

November 13, 1997

We stand on the threshold of the digital communication age. The next few years are crucial in the movement for democratic communication and public determination of our cultural environment. Our first step is to convene a working group to draft legislation for media antitrust on January 23-25 in Philadelphia, coordinated by the Cultural Environment Movement and moderated by Mark Crispin Miller of Johns Hopkins University.

The cultural environment, the public space of our times, is dominated by a few transnational media and telecommunications conglomerates, driven by the marketing imperative. The two largest global media firms, Time Warner and Disney, have seen their non-U.S. revenues increase from around 10 percent in 1990 to 35 percent in 1996, with the expectation that the figure will go over 50 percent early in the next decade.

In media, there is now a global first tier of some 10 mostly U.S.-based media conglomerates with global production and distribution networks. The system serves mostly advertisers and shareholders. The traditional public service role of the public airways has been marginalized. To demonstrate, enclosed with this letter are three charts plotting media ownership, compiled by Mark Crispin Miller and Janine Jaquet, and published in The Nation magazine. Two chapters from The Global Media by Edward S. Herman and Robert W. McChesney provide detailed analyses of the situation.

One way to counter the trend of media consolidation is through federal legislation, a long-term project requiring strong public support. The Cultural Environment Movement, a growing coalition of more than 6,000 individuals and organizations united in working for gender equity and general diversity in mass media ownership, employment and representation, provides the base for launching a campaign of information and mobilization in support of the legislation.

On January 23-25, 1998, CEM is convening a small working group to draft an outline for such legislation. The group will meet not to debate the merits of antitrust, but to proceed on the grounds that it is desirable. We invite you to join this conference at the Sugarloaf Conference Center in Philadelphia. We'll meet just before dinner at 4 pm on Friday, and work until lunch on Sunday. Accommodations and meals will be provided by CEM. We request that you arrange for your own travel, but we have a small budget available if this will prevent you from attending.

Please RSVP by December 8. An RSVP form is included with this letter, along with an addressed envelope. You may mail your response to:

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Or fax (215) 204-5823
Or e-mail <cem@libertynet.org>

If you have any questions, feel free to call Kate Duncan at (215) 204-6434.

Sincerely,

George Gerbner
Chairman of the Board

Kate Duncan
Program Director