

women's media action

No. 26 Mar-Apr 84

30p

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RECORDINGS
BILL**

**CHEAP
CLOTHING:**

the exploitation
behind the ads

**PICTURES OF
WOMEN:**
public reactions

Adwomen's
comment



Womens media action

c/o A Woman's Place, Hungerford House,
Victoria Embankment, London, W.C.2

OBJECTIVES

WMAG is a feminist group which aims to eliminate sexism and stereotyping in the media. The media ascribe roles to people according to their gender. Our concern is to encourage positive and balanced images of women in all aspects of our lives.

We are principally interested in abolishing:

- 1) The portrayal of women as sex objects by using women's bodies to sell products, e.g. women draped over cars; newspaper pin-ups; ads for showers, etc.
- 2) The depiction of violence against women as acceptable, enjoyable, or the fault of the woman, e.g. the reporting of rape in a way intended to titillate; posters advertising films exploiting violence against women.
- 3) The assumption that domestic matters, child care and nurture are solely the responsibility of women and girls and at the same time trivial, and the assumption that technical, political, scientific and economic matters are men's domain.
- 4) The stereotyping of human qualities into masculine and feminine, e.g. women as gentle, submissive, passive, intuitive, indecisive...men as strong, energetic, dominant, etc.
- 5) The conditioning of children to accept such stereotypes.
- 6) The representation of women as being subservient or the possessions of men.
- 7) The use of language which implies that the masculine includes the feminine since men are the norm to which women are an exception, e.g. history of man, 'he' meaning 'he or she', trade unionists and their wives, etc.
- 8) The use of details in reporting which mention a woman's personal appearance, age, marital status where these are irrelevant.
- 9) Words which belittle and trivialise women, e.g. girl, bird, chick, bit of stuff, etc.
- 10) The inference that heterosexuality is the only normal and acceptable mode of behaviour.

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WMAG BULLETIN : 6 issues £3.00 ___ 1 issue 30p (& large s.a.e.) ___

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W.M.A.G. NEWS

Meetings

18 March Open meeting at A Woman's Place to discuss the future of the Women's Monitoring Network - the next topic, how to organize the monitoring, how to get more women involved, etc. 11am-4pm

27 March WMAG Open meeting - talk on the work of the group, slideshow, wine and cheese provided. 7p.m. All women welcome.

Coming soon London Media Project are running a workshop for us on how to understand and use the media, to get coverage, to complain, to cope with interviews, etc.

Our regular meetings take place every second Tuesday at A Woman's Place at 6.30pm Next meetings : 20 March, 3 April, 17 April.

Some of the things we're discussing at the moment are :

- a public meeting with editors of women's magazines;
- a study of a large selection of sexist ads to see which advertising agencies are most at fault;
- monitoring London media.

Other ideas always welcome!

Work on our office in Brixton is nearly completed. When it is finished we hope to appoint a part-time worker to help get some of these projects off the ground.

* * * * *

Editorial collective :

Julienne Dickey
Jean Harding
Carrie Harvey
Sue Warlow

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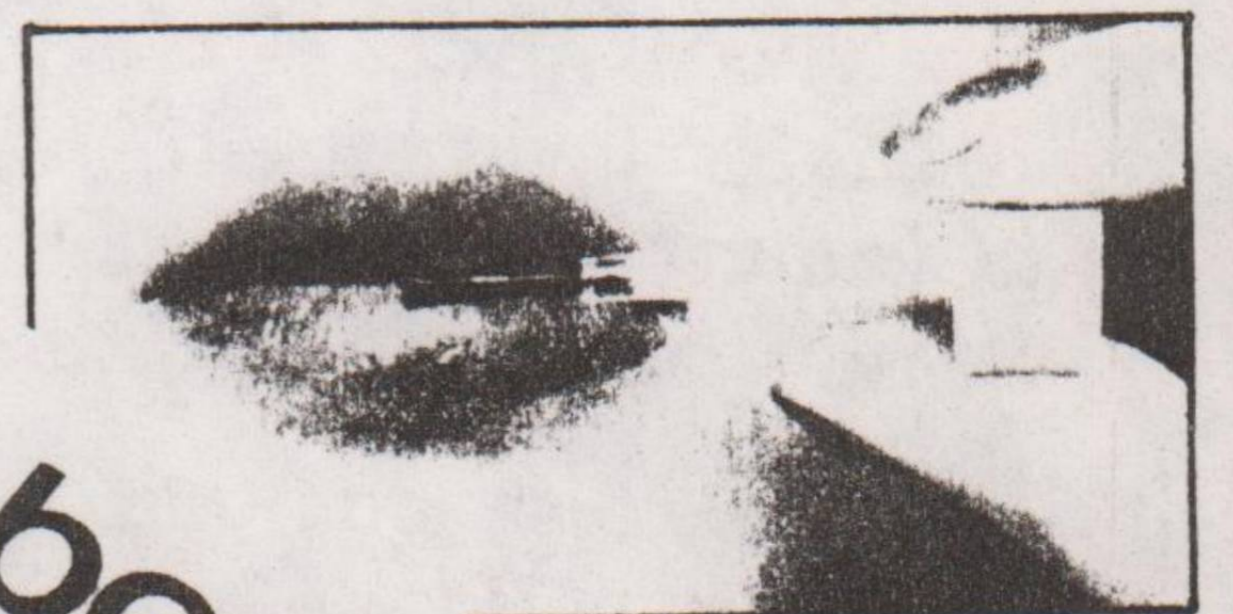
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Germaine Greer's latest book "Sex and destiny; the politics of human fertility" is now on sale. It remains to be seen whether the cover will prove to be a good selling point; my reaction was nausea. It depicts a woman's body with legs lengthened and distorted to form the shape of a wishbone... the resulting mental image is of a woman's body split in half.

