

who were taught to be like men in the early days.

"Until and unless women can get into top jobs in newspapers without having to inherit them from their fathers or husbands, there won't be much change," Wertheimer said. "Yet this field has been a blessing for women," she added, comparing journalism to business groups before whom she appears as a speaker, which often are 90% male, she said.

"When the day comes when no one in the news-

room can remember when women *weren't* in the newsroom, then perhaps journalists' collective experience in that regard will make the change happen," Wertheimer said.

### *Women, the Press and the '96 Campaign*

Betty Houchin Winfield of the University of Missouri discussed coverage of Presidential wives,

## **Donna Allen's Comment**

### **CEM Builds Women's Contributions Into Founding Convention's Structure**

After three years of communication among interested groups, the founding convention of the Cultural Environment Movement (CEM) was held in March in St. Louis in cooperation with Webster College.

More than 250 people from 32 states and 13 countries discussed the need for people to take control of their cultural environment and shape it to meet human needs.

"We are here to address the problems of a globalized, conglomeratized, standardized cultural environment that is damaging to our children, our democracy, society and communities," said CEM founder George Gerbner. "We are here to offer the liberating alternative."

The participants debated recommendations in 15 working groups and approved in principle a People's Communication Charter, a Viewer's Declaration of Independence and a representative organizational structure.

But most remarkable to me, and a first in all my years of conference-going, was the inclusion of a "Women's Room" in the convention structure.

The principal inventor of the plan, CEM's Sheila Witherington, with Brigitte Rouson, Brigitt Thompson and Louise Shoemaker, wrote the women delegates: "It is not often that so many prominent women activists and scholars have an opportunity to think and work together. We want to make the most of this extraordinary opportunity. The schedule of the convention is very full, but as women, we know that if we rise early and are willing to stay up late, we can squeeze in a few extra precious moments that sometimes make the difference in whether we succeed or fail at what we try to do. Therefore, we have reserved a special time and a special place for women at the convention.... every evening from 9-10:30 and every morning at 7."

Listed in the convention schedule as "The Women's Room: Setting Women's Agendas for Mass Media, Democracy and the Cultural Environment," the plan worked beautifully, with women meeting additional times and in a variety of subgroups. The Women's Room did indeed become, as they had hoped, "a place to collaborate and envision." Nearly all of the 100-plus women at the convention took part in one or more of the Women's Room discussions and helped shape its final multiracial, multiethnic and multidisciplinary recommendations to the CEM.

These urged CEM to: observe the tenet that all women speak for themselves; implement a CEM women's network; support Section J, "Women in the Media," of the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing (with reservations about a media "self-regulatory mechanism"); create links with local organizations toward support of CEM goals; focus on the development of partnership sponsors with other advocacy coalitions; establish feminist principles of collaboration and non-hierarchical cooperation in all aspects of decision-making; mandate race and gender parity to include youths, seniors, diverse cultures and those with disabilities; develop global participation, perspectives and agenda; establish an oversight committee to assure diversity, equity and the implementation of these recommendations.

Five other recommendations addressed oppression and stigmatization; violence against women; peace and justice; corporate crime; and poverty. CEM cooperation with the American Women's Roundtable also was recommended.

For more information about CEM or about The Women's Room, contact CEM at University City Science Center, 3624 Market St., One East, Philadelphia, PA 19104. Telephone: 215-387-5303; FAX: 387-1560; e-mail: bmosley@libertynet.org

*Note:* Media literacy was a well-considered topic at the convention, and included presentations by Elizabeth Thoman, founder and executive director of the Center for Media Literacy. The Center publishes "Break the Lies that Bind" (which I mistitled in an earlier column), a workshop package for community use that expands on the Center's magazine series, "Redesigning Women" and "Men, Myth and the Media." It is available for \$27.95 at the Center's new address: 4727 Wilshire Blvd., #403, Los Angeles, CA 90010. Telephone: 213-931-4177; FAX: 213-931-4474. To order products from the Center, call 800-226-9494.