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CEM SOLIDARITY CONVENTION 99

Plenary Session

Sunday, March 28, 1999

The first order of business was the presentation of Working Group Action Plans. At the Solidarity Convention the 14 Working Groups identified at the Founding Convention were solidified into four (4) groups.

*WORKING GROUP #1 *Who is Telling All the Stories? Telecommunications and Media Monopoly*

Chair Mike Morgan presented the recommendations to reflect extensive discussion based on the results of the previous CEM meeting on anti-trust issues. These issues are regarding (a) enforcing existing regulations, (b) enacting new regulations, and (c) pursuing public education efforts.

1. As an extension of this convention's theme of Solidarity, CEM should support key projects which already have some momentum, such as:

- a) legal challenge to the '96 Telecomm Act: perhaps specifically focused on digital channel giveaway, and/or station ownership caps;
- b) campaign for independent public television;
- c) Media Channel web site.

Methods of support could include:

- a) seed money or matching funds when available;
- b) publicity, both internally and with external constituencies;
- c) through regional mini-conferences (as noted in point 7);
- d) designating CEM members to act as liaison with these initiatives, and report back to CEM membership.

2. Continue and expand monitoring of (1) media content and (2) ownership patterns; expand CEM network and constituencies concerned with media ownership:

- a) coordinate with and help link complementary projects on these topics;
- b) identify, and connect with, other political action, watchdog, and media advocacy organizations;
- c) pursue and develop links with large organizations, such as religious congregations and trade unions, to disseminate media education materials and help them form media committees.

3. Expand use of the web and electronic technologies to share and disseminate information. (Use CEM as an archive/umbrella for research projects and for information on activism efforts).

- a) through the e-mail list for announcements (separate from list for debates);
- b) archive reports stored on CEM web page;
- c) set up regular online chats among members on selected topics;
- d) electronic and print newsletters.

4. Members should solicit volunteers (students and others) for activities such as:

- a) legal defense fund;
- b) monitoring projects;
- c) publications;
- d) community outreach.

5. Create a brief, accessible booklet that graphically illustrates media ownership concentration, what it means to ordinary citizens and their families, and how they can become involved with CEM. Similar booklets on other topics can also be created (e.g. on digital channels).

6. Each CEM member should strive to cultivate a journalist to help disseminate the CEM perspective on media concentration and other issues; also, funnel information to the Institute for Public Accuracy.

7. Regional events should be used to maintain focus on topics such as "*Our kids are not for sale (and neither are we)*"; or "*sustaining a democratic FCC*".

8. Distribute a listing of all convention recommendations and proposals in the next **CEM Monitor**, with a check list for members to 'sign up' for particular tasks.

COMMENTS: Comments included Jacques Brodeur's "strategy, strategy, strategy" motion to encourage CEM Board to develop a 1-5 year strategic plan. *Motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

WORKING GROUP #2 **Voices Against the Stream: Independents, Public Media, and Other Alternatives*
Chair Martha Richards presented these action plan recommendations:

1. To develop a strong and vibrant cultural environment movement, we need to encourage the participation of the full range of cultural workers, i.e. people working in the performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, and mixed media, in addition to television and film. The current language of the People's Communication Charter and the Agenda for Action seem to use the word "media" as an all-inclusive term for cultural activities. Since most people use the word "media" to refer exclusively to film and television, many potential supporters of CEM who read our literature, may not realize that we want to include them. Therefore, our working group recommends that we use the more inclusive phrase "arts and media" as often as possible in all CEM publications and resolutions. Also, we need to recognize that the struggle for the survival of the National Endowment for the Arts has many parallels to the struggle over the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and most nonprofit arts organizations face the same commercial pressures as public television groups. Many arts organizations have been working on these issues, and CEM needs to find ways to build alliances with them.

2. To encourage as much activism as possible, CEM needs to find ways to help activists contact CEM members about specific initiatives. CEM should attempt to code its mailing list by areas of interest and should develop a policy about sharing the coded portions with activists. In future conferences, time should be scheduled for people to recruit colleagues for specific initiatives. Also, activists should be given opportunities to publish announcements about their work in the **CEM Monitor**.

3. In the planning for future conferences, there should be a "call for special interest working groups" so members trying to initiate projects can get support and feedback.

4. We encourage members of CEM to contact the people in our working group for more information about the following activities:

The Public Broadcasting Trust - Contact Jerry Starr, Center for Social Studies Education
Phone: (412) 341-1967 E-mail: jmstarr@aol.com

Linking Public Access Television Stations Through the Internet - Contact: Mike Mic, President,
Progressive Grass Roots Worldwide Web/TV Network
P.O. Box 627, Woodland Park, CO 80866
E-mail: pgwwtvn@bemail.com

Micro-Radio Stations and Other Radio Issues - Contact Jesse Walker, Phone : (310) 391-2245
E-mail: j_walker@earthlink.net

Funding for Women in the Arts & Media - Contact: Martha Richards, The Fund for Women Artists
Phone: (413) 585-5968 E-mail: Womenarts@aol.com

*COMMENTS: *Recommendation #1:* - Jerry Starr requested to use CEM 6000 membership list for notification of citizens for PGWWTVN to get word out for added support.