Germaine Greer mentions this cover in an interview in the Guardian (10 March). She apparently objected to the publishers (Secker & Warburg) about the cover, but they only agreed to alter the body slightly to make it look more androgynous.

Many writers have great difficulty in getting their work published and have to accept the publisher's decisions on content and presentation. Germaine Greer, a best-selling author, should have refused to accept the use of this violent image.

BLACK WOMEN AND REPRESENTATION - COURSE

Sun. 8th April

The history of stereotypes: accepted conventions. Screening and seminar.

Sun. 15th April

Who controls the image: reflections of social relations. Screening and seminar.

Sun. 29th April

Towards new social realities: alternative images. Screening and seminar.

Venue: Four Corners, 113 Roman Rd, E8.

Cost: £2, £1 each session. Creche, also wheelchair access. 2-5p.m.

Also a series of 3 practical VHS video workshops - for more details phone Nadine or Maureen at Women in Sync, 278 2215. (Black women only)

A New (?) Labour Daily

In February a few of us attended the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom conference on the possibility of a new Labour daily to redress the political imbalance of the current press.

It was predominantly a conference for the boys, with very little effort to address women or our issues. The 90-minute opening session saw no women on the platform - Jill Tweedie was originally involved but couldn't make it, and was not replaced.

The main ideas centred around whether such a paper was a viable economic proposition, and how it would be staffed and run. There were lots of suggestions about changing legislation to prevent monopolies, but any notion of amending laws to benefit workers seems pretty unrealistic in the present climate.

The rest of the day was divided into workshops on media for black people, women and local areas, union journals, broadcasting and a labour daily.

The workshop on the labour daily was dominated by men. The main discussion was on economic viability; the T&GWU has offered £1 million towards it, and it was thought more money could be raised. But what sort of paper would it be? Heaven forbid it would be turgid, dull and patronising, along the lines of Labour Weekly. One half-wit suggested that Page 3 type material be included to make it sell. The general feeling however seemed to be that it would be a popular daily but presenting black and women's issues and news in a radical and lively way.

There was a lot of talk about how socialist ideas could be "got across" to people. While being sure that socialist and feminist ideas can be presented as interesting, exciting and even fun, we don't like the idea that they might be presented by some sort of revolutionary elite, spreading the word to the unfortunates who previously read the Sun.

So it was an interesting discussion, and ended on the suggestion that the CPBF carry out a feasibility study.

In the final session Sandra Horne, Equality Officer of ACIT, made some excellent and very relevant points, such as why is it that the Labour movement claims to be able to run the country and improve the quality of people's lives but can't get it together to run a newspaper! She also suggested that energies might more usefully be directed towards cable and video, which are booming while newspaper sales decline.

We hope that the next CPBF conference in April will give a greater voice to women.

CPBF Conference, 14/15 April, 10-5.30, at County Hall, London. Topic: Media, freedom and the state. Cost: £5 delegates, £3.50 individuals, £1.50 unwaged. Creche bookable in advance; wheelchair access.

The VIDEO RECORDINGS BILL: What price censorship?

Under consideration in Parliament at the moment is the Video Recordings Bill, introduced by Graham Bright MP. The clauses and their proposed amendments are complex; so too are the arguments around the issue of censorship as it relates to morality.

Some history: traditionally the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC) was responsible for classifying all films; it was not backed up by statute, but relied on voluntary co-operation by cinemas. The BBFC policy was one of "liberal concerns", defined as "seeking to reflect intelligent, contemporary public attitudes, while taking into account the law", i.e. the Obscene Publications Act (OPA) to which all films are of course subject.

However, videos were not dealt with by the BBFC, and thus "video nasties" were able to proliferate. Eventually, the Daily Mail began a campaign against them, leading to a huge public outcry, a demand that steps be taken to curb them. The British Videogram Association (BVA) adopted a voluntary code, on similar lines to the BBFC, and videos are now classified by them. The BVA, consisting mainly of video retailers, has always feared the consequence of legislation on trade and maintain that it will lead to a huge black market of "video nasties" which will be outside their control.

But the present Government, with its commitment to a return to "Victorian values" and its susceptibility to the powerful morality lobbies of Whitehouse et al, has decided to opt for this censorship legislation - hence Graham Bright's Bill (which incidentally has all-party support). The protection of children is its principal overt rationale.

It has also reconstituted the BBFC and given it statutory powers. Until the enactment of legislation, it has involved the OPA to cope with the video nasties and large numbers of videos have been seized. These have included some films released on video which had actually been approved by the BBFC.

CENSORED

So what is the Video Recordings Bill? It is designed to establish a statutory body to issue classificatory certificates to videos; distributing videos without certificates will be an offence. The most interesting clauses of the Bill are Clause 2, which relates to exemptions, and Clause 4, which outlines the powers of the classifying authority.

Clause 2 reads thus:

2.—(1) Subject to subsection (2) below, a video work is for the purposes of this Act an exempted work if, taken as a whole—

- (a) it is designed to provide information, education or instruction; or
- (b) it is concerned with sport, religion or music.

