division; Canadians Concerned About Violence in Entertainment (Toronto, Canada); Center for Children's Media; Center for Media Education; Center for Media Literacy; Center for Partnership Studies; Center for the Study of Commercialism; Citizens for Media Literacy; Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility; Foundation for Deep Ecology; International Association for Mass Communication Research; Media Action Network for Asian Americans; Media Education Foundation; Media Image Coalition; Media Watch, USA; Minority Media and Telecommunications Council; National Council of Churches; National Stigma Clearinghouse; National Storytelling Association; New Mexico Media Literacy Project; New World Foundation; Northlands Storytelling Network; Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force; Physicians for Social Responsibility; Public Media Center; and the Screens Actor Guild. A representative list of supporting organizations includes the Advocacy Institute; African-American Men and Boys Initiative; Albuquerque Academy; Alliance for Children and Television; American Federation of Television and Radio Artists; Artists for Recovery; Association for Media Literacy (Nova Scotia, Canada); Canadian Teachers Federation (Ottawa, Canada); Center for Communication Policy; Centre for Communication and Human Rights (The Netherlands), Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (South Africa); Chicago Media Watch; Coalition for a Responsible TV (Ontario, Canada); Columbus Center for Media Education; Council for Public Media; Environmental Media Association; FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting); Free Speech TV; Globalvision, Inc.; Infinity Dance Theater; Institute for Alternative Journalism; Institute for Culture of Croatia; Intercare Behavioral Health; International Development Research Centre (Ontario, Canada); International Institute for Regulations in Telecommunications (United Kingdom); Key of See Storytellers; Labor Council for Latin American Advancement; LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens; Marin Institute for Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug

Problems; Macedonia Family Life Center; Media Awareness Network; MEE Productions; National Alliance for Non-Violent Programming; National Coalition Against Television Violence; National Federation of Community Broadcasters; National Hispanic Media Coalition; National Political Congress of Black Women; National Telemedia Council; New Mexico Media Literacy Project; New Road Map Foundation; Peace Magazine; Project Censored; Princeton Media Education Project; Reason & Democracy/Committee to Save Public Media; Reel Women; Responsorbility; Rocky Mountain Media Watch; Science for Peace; Strategies for Media Literacy; St. Louis Journalism Review; Television with a Point of View; TV Free America; TV Tune-In, USA; Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press; World Association for Christian Communication, and the World Business Academy.

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