

WORKING GROUPS of the FOUNDING CONVENTION

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1 Who Is Telling All the Stories? Telecommunications Concentration, Media Monopoly

"Merger mania" has been the rule of the decade and is escalating virtually unchecked. While channels proliferate, ownership is becoming concentrated in a few mega-conglomerates. With every merger, entry is denied to new voices, and staffs are reduced. This Working Group addresses anti-trust and freedom of press issues.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Alliance for Cultural Democracy; the Center for Media Education; the Center for the Study of Commercialism; Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR); the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council; National Citizens Communication Lobby; Institute for Alternative Journalism; Project Censored; the Center on Speech, Equality and Harm; the Center for Media Education; the Institute of Alternative Journalism; the Media Access Project; and others.

2 Voices Against the Stream: Independents, Public Media and Other Alternatives

As media consolidate, fewer creative sources fill more outlets with less diverse but more conventionally marketable products. Independents, minority and alternative voices are squeezed out of the mainstream. This Working Group represents independent producers, artists, journalists, advocates of public broadcasting, media executives, scholars, political economists, and other leaders working for greater diversity of perspectives and voices in the everyday cultural environment.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Institute of Alternative Journalism; Continental Cablevision; Deakin University School of Visual, Performing & Media Arts (Australia); Diversity University; Globalvision; International Television Society; National Film Board of Canada Media Awareness Network; the New World Foundation; the Public Media Center; PR Watch; Real World Communications; Wilder Foundation; Working Together; Future Wave; and others.

3 Educational Imperatives: School Support, Media Literacy, Critical Awareness

Community support of schools and of their ability to launch much-needed new initiatives such as media education depend on a supportive cultural environment. Such an environment does not exist now. This Working Group confronts the problems of the image and commercialization of schools, and of the need for critical media literacy programs on every level.

Organizations to be represented in this Working Group include the Association for Media Literacy (Canada); the Center for Media Education; the Center for Media Literacy; the Centre for Literacy (Canada); the Citizens for Media Literacy; the Columbus Center for Media; the Foundation for Media Education; the National Telemedia Council; the Pacific Mountain Network TV Literacy Project; the Princeton Media Education Project; UNPLUG; the Strategies for Media Literacy; and others.

4 Health-Promotion and Damage-Prevention: the Cultural Frontier

The new frontier of health promotion and damage prevention is the cultural frontier. Most preventable illness, injury, and death are culturally induced. The promotion and use of damaging products such as tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, claim more victims than all other sources combined. Stereotyping and stigmatization of persons with physical disabilities and mental illness hurt still more people and families. Firearms pose a health hazard, but gun-toting heroes stalk the screens and pages of our entertainment media.

Organizations in this Working Group include the American Pediatric Association; Artists for Recovery; the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention; Ecopsychology Institute; Houston Health and Human Services; Intercare Behavioral Health; Karolinska Institutet Department of International Health and Social Medicine (Sweden); Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and other Drug Problems; the National Stigma Clearinghouse; Performers with Disabilities; Philadelphia Pediatric Society; Physicians for Social Responsibility; and others.

5 Religion As A Cultural Force vs Media as Religion

The pervasive misunderstanding and misrepresentation of religious convictions and motivations lead to cultural conflict, violence, and even to wars. The religious right presumes to speak for religious people in general and grabs political power. At the same time, the mass media present a world view complete with their own myths and values. This Working Group represents a diversity of religious traditions in American life and throughout the world, addressing the problems of religious perspectives in the cultural mainstream.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Center for the Study of Communication and Culture; the Episcopal Church Center; The Interfaith Alliance; the Jesuit Communication Project (Canada); Kaleidoscope Church and Community Partnership; the National Council of Churches; the Religious Public Relations Council; the American Jewish Committee; the American Jewish Congress; the United Church of Canada Division of Communication; the United Church of Christ Office of Communication; the World Association for Christian Communication; and others.

6 Ecology, Technology and the Information Superhighway: Who Pays the Price?

Technology, consumerism, the ecosystem, and information inequity present interrelated issues. Cultural representations of technology shape their applications. Major polluters and promoters of wasteful consumption, transportation, and energy control the mainstream of the cultural environment. Who could bring into every home the full story of the poisoning of the planet, the squandering of its resources, and the threat to the ecological balance on which life depends? Or the full story of who pays what price for and reaps what benefit from what kinds of "progress?" Instead of that story, technocratic fantasies promise a new abundance, pave the way for information superhighway robberies, marginalize the information-poor, isolate the information-rich, and deprive both of knowing the social and ecological costs of media-induced lifestyles.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Center for Ecoliteracy; Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility; the Foundation for Deep Ecology; the Environmental Media Association; the Chicago Media Watch; the Center for Cultural Activism; the Environmental Action Foundation; the Public Media Center; and others.