(2) A video work is not an exempted work for those purposes if, to any extent, it depicts or otherwise deals with—

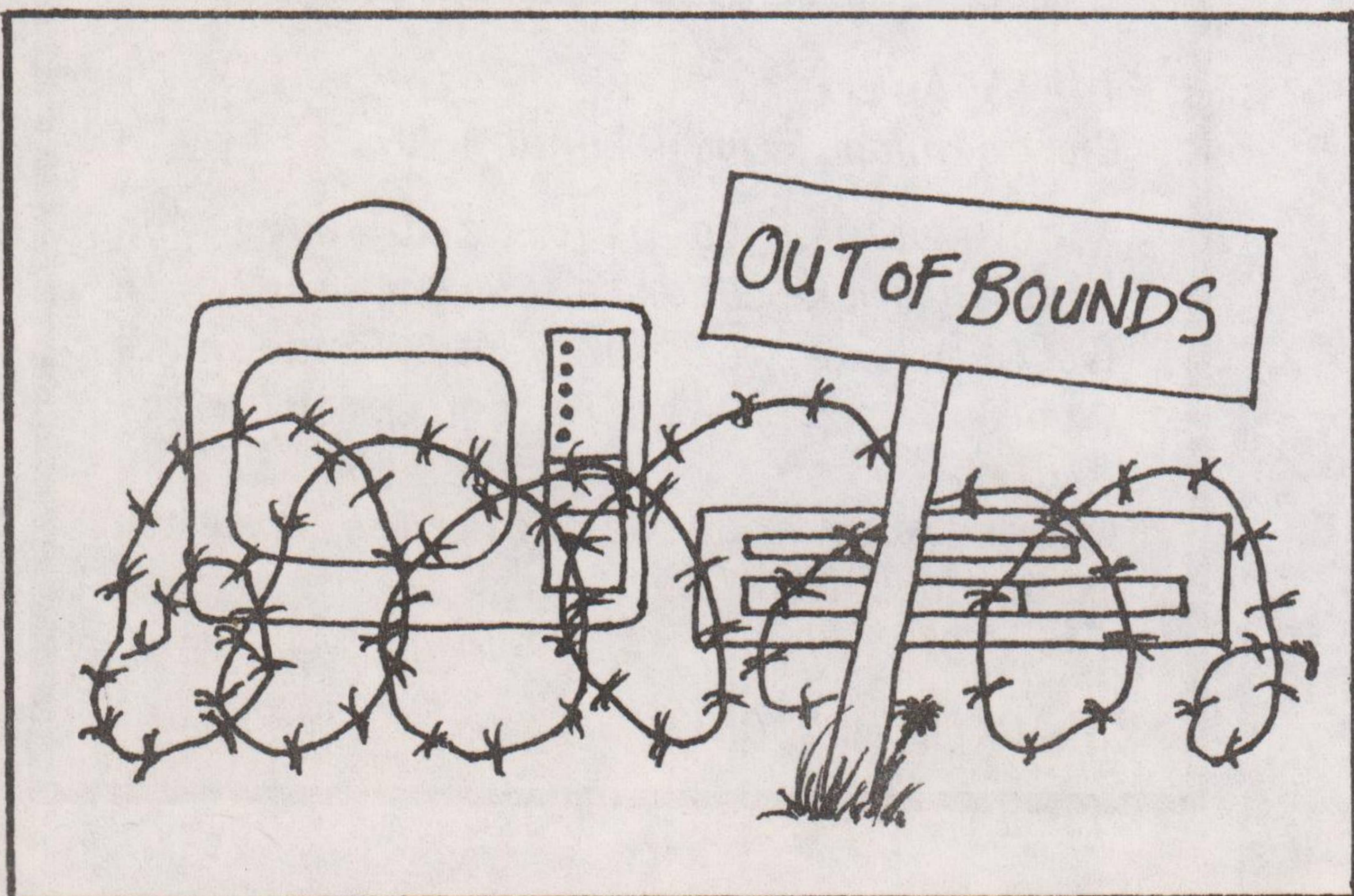
- (a) human sexual activity or acts of force or restraint associated with such activity;
- (b) mutilation, torture or other acts of gross violence;
- (c) human genital organs or human urinary or excretory functions;

or is designed, to any extent, to stimulate or encourage anything falling within paragraph (a) or (b).

This clause reflects the influence of the "anti-nudity-and-sex" lobby, rather than demonstrating a concern for the wider issue of the treatment of women by the media. Clause 2(2) is designed to prevent pornographic videos being marketed as educational but it creates problems; for example, videos concerned with the "gross violence" of war, medical videos, videos showing works of art which depict sexual organs, and - of special interest to women - videos made by women's groups on topics such as gynaecology or violence against women.

Certain amendments have been tabled to deal with these problems, and a likely change is the rewording of the preamble to 2(2) to read "a video work is not an exempted work for those purposes if it depicts to a significant extent.....".

CENSORED



Clause 4(1) is as follows:

4.—(1) The Secretary of State may by notice under this section designate any person as the authority responsible for making arrangements—

- (a) for determining for the purposes of this Act whether or not video works are suitable for showing,
- (b) in the case of works which are determined in accordance with the arrangements to be so suitable—
 - (i) for making such other determinations as are required for the issue of classification certificates, and
 - (ii) for issuing such certificates, and
- (c) for maintaining a record of such determinations (whether determinations made in pursuance of arrangements made by that person or by any person previously designated under this section), including video recordings of the video works to which the determinations relate.

An amendment, supported by Mrs. Thatcher and Leon Brittan, would have prohibited the distribution of all 18R videos, on the grounds that they could be viewed at home by children. This amendment was lost, but 4(1)(a) has since been amended to read "suitable for viewing in the home". Apart from problems of defining "whose home?" and "what is a home?" (does it inevitably consist of a married couple and under-age children?), there are fears that this blanket provision will lead the way to banning videos on puritanically moral or political grounds.

The ACTT (the TV technicians union) at its conference in March 1983 passed a resolution "to campaign widely against the production and distribution of pornographic films and videos". They did not recommend a ban on such material, and the union has always been extremely wary of state censorship. Although they recognised that the Video Recordings Bill would provide a platform for debate about the issues concerned, they have suggested certain amendments themselves, which will restrict the Bill's powers solely to controlling video nasties and pornography.

