

AMIC ICC Seminar on Children and Television :
Cipanas, September 11-13, 1991 : [welcome
address]

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Welcome Address

By

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WELCOME ADDRESS BY MR VIJAY MENON, SECRETARY-GENERAL, ASIAN MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE (AMIC), AT THE SEMINAR ON "CHILDREN AND TELEVISION", CIPANAS, INDONESIA, SEPTEMBER 11 - 13, 1991

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the Opening of this Seminar on "Children and Television". The idea of holding this seminar first occurred two years ago at a meeting of the International Children's Centre and AMIC. It was dormant for some time, till Dr. Eric Chevallier wrote to us in July last year, stating that the Indonesian Children Welfare Foundation was also interested in co-sponsoring the seminar. Planning picked up speed thereafter and we are all here in Jakarta, with H.E. Minister Harmoko, whom we value as a 'long-standing friend' and a source of encouragement and support.

Television has been described as the ultimate form of mass communication, a medium which has had a profound, even revolutionary, effect on society, culture and values. As with any revolutionary instrument, it has enormous potential to do good - as well as to cause harm.

Our concern at this seminar is with the role of television in relation to children. There is cause for concern. Asia has the largest number of children in the world - almost 500 million. Levels of literacy in many countries are low while poverty is high. The children in these countries constitute a vulnerable viewership.

Research suggests that children are attentive to television by the time they are six to nine months old and that the video environment plays a major role as they grow and develop; that the power and visual permanency of what we learn is greater with television than the printed word; that children are poor at distinguishing fact from fiction and the young are often not capable of tuning out irrelevancies.

These research findings raise troubling questions - reflected in the headline of a recent issue of the Australian Children's Television Action Committee's Newsletter: "Is Television Creating a Race of Zombies", it asks.

The fact is that television has enormous potential to do good. With adequate allocation of time and funds, and good programming which is culturally relevant and tailored to the needs of children, television can be a healthy and positive influence in the lives of children in Asia. We are confident that this seminar will help to provide suitable guidelines.

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We have at this seminar, senior professionals from Australia, India and Indonesia, from Japan, Korea and Malaysia, from Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. They represent the media and academia, policy makers and practitioners. It is a measure of their interest and concern that they readily agreed to participate in this meeting.

We would like to acknowledge the support extended by the Australia-Indonesia Institute, NHK and the Korean Broadcasting Corporation in facilitating the participation of delegates from these countries.

The Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre is a regional mass communication body based in Singapore and supported by the Government of Singapore and by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung of Germany. AMIC, to use our popular abbreviation, is a non-profit, non-government organization dedicated to promoting mass communication in the region. Our activities cover documentation, publications, research, seminars, workshops and institutional development programmes. We are in the process of organizing an information network covering ten Asian countries, including Indonesia. We have brought out a number of titles recording the Asian experience. Our on-going research programmes deal with Communication Trends in Asia and with International TV and Video Flow.

Today's meeting is one of sixteen workshops and seminars scheduled in 1991. These are made possible by the funding support provided by agencies such as the International Children's Centre, Paris and The Asia Foundation, Jakarta, and the collaborative assistance of institutions such as the Indonesian Child Welfare Foundation. We value equally highly the moral and material support of government agencies of which DEPPEN is an outstanding example.

We thank His Excellency, Minister Harmoko, represented this evening by Ir. Dewabrata, Head, Information Research and Development Board, DEPPEN, for agreeing to inaugurate the seminar. His address will be a source of added encouragement to all of us to work for the successful attainment of the seminar objectives.

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