-Bob Hackett stated CEM is really a network.

-Adam Ward recognized there are many unplugged cultural workers and institutions who are under attack that CEM needs to be a supporter or provide an umbrella for their non-electronic struggles.

-Jacques Brodeur stated previous statements were 100% legitimate and we need to stand up for CEM movement. However, he voiced the concern that we need not take financial and unwarranted time and resources away from CEM as a whole.

-Jerry Starr stated PGWWTVN is externally funded and needs access to those most identified by CEM.

-George Gerbner relays that CEM is inclusive name.

**Recommendation #2:* -Motion that as activists we share common goals and the criteria to use the CEM list should be compatible with those goals.

- George Gerbner seconds the motion and the recommendations by Starr and Richards.

- George Gerbner comments that all mainstream media are instrumental for human child development.

- Peter Wirth asks, "How will the list be used?"

- Jerry Starr responds, "We will not ask for money for one-time usage."

- Thomas Gardner states, "CEM Board should set a policy concerning usage of CEM membership list."

- Martha Richards agrees that policy must be developed by Board.

- Thomas Gardner recants that policy must be determined before list is shared with other organizations.

**Chair Baker rules to take vote on general recommendation of Working Group #2 with amendment by Gardner to be voted on and that a separate vote be taken on Starr's proposal.*

- Adam Ward asks for clarification and states, "Vote against this proposal only if you feel satisfied with the existing CEM definition."

- Thomas Gardner withdraws amendment.

**Vote on general recommendation of Working Group #2 and Starr's proposal unanimously carries.*

WORKING GROUP #3 *Advocacy: Communicating What Works

Chair Larry Hoffman presented recommendations in terms of *problems* facing CEM and *solutions* in which CEM should engage.

1. CEM's isolation is a major problem and the lack of recognition by the public that they own the airways. Solutions:

- a) coalition with other organizations
- b) enlist sympathetic persons from within the industry and include labor unions
- c) partnership with parents, teachers, and unions

2. CEM problems are:

- a) many viewers will not agree with CEM values, assumptions or efforts.
- b) viewing people as mass consumers, not citizens
- c) silence and powerlessness of citizens, especially minorities

Solutions include:

- a) avoid confrontation and promote tolerance ("tolerance sells")
- b) effective channeling of people's discontent
- c) CEM needs to coordinate letters to editors in major global markets
- d) provide a 1-900 telephone number where people can call to ask questions, make comments, chat

3. CEM problems are:

- a) lack of specific mobilization of youth
- b) abuse of First Amendment by irresponsible media corporations

Solutions include:

- a) CEM student movement
- b) more class action litigations

4. CEM problems are the isolation of CEM members and the commercial sponsorship and advertising in schools (in exchange for corporate support. Solutions:

- a) collect and provide a bank of resources and articles on important issues through CEMNET website
- b) adequate government funding of education
- c) publicize the real costs

5. CEM has the problem of appearing negative about programming (*toxic--deleted) *sexism, racism and violence.

Solutions:

- a) focus on, and reward, positive productions and media actions
- b) organize commercial (*boycott--deleted) *censorship of sponsors

6. CEM suffers from competition among activist groups for money and not enough focus on international differences.

Solutions include:

- a) increase coordination of funding
- b) promote distribution of international media products and news

7. CEM has a problem with separation of activism and scholarship (i.e. not enough critical thinking and planning).

The solution is to gain mutual support of activism and scholarship.

8. An overall CEM problem is that corporations have the same rights as individuals. The solution is to publicize studies of negative aspects of corporate conglomerates.

COMMENTS: Gerbner, Richards and Pecora spoke about advisability of "should" language and the responsibility for implementation. It was agreed that "will" be substituted for "should".

***Recommendation #1:** Rose Dyson spoke of her experience in Canada with 1-900 numbers to channel information and answer questions. Patricia Herdman agreed the 900 number in Canada has been a good idea.

***Recommendation #2:** Thomas Gardner stated that most people voice media discontentment. Commercialism and privatization are taking place in all educational institutions. Cultural diversity needs promotion on international news.

***Recommendation #3:** Chair Baker ruled to delete the word "boycott" and replace with "censorship."

*Advisory Motions: -Jacques Brodeur spoke of Canada's *School Ad Fight*. Adam Ward explained the *Angela Davis Model*. - Henry Kroll asked for point of clarification. - Chair Baker ruled these two motions were advisory only. -Larry Hoffman moves that the word "toxic" programming be changed to "sexism, racism and violence." -Chair Baker called for a vote and working group recommendations as amended and they passed overwhelmingly.

*As part of this solidified group, Renee Cherow O'Leary, did bring out that educational imperatives need school support, media literacy education and the public must become aware of these needs. Way in which this can be done include:

- a) dialogues with educators
- b) student chapters for CEM
- c) orientation classes for public on media literacy

-Chair Baker called for vote and supplemental report accepted.