CENSORED

For they and others involved in the media fear that the passing of the Bill will open the way for tougher censorship of broadcasting; Mrs Whitehouse's avowed aim is to bring TV into line with videos. At the moment the BBC and the IBA operate a self-classifying system, but in future any programmes considered not suitable "for viewing in the home" would be banned. There is also a demand to increase the severity of the OPA, and many suggest that this is already being considered.

As feminists we are faced with a dilemma. Of course we want to see an end to material which humiliates and degrades women and involves violence against women - and

censorship may be a necessary avenue to this end. But given our different viewpoint from that of either Mrs. Thatcher or Mrs. Whitehouse, we may rightly be suspicious of any censorship legislation initiated by them. There is also cause for concern in the way the Bill is being bulldozed through; any MPs who dare to question the imposition of this kind of censorship are liable to be accused of condoning violent and obscene sex.

Sandra Horne, Equality Officer of ACTT, comments in a recent article in "Broadcast" magazine: "Doubt about the Bill can mean a fear that its real intent is as set out in one of Sir Bernard Braine's proposed amendments -

"It shall be the duty of the designated Authority to satisfy themselves that so far as possible, video works certified by the Authority for viewing in the home, do not include anything which offends against good taste or decency, or is likely to encourage or incite to crime, or lead to disorder, or be offensive to public feeling".

A video on Greenham Common, a trade union picket, a riot, "The Day After"? Goodbye to all that in the comfort of our homes - and just as we thought video technology might speed and aid communications. Whatever the fate of that particularly specific amendment, there must be real fears that this Bill could be used for purposes other than to curb "nasties". The tide of reported public opinion may ensure its passage with or without amendments, but those concerned with the issues of "nasties" and/or free communication have a responsibility to ensure that this Bill is properly considered, and not just rushed through on a tide of protectionism. A tide which could have evil, as well as good intentions."

Julienne Dickey.

BLACK WOMEN AND MEDIA CONFERENCE

14-15 April, at The Factory,
Chippenham Mews, London W9.

A conference to provide a space for black women to discuss the media in Britain, as well as learn and share various media skills. Equipment provided.

Wheelchair access, signers, creche,
Saturday night social.

Fee: £2, £1, 50p. Fares pool.

BLACK WOMEN ONLY

CHEAP CLOTHING :

what lies behind the ads?

Browsing through magazines and newspapers many women are no doubt tempted by ads for nice cheap clothes, maybe from C & A or John Lewis or Littlewoods or Debenhams - or perhaps Woolworths. All these stores offer clothes at temptingly low prices. You might be forgiven for thinking that the profit margins on these cheap items are small. But they aren't at all; enormous profits are made by the big stores on clothing which seems low price.

The (white) women modelling the dresses in the ads are not usually of the "glamorous" type - they are women most of us can relatively easily identify with. But what they give no indication of is the exploitation behind this trade. Much of this type of clothing is bought in Bangkok, Thailand, where there is a huge and growing clothing industry, dependant on the labour of young women and girls.

Great Universal Stores (GUS) bought 12,000 three-piece and 3,500 two-piece acrylic suits last year from the Fortune garment factory in Bangkok. Each suit cost GUS £4.74; they were sold at £19.99. Littlewoods bought 48,000 pullovers with ribbons sewn on them from a firm called Thai Thon. Each pullover cost Littlewoods £1.65 and was sold for £4.99.

Examples like these give some idea of the amounts of money stores can make by doing their wholesale buying in Bangkok while the British clothing trade dies. They also give some idea of the volume of clothing imports from Thailand. 48,000 of one particular pullover style for one chain store is quite typical. £1.5 billion worth of clothing was imported from overseas by British clothing retailers in 1982 and half of this came from the Far East.

This vastly lucrative trade, which is keeping Debenhams, John Lewis, etc buoyant while other clothing retailers go to the wall, is completely dependent on the under-paying and over-working of the female seamstresses in Bangkok, who make the pretty clothes and receive a tiny

slice of the profits: just enough to keep them alive. The Thai minimum wage is £2 per day. A "World in Action" team of journalists, sent out to Bangkok to research for their report on the Bangkok clothing trade found teenage girls getting paid less than £1 per day, with no extra overtime pay. Underpayment is not the only way in which the Bangkok clothing manufacturers break the law. Thai law stipulates that factory workers must not work all night, must be given regular holidays, must be paid for overtime at certain rates, and must be permitted to organise into Trade Union shops if the factory is large enough. The "World in Action" team found these laws flouted time and again.

The clothing trade in Bangkok is particularly dependant on very young women and teenage girls. Thai law makes it illegal for girls under 15 to work unless they have a written note from their parents, a medical certificate, and a school certificate; only when these are supplied will the government issue the requisite permit. None of the girls interviewed by the "World in Action" team reported having been asked for any of these documents. They all said they had been asked their age, and then told to work hard lest they lose the job.

The girls who work in the clothing factories generally live in accomodation provided by the factory owner. To call it "accomodation" is really to pay the owner a tribute he (invariably "he") most certainly does not deserve. The girls sleep feet to feet in cramped dormitories, sharing open toilets and insufficient washing facilities. There may be a few fans, but the "World in Action" team reported stifling conditions in the dormitories they visited. It is customary for the girls to work until 11.00p.m. and then start again at 8.00 the following morning. Usually, they have to buy their own food; not that they get a lot of time to eat it in. The ITV





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"World in Action" programme was shown, on 6 February 1984, there is no excuse for ignorance.

Ralph Warburton, merchandising director at Littlewoods, was asked at a clothing exhibition organised by the National Economic Development Office last year, why he didn't buy more clothing from British firms. He answered that they had become "spoonfed, cushioned if you like", "very fat and lazy". Anyone who has had contact with workers in the clothing trade here will know what an insulting lie this is.

team reported "minders" employed by the factory-owners, who accompanied the girls outside in their short breaks, and chased them back into the factory again after a few minutes.