7 Labor Under Attack: Jobs, Work and Image

Employment opportunities, conditions of work, diversity, and the representation of labor in the media, are major concerns of organizations of the creative community and of working people everywhere. Real wages have fallen and unemployment and insecurity have risen. Profitable mergers and "downsizing" in telecommunications, as in other industries, erode diversity and deprive millions of voice and livelihood. Silence and inadequate representation in media hide these anomalies.

Organizations in this Working Group include the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists; the Screen Actors Guild; the Writers Guild of America, West; the Labor Institute of Public Affairs; and others.

8 Global Village or Global Dominion? Cultural Integrity and Human Rights

This Working Group will address the cultural implications of global marketing of audiovisual products, transborder communication and information flow, the role of media in societies in transition, the homogenization of cultures, and human communication rights around the world.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Centre for Communication and Human Rights (The Netherlands); Centre for Cultural and Media Studies (South Africa); Institute for Communication Research (Seoul, Korea); International Association for Mass Communication Research; International Organization of Journalists (Spain); International Public Relations Association (France); Obor Indonesia Foundation (Jakarta, Indonesia); National Literature and Arts Society (Punjab, India); Open University School of Media Studies (Jerusalem, Israel); Radio Venceremos (San Salvador, El Salvador); European Federation of Community Radios (France); the World Business Academy; and others.

9 Children, Youth, Aging, and the Family: Media from Cradle to Grave

Children and youth are greatly under-represented and, when shown, tend to be portrayed as defiant, violent and irresponsible. Older characters (65 and above) are also rarely seen (as prime-time television characters they are one-fifth of their actual proportion of the population), and are seen mostly as feeble or as victims, or both. The family is typically a middle-class consumer-oriented setting for stereotypic comic

situations, and absent when the focus is on serious action. Villains are typically older and darker and more "ethnic" than heroes. Saturday morning children's programs are the most violent, stereotyped, and hostile to parents and other adults, especially older women.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Alliance for Children and Television (Canada); the American Humane Association (Children's Division); Americans for Responsible Television; Children's Defense Fund; the Coalition for America's Children; the Center for Children's Media; the Center for Media Education; the Centre for Youth and Media Studies (Canada); UNPLUG; the Television Project; and others.

10 Women And Men: Gender Issues and Sexual Orientation

Gender is culture's symbolic response to the biology of sexual differences. Meanings ascribed to these differences are used to organize production, reproduction, and consumption. Women are the universal "minority." They are under-represented, sexually flaunted, commodified, and often shown as victims. Media frame stories secured by compulsory heterosexuality. This Working Group examines the meanings ascribed to gender and sexual orientation in the current cultural environment, and propose liberating alternatives.

Organizations include the Center for Partnership Studies; the Communications Media Consortium; Sexual Assault Program (City of Houston); the Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press; the Philadelphia Lesbian and Gay Task Force; GLAD; Media Watch USA; and others.

11 Affirming Diversity, Equity, and Justice: African Americans, Latino, Asian, Native American, and Other Ethnic and Religious Minorities

"Minorities" are not born. They are created by systematically depriving some groups of representation, resources, opportunities and power. Programs to rectify that process, feeble and timid though they were, are under attack. Organizations that extended the civil rights struggle to telecommunications come together in this Working Group to counter the gravest threat ever to media diversity.

Organizations in this Working Group include Media Image Coalition; the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council; the National Hispanic Media Coalition; NOSOTROS; the Media Action Network for Asian Americans; the American-Arab Anti-

Discrimination Committee; the National Association of Arab Americans; the American Jewish Committee; the American Jewish Congress; and others.

12 War and Peace and the Cult of Violence

Images of violence fill our homes and the minds of our children. This Working Group addresses the driving forces behind the unprecedented flood of violent images, and seeks a liberating alternative.

Organizations in this Working Group include the American Pediatric Association; Anger-Insight-Resolution; the Coalition for Responsible Television (Canada); the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention; Canadians Concerned About Violence in Entertainment (C-CAVE); Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (Peace Portfolio), Toronto, Canada; the Transformative Learning Centre, Toronto, Canada; the National Coalition on Television Violence; and others.

13 Storytellers in a Culture of Storysellers

Those who have stories to tell, rather than only to sell, work to recapture their role in a media-dominated culture. This Working Group represents some of the most creative members of the storytelling community responding to that challenge.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Key of See Storytellers; the National Storytellers League; the Northlands Storytellers Network; and others.

14 Advocacy: Communicating What Works

Activists know a great deal about what works and what does not work on the grass roots level. However, there is less knowledge of and faith in what works among the citizenry at large, and hence, little support for enlightened public policies nationally and internationally. This Working Group brings together experienced and successful leaders, scholars, and organizers to create a master list of recommendations for action on all levels.

Organizations in this Working Group include the Center for the Study of Commercialism; the Advocacy Institute; Citizens Action for Better Television (CABTV); the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation; and others.