*Working Group #4 *War and Peace and the Cult of Violence*

The US military, industrial, academic complex has created a national economy in which weapons of mass destruction and popular culture, laced with violence as a cheap industrial ingredient, are the two major exports. To address this predicament, not only for Americans themselves, but the world at large, this group recommends the following strategies:

1. Critical examination of the political economy of the academy and its militarization through the establishment of ad hoc committees on university campuses involving faculty and students for the purpose of addressing and objecting to these conditions, i.e. the current militarism in departments of science and technology, based on how research grants are obtained and used, along with invasion of market place values into schools and universities in general is drastically skewing the principles of education to serve unbridled capitalism.

Models for this purpose include Science for Peace, Canada, based at the University of Toronto and its ad hoc committee, People Against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (PAMAI). Apart from members of this working group already active in the latter (Rose Dyson and Metta Spencer), it included Charles M. Overby, Ph.D., P.E., Emeritus Professor, Industrial and Systems Engineering, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio who is interested in providing some leadership on implementation of this recommendation beginning at Ohio University.

2. Formation of and faculty support for a CEM student movement on university campuses throughout the world. Working group facilitator, Lisa Brooten, Ph.D. Candidate in the School of Telecommunications at Ohio University is interested in providing leadership on this recommendation.

3. Address and publicize dichotomy whereby academics are discouraged from community activism because it detracts from 'credible' scholarship in its more conventional forms.

4. Encourage more funding allocation for media literacy curriculum development for schools in which the pervasiveness of military themes in early male culture is addressed and refuted.

5. Encouragement of more funding for conflict resolution strategies involving nonviolence through role model depictions in media education and entertainment that negate racism, sexism, classism, hate antisemitism, and bigotry.

6. More health based definitions of media violence harmful effects among CEM members at large such as those appearing on the American Medical Association's homepage at <<http://www.ama-assn.org>>. We also recommend that the CEM web page include reference to this information provided on the Internet. (See C-CAVE handout for further details on the nature of information provided by the AMA).

7. Class action lawsuits against producers and distributors of extreme violence in popular culture such as the recent law suit before US Supreme Court launched against the families of copy cat crime spree perpetrators, Oliver Stone and others involving the film *Natural Born Killers* as described in C-CAVE handout on back page (article from *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, 9/3/99, p. C5).

The intended purpose for these kind of civil lawsuits involving damages would be to drive the price of violence up as a cheap industrial ingredient because it sells well on a global economy and translates easily into any language. One C-CAVE member, with the help of legal counsel, is currently exploring the feasibility of proceeding with a lawsuit over the production of *American Psycho* in Toronto on the basis that it contravenes sections of the Canadian Criminal Code.

8. Encourage advertisers to withhold their sponsorship from extremely violent television and radio programming, films and other forms of popular culture (already a strategy used by C-CAVE that has proven to be somewhat effective).

9. Focus public education initiatives on harmful effects of extreme violence on investors in megabucks productions such as *American Psycho* currently in production in Toronto and New York (C-CAVE is in the process of identifying the specific investors in this particular production).

NOTE: Toronto, Canada is now widely regarded as the third largest center for film and television production in North America, with Los Angeles the largest and New York City the second largest.

COMMENTS: *Resolution #1: Submitted by Metta Spencer.

"I, Metta Spencer, will investigate the formation of organizations in Canada and the United States devoted to fostering the culture of peace, as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly. I will report these findings back to the Executive Committee of CEM so that further cooperative linkages can be established."

*Resolution #2: Submitted by Rose Dyson.

"That CEM support Canada's right to mandate that Canadian advertising dollars directed at Canadian audiences be spent on Canadian originated media such as magazines.

In giving its support and rejecting recent World Trade Organization opinions on the issue, CEM commits itself to viewing cultural products as requiring that they be exempted from many aspects of international free trade law."

-Jerry Starr commented there is difficulty in the scope of these resolutions.

-Jesse Walker moved to separate Metta's resolution from the rest of the group recommendations.

-Adam Ward urges CEM members to pass full recommendations with both resolutions.

-Charlie Overby spoke of USA's militarization and production of violence.

-Chair Baker accepted motion to "table" these group recommendations for further discussion and later action.

-Adam Ward from The Liberation Circus explains the tri-polar versus the bi-polar model of cultures. That is to say there is the family, there is work, then television has taken the place of the third place. Perhaps libraries could tell stories, friends could talk at a bar, these third places are necessary for people to be rich in culture. Our world is losing its third place. Adam resolved he would research alternatives and report back to CEM with recommendations.

-Jerry Starr adds information concerning "Diversity Panel." This panel focus is on exclusion and resistance in our society. Micro-Radio is important for CEM to support as an example of resistance of status quo.

-Thomas Gardner motions CEM go on record against cable rate deregulation by formulating a press release.

*Chair Baker accepts motions, seconds, and motions carry. 1999 CEM Plenary session is adjourned.