A reader's gut-reaction of horror on learning about these conditions would be reinforced by actually meeting some of these girls. The "World in Action" team described their appearance as, on the whole "anaemic" with "hollow faces" and "deadened eyes". I asked some students from Thailand if they thought this was the case, and their answers bore out the truth of this. The students also confirmed that the girls who were forced to take up this type of servitude were not, on the whole, natives of Bangkok (who would know already of the ghastly conditions and use their knowledge of the city to find other work), but country girls who come into the city looking for a job, and have neither information nor choice.

Obviously, the factory-owners are grossly culpable in this appalling story, but the point for us, the consumers living here in Britain, is that they are vindicated by the massive financial support they receive from British clothing retailers: C & A, Woolworths, etc. Several factory-owners interviewed by the "World in Action" team described visits from chain store buyers. Even if the buyers in question did not gain access to the ghettos in which the girls live, or discover the lengths of their working days, they saw the girls; did all those buyers come away with the impression of blooming health, when the ITV team were upset at their physical debilitation? In any case, since the

Hackney, long the centre of London's cheap clothing trade, has a large proportion of Turkish and Bengali clothing workers who work terribly hard, on piecework, for wages well below the national average.

This is not a call for British stores to "buy only British": to cease all orders from Bangkok factories, and so put thousands of Thai women out of work. But these retailers have tremendous influence with the Thai factory-owners, who are financially dependant on their orders. It is high time that Debenhams, C & A and co., used some of their influence, instead of inflicting cruelty on thousands of young women by calculated indifference. After all, these Thai factory-owners are not only guilty of laxity and neglect: they are breaking the law.

There is also a wider issue here, about advertising in general. Advertising is a reflection of our capitalist society, where products appear as if by magic for our immediate consumption. This leads to an underrating, indeed a disregard, of the production processes and those who work in them.

I would like to encourage anyone reading this to write to the stores I have mentioned about this. Sisters in Thailand need our letters.

Teresa Vermeulen



COMMENT

Two women who have been involved in the advertising industry recently came to speak at a WMAG meeting.

Claire Voss-Bark works as a typographer for Film Composition, who undertake jobs for ad agencies. She previously worked for an ad agency herself.

"Ad agencies are extremely concerned with their internal politics and that of the rest of the advertising industry. It's like showbiz - it's about presenting yourself. The people at the top all want to be stars and get into The Book (Design and Art Directors Annual) and to win awards. It really has nothing to do with selling products.

"It's also very hierarchical - and overwhelmingly white, heterosexual and male. The majority of the women are secretaries and accounts clerks. Some become copy-writers, who are teamed with an art director to produce the ad - very few women become art directors. Even rarer is a female creative director (who makes overall decisions about the creative process). Women who do make it to the top tend to be careerist and have to compete with men on their terms - they are generally insecure and feel easily threatened, and cannot afford to be called feminists.

"Being a female typographer is uncommon. I enjoy typography and if advertising is the only place I can do it to earn money then I have to do it and try to ignore the end product. If I find an ad offensive I say so, but it doesn't have any effect.

"The men I work with are all NGA members, very anti-black and anti-women. It's been very difficult getting into the union - they're not used to having to deal with women and hate change. But although they're anti-women, they like me as an individual and recognise that I can do my job, so working with them is OK. I was taught on the job by men who were willing to share their skills (though many don't want to)."

Kathy Eisner used to work for Saatchi and Saatchi as an account handler.

"Advertising is in the business of selling ideas, the perception of the product, rather than the product itself. Advertisers claim that they reflect society - and this is true to the extent that the women in the ads are largely involved in the activities portrayed - but they reflect an ideal. Advertisers counter the argument that they are creating needs by saying that people are buying satisfaction rather than the product. All ads have a carefully identified target market, based on a social classification system. They create aspirations, promises of better things - many ads are aimed at a "C2" audience.

"Sometimes, for example in the Daily Mail campaign aimed at women, they present aspirations that are too far beyond the means of the target audience. Many agencies are now employing psychologists, as they do in the States, to decide on strategies. Also to test the employees - and for me this was the last straw and the point at which I left Saatchi and Saatchi.

"Campaigning against sexist advertising presents a problem. It's worth complaining to publications - but to be really effective you need to attack the source and change the advertising strategies of the agencies. It's almost pointless to complain to them about one-off ads because they have such a short life anyway - it's better to concentrate on a series of ads on a similar theme, or on TV ads, which have a longer run. You could also research an agency's past record, by looking at the ads produced by them over one or two years.

"Agencies are terrified of bad publicity so a concerted campaign might have an effect. A particularly insidious form of sexism in advertising is the ubiquitous use of men to advertise products - this might change if advertisers took up the implications of the increase in women's purchasing power. As yet they are still geared to the idea that women only buy soap powders and washing up liquid."

Brief Answers

OPINION: What's wrong with wanting to look at "beautiful" women/ presenting a woman as "beautiful" is a compliment. (The other side of this argument is often: why are those who object to the decorative or sexual portrayal of women always so ugly; they're just jealous.)

ANSWERS:

(1) As with all forms of sexism, presenting a woman in terms of her physical attributes is dehumanising in the sense that all other aspects of her full humanity are ignored or even denied (e.g. the "dumb blond" syndrome). And those aspects which are emphasized happen to be those which are more "pleasurable", less threatening, to men.

(2) Posing female models become a marketed commodity, and manipulative camera-work and irrelevant context detract even further from their "realness" - their humanity is further reduced.

