

Culture Jamming



Brave New Cultural Environment

AMERICAN REVOLUTION PREPARES FOR TAKE-OFF

A SECOND

YOU FIRST READ about the launching of the Cultural Environmental Movement in *Adbusters* (Winter '90), under the title "The Second American Revolution." The momentum has built ever since.

As you may remember, CEM confronts problems inherent in the cultural changes of our times. Children today are born into homes where the television blares an average of seven hours and 41 minutes a day. As they grow up, most of the

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stories about people, life and values they hear are told not by parents, schools, churches or others in the community who have something to tell, but by a shrinking number of global conglomerates that have something to sell.

This is a radical change in the way we employ creative talent, raise our children and manage the cultural environment. CEM is confronting these problems.

We have set up a non-profit educational, tax-exempt corporation, assem-

bled a group of consultants and advisors, networked, made many personal appearances and helped arrange regional conferences.

The response has been positive, at times overwhelming. People are ready and eager to engage in a new and different kind of action. The reasons include the rise of television violence as a health issue — in which our violence profile study played a part — and the release of our study *Women and Minorities on Television: Casting and Fate*, sponsored by the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG).

The rise in public concern has caught the attention of government and industry. In July, for the first time, a high-level government-sponsored group of health, youth and education professionals, along with writers and independent producers, met to consider media policy. They concluded: "The issue of media violence is really just the first phase of a major cultural debate about life in the 21st century." Their recommendation, among others: "Take lessons from the environmental movement to form a 'cultural environmental'

movement."

On Aug. 2, CEM's Industry-wide Leadership Conference on Violence in Television Programming met in Los Angeles. Never before had leaders of electronic media joined legislators, educators, researchers and representatives of citizens' groups to discuss a matter of cultural policy.

The Los Angeles "summit" — as the press dubbed it — was broadcast live by CNN, and covered by international media. The following day, representatives from the SAG and AFTRA unions in Los Angeles endorsed a plan — developed with CEM participation — for the formation of a coalition for media diversity.

CEM is now emerging as an international coalition of media, labor, religious,

health-related, women's and minority groups working for freedom from stereotyped formulas, investing in a freer, fairer and more diverse cultural environment.

We demand a reversal of the concentration of control over new communications technologies, a halt to the

increasing conglomeration and globalization of ownership and an end to formula-driven homogenization of content.

We are planning a press campaign and a call for a "peoples' convention." That convention will include a covenant of people's communication rights and a viewers' declaration of independence.

You can take part in the Cultural Environmental Movement. Send us the names and addresses of individuals and organizations willing to consider affiliation. Even better, send us statements from organizations interested in signing on. Contributions are welcome.

Our society is near a turning point in cultural policy-making. CEM is the catalyst to bring it about.

— *George Gerbner is chair of CEM.*

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VIOLENCE
MAY BE
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