(3) We all internalise stereotyped notions about what constitutes beauty and any other kind of beauty is dismissed. Placing a high value on one kind of (purely external) beauty leads those who do not "measure up" to feeling undervalued, regardless of how many other "virtues" they undoubtedly have. To say nothing of the unfair treatment meted out to such women (i.e. most of us) by others.

(4) Of course it is nice to be appreciated for how we look - and all women have the right to be thus appreciated. But if this compliment is motivated purely by the gratification of the viewer, especially if it is at the expense of the appreciation of other qualities, then it is no compliment at all. Furthermore, the giving or withholding of compliments is often related to a power relationship, wherein women depend on men's judgement for their self-value and are expected to feel grateful if they score well.

(5) The "feminists are ugly/you're jealous" remark is a reflection of male pique at women who do not "play along". It is a way of avoiding or trivialising the real issues involved, and is designed to divide women. Of course, given the constant bombardment of information about what constitutes "beauty", we are susceptible to these insults and may even end up believing the lies. Thus "beauty" (or lack of it) is used as a tool to manipulate women.

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The other day, looking along the shelves in a supermarket, I was stopped dead in my tracks. I reeled under the effect of something I had never seen before. Something which had far more impact than any of the (many) sexist ads that have been forced upon my view.

Staring down at me from the side of a packet of Batchelor's Cup-o-Soup - mushroom flavour - was a smiling woman's face - WEARING GLASSES! Never, NEVER, have I ever before seen an ad with a woman in glasses. Except in opticians' windows, where they try to convince women that they CAN still look glamorous IN SPITE OF specs.

Now I've worn glasses most of my life, and so do lots of my friends - but this woman on the side of the packet looked totally novel, even strange, to me. It made me realise afresh just how conned we are by the advertising industry, when what stares back at us each morning from the mirror bears absolutely no relation to the images with which we are constantly bombarded. No wonder we have such a hard job sorting out questions of identity and self-image!

Julienne Dickey.



The following are quotes from letters received by Pictures of Women in response to their Eleventh Hour series on women's sexuality. They raise interesting questions about people's perceptions about what constitutes "balanced" TV, and what constitutes a "real" woman. Incidentally there were far more favourable responses than are quoted here, as well as a number of criticisms of the camerawork and presentation.

"I have never seen such a bunch of self-righteous, scruffy, butch, apparently left-wing, Greenham Common-type women in my whole life. There was nowhere to be seen a cross-section of the women of this country. They weren't real women - if this is supposed to be a cross-section of the women's groups of this country then no wonder feminism has such a bad name... Why oh why did you let such a bunch of extremists get their hands on this subject, when it would have been much fairer to find people such as myself, who can reasonably argue the male role... I noticed that most of the women who complained about pornography and the exploitation of women in adverts etc were singularly unattractive - is this a reaction against the fact that they are not beautiful enough to figure in these images?"

"These feminists are always yelping about castrating men (because they feel they have already been castrated and want revenge) but they get very upset if one gives them a dose of their own medicine..." (from a man)

"As a prostitutes' client for more than 30 years it made me spit to hear that old pro go on about women being used and exploited by men. The fact is pros are the scum of humanity..."

"I think the programme is well put together but I do think there is an underlying jealousy from the female participants of those gorgeous females. What they never ever consider is how a male with the wrong physical appearance might also feel when he thinks of the fine specimens of male models with their gorgeous females... Everything depends on how you look, your genetic value... Children are becoming more beautiful, probably as a result of this kind of advertising - what happens if you don't 'breed beautiful' can be seen in the

Polaroid ad where an attractive guy with a Polaroid is preferred to an ugly guy with a much better camera at a party... [This] ad is just as offensive to all 'lesser' men in the world as are some of the ads the group discussed. So you harping on about how hard done by women are is not quite accurate. It's the lesser men who really suffer in this world and women can always get together when they're feeling low. Men can't really do that. They're programmed for more altruistic ends." (from a man)

"I have been watching your sexuality series with increasing interest. I've never seen anything like it on telly before. Not only are the issues moot (crucial in fact) but I feel that for the first time women's views are being put across. I watch the programmes with my husband, son and daughter and we always have long discussions afterwards."

"I feel that in both programmes there has been some very valid material discussed and I believe that certain aspects have been made clearer to me than they have appeared before... However I feel that the programmes can also have been damaging to the very cause that they have tried to argue... the extremes that the presenters have put the subject matter over and the frankly biased arguments in many cases have caused friends and associates of mine to cast out the programme as ridiculous... I feel that the programmes would have been much more useful if there had been a balanced approach with some constructive discussion rather than the somewhat bizarre extreme viewpoints of a minority of society." (from a man).

"I am just fed up to the teeth about watching programmes on the subject of 'WOMEN'. From when I get up in the morning until I go to bed at night, I am continually confronted with an everlasting supply of either Greenham Common women, or women shooting off their mouths about wanting a divorce for no reason at all; or else I have to put up with a group of Women's Liberated Comedians and, now, they are complaining about porn... I can bring to mind about one programme now on about MEN - the first for a long time... from my point of view we could do with a whole lot less comment and programmes on women and more on MEN..." (from a man)

continued over...

12 Woman's Voice, Man's Views . . .

The Sunday Times knows that, for all its deviuos sexism, it would never get away with a blatantly anti-woman rave if it was written by a man. So when Julie Birchell of New Musical Express offers them a totally offensive, deliberately provocative piece to outdo Auberon Waugh you can see their eyes glinting with relish. How to provide a suitably nasty swipe at feminism and the women's peace movement that feminists presumably will not be able to answer back. How to promote divisiveness among women.

While not really wanting to provide her with a further platform for her anti-woman sentiments, here are a few typical quotes from the article on "Born-again Cows" which appeared on 4th March:

"The working-class Cow is not so bad, tending only to mill about vacantly and breed over-enthusiastically."

"Female friendship is fine for teenagers and old women, both of whom are so maddening in their own way that only a similar fruitbat could tolerate it for more than 10 minutes."

"The Born Again Cow is much worse than her Seventies precursor, the Earth

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"One programme made from the woman's point of view and 50% of the population feel excluded! One programme. It was unfair to men to exclude them, they whined. Instead of intelligent debate we were treated to men whining. Childishly. Do male viewers know that all programmes present their point of view and so are unfair to women? Do they also know that women are not allowed to make programmes for and about ourselves and that in addition we may not be angry! Because it upsets men. Only men may be angry."

"The POW programmes seem too scared to talk about women's sexuality really... The subjects that are covered are talked about as if we didn't care... The anger has been washed out of the tapes."

"Although I consider myself a feminist I can hardly say I've enjoyed the series. The main problem has been one of accessibility. The programmes make sense and flow for middle class women studying PhD's in media and sociology but for women like me who come from working class backgrounds they merely intimidated... Only committed feminists would have begun to understand the programmes and

Mother, because the Earth Mother always had the inclination and as she went to seed during her late youth it really wasn't a matter of great concern - her ankles had never been anything to write home about anyway."

The Sunday Times proclaims Birchell as the "prophetess of punk" - does this mean her ideas are born out of some sort of malicious, self-destructive chic? She would no doubt scorn attempts to pity her for not yet having discovered the joys of sisterhood, but such pity would be well-deserved. The despising of one's own sex, or any members of it, must amount, in the end, to a despising of oneself, of one's femaleness.

Truly despicable are those men who shelter behind their female stooges, who use them to disseminate their woman-hatred. Who gleefully interpret any divisions in the ranks of women as a justification for such misogyny. Men who truly wished to be good allies for women would not use the results of women's self-oppression in this way, but would always encourage women to see the truth about ourselves.

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surely these are the last women who you should be trying to reach."

"Your programme would have had no impact at all on ordinary people - other than to confirm their stereotype views. Sexist males and females would've switched off immediately. Anti-sexist men would've felt (AGAIN!) excluded... Your programme was made for middle class educated women for the same..." (from a woman)

"I noticed that most of the women commentators were dressed like men and some of them adopted the same postures as men... They seem devoid of emotion and completely sexless." (from a man)

"The stars of your show were worried that these pornographic pictures of women painted a bad image, however I feel that it is these feminists who are destroying the femininity of women. Sometimes I didn't know whether I was looking at men or women." (from a woman)

"I am writing to congratulate you on your excellent programme on prostitution... All the issues were set out really clearly." (from a woman)

YOU'LL GET A KICK OUT OF GS BATTERIES

AND THEY'LL STAY CHARGED LONGER TOO!

THE NO.1 6 & 12v MOTORCYCLE REPLACEMENT BATTERY.

Send SAE for Battery Maintenance Chart

GS From **Tran Am** CYCLE WORLD LTD

14-16 AIRFIELD RD, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET

If you see an advertisement in a newspaper or magazine that offends you:

- write to the editor, explaining why you find the ad offensive;
- send a copy to the manufacturer or producer of the service;
- and a copy to the Advertising Standards Authority, Brook House, 2-16 Torrington Place, London WC1, with a covering letter asking them to take up your complaint.

adversary

This month's offensive ad appeared in the March 1984 issue of "Bike" magazine. We sent them the following letter:

Dear Sir/Madam,

We wish to complain about the extremely offensive advertisement which appeared on p.52 of the March issue of your magazine.

Not only is the inclusion of the woman completely irrelevant to the product advertised, the use of such an image contributes to a view of women as sexually-available objects, marketable commodities.

Furthermore the deliberate aiming of the the charger clip at the woman's breast creates a very sadistic image; such implicit violence directed towards women is totally unacceptable. (We note that the charger clips are introduced purely for the purposes of creating this violent image, since they are not part of the advertised product).

We trust that you will not carry this ad, nor others like it, in future issues.

Yours faithfully,
Women's Media Action Group.

* * * * *

positive steps



The advertisement above appeared in Ms London, 16th January 1984.

A.S.A. REPORTS: summary

The February report of the Advertising Standards Authority revealed an all-time record: six ads investigated relating to offensiveness to women! And two of the complaints upheld. Not exactly earth-shattering, but something to be going on with. One hesitates to suggest that the ASA's greater readiness to uphold complaints against, or at least deprecate, offensive ads has contributed to a decrease in such ads - but a recent glance through all the publications in W.H. Smith revealed far less cause for offence than formerly. So it really is worth inundating the ASA with complaints!

Results of ASA investigations:

January.

Basis of Complaint: A company director objected to a front cover advertisement appearing in Engineering Distributor which featured a photograph of a nude model together with the headline 'What's a nice girl like this doing in an ad for tools?'. The advertisement continued 'now that we have your undivided attention . . .'. The complainant considered the illustration to be offensive. (Section II, 2)

Conclusion: The advertisers stated that the advertisement had been given a good deal of consideration when it was prepared and they regretted that even one person had been offended by what they had considered to be a light-hearted and acceptable approach. They volunteered to withdraw the advertisement immediately and the Authority was pleased to note the advertisers' prompt action in dealing with the complaint.

February.

Basis of Complaint: Three members of 'What's New in Industry' and 'Engineering Distributor' objected to an advertisement for an industrial degreasant headlined 'Sorry, there's one area of industry even Gunk can't clean up'. The advertisement featured a photograph of a girlie pin-up calendar and stated in the body copy 'True, we have to draw the line at cleaning up crumplet. But as degreasants go nothing strips off faster than Gunk'. The complainants considered the advertisement to be degrading to women, unnecessary and offensive. (Section II, 2.)

Conclusion: Complaint not upheld. The advertisers pointed out that the photograph was relevant to the message of the advertisement and they did not think that such an approach would cause offence to those to whom it was addressed. The publishers stated that no complaints had been received direct from readers and the Authority considered the advertisement to be acceptable in the context in which it appeared.

Basis of Complaint: Nine members of the public objected to an advertisement in 'Marketing' for a folding display system and which included a photograph of a semi-nude female model. The complainants all considered the photograph to be both irrelevant to the product advertised, and offensive. (Section II, 2.)

Conclusion: Complaint upheld. The advertisers stated that they believed the photograph, which showed the model reclining in a pool of water, unlikely to cause offence. They added that it had been selected to complement the copy line 'The Refreshingly New Display Concept', and to demonstrate how a 35mm transparency could be enlarged to cover the entire display system. The Editor of 'Marketing' stated, however, that the advertisement, which was a pre-printed leaflet, had been offered for insertion into the magazine at a late stage and that it had thus escaped their normal procedures for checking the suitability of advertisements. He added that had it been seen prior to publication, it would not have been accepted.

The Authority thought the inclusion of such a photograph which was quite irrelevant to the product being promoted could reasonably have been expected to cause offence amongst those likely to see it. The advertisers were requested to avoid such an approach in future.

Basis of Complaint: A member of the public objected to an advertisement in the 'Maidenhead Advertiser' for a 'range of chain saws', and which included a photograph of a scantily-clad female model sitting astride a chain saw. The complainant considered the illustration to be irrelevant to the product, and the sexual connotation to be offensive. (Section II, 2.)

Conclusion: Complaint upheld. The advertisers stated that the illustration had been included in order to catch the eye of their target audience which was exclusively male and that they did not consider the advertisement to be offensive. The Authority was pleased to note, however, that following the notification of the complaint, the advertisers gave an immediate assurance that the advertisement would not be repeated.

* **Basis of Complaint:** Two members of the public objected to advertisements which appeared in the Lewisham & Catford News Shopper and the County Border News, Tandridge for tyres which featured line drawings of a scantily-clad female draped across tyres, their latter advertisement including the headline 'Let us tyre you out'. The complainants considered the illustrations to be unnecessary and the advertisements to be in very bad taste. (Section II, 2.)

Conclusion: Complaints not upheld. The Authority noted that the Lewisham & Catford News Shopper had rejected the headline 'Let us tyre you out', but both publishers considered the line drawings to be acceptable. They had received only one complaint direct. The Authority considered that the line drawings were irrelevant and the advertisements were in poor taste, but that they were unlikely to cause grave or widespread offence.

Basis of Complaint: A member of the public objected to an advertisement in the 'Letchworth & Baldock Express' offering tyres, exhausts, brakes and shock absorbers, and which featured a photograph of a semi-nude female model. The complainant considered the illustration to be both irrelevant to the products being offered, and offensive. (Section II, 2.)

Conclusion: The advertisers stated that they had utilised this approach in their advertising for a number of years and did not believe that it was likely to cause offence. The publishers confirmed that they regularly carried this advertising, with a variety of photographs and had not considered it to contravene the Code. They added that they had received an assurance from the advertiser that particular care would be taken in the choice of photograph to be used in future. Although the Authority did not consider that the advertisement had caused grave or widespread offence to readers in general, they thought that the use of female models in advertisements for motor products was unnecessary and irrelevant, and recognised that such an approach could well cause offence to some people. The advertisers were asked to consider using an alternative approach in future advertisements.

Basis of Complaint: A member of the public objected to a cinema advertisement for used motor vehicles which featured a scantily clad female model in a bedroom, together with a voice-over which stated: 'She may be beautiful . . .' and continued by highlighting the 'real value' of the vehicle offered by the advertiser. The complainant considered it both irrelevant and offensive to utilise such an approach to sell used motor vehicles. (Section II, 2.)

Conclusion: The Authority noted that the visual aspect of the advertisement had originally been designed for the promotion of beauty salons, but in this instance had been adapted to include a special sound commentary for use by the advertiser. The Authority thought that such an approach was quite unacceptable for the type of product being advertised, and was pleased to note that the advertisement would be withdrawn in view of the complaint.

REPLY TO OUR COMPLAINT TO THE SOUTH LONDON PRESS

(The ad which we featured in our last issue was for London Tyres, and depicted a scantily-clad and beckoning woman - the ASA investigated this ad in other publications, and their response is given above*).

Dear Group,

Thank you for your letter regarding the tyre advertisement. While I would agree that the link between the product and the sketch is as thinly-drawn as the cartoon character's T-shirt, I am inclined to believe the majority would find it too trivial an image to be extremely offended.

It is, after all, a cartoon - an imaginary figure which the advertiser clearly believes serves an alluring purpose in drawing readers' attention to his product. I am sure there are many people who would find the style archaic and irrelevant but the advertiser is apparently convinced it assists his sale, and I am advised he uses the cartoon in all his company's promotional activities.

The presumed impression of there being some association between tyres and sexual promise is evidently preposterous. In those circumstances I think it unreasonable to assume the image is anything other than laughable and I find it hard to believe readers would spend time dwelling on your thesis that the cartoon is as much of a commodity as the tyres, since the image is clearly absurd.

I therefore make no pledge the advert will not be repeated, though I live in hope the advertiser may be persuaded to use some more relevant image.

Richard Woolveridge, Editor.

NO COMMENT!

REVIEW

LIANNA (Reviewed by Teresa Vermeulen)

It is enormously encouraging to see that Lianna is on general release, appearing in local cinemas, not just the ICA. A film which has as its central theme a love affair between two lesbians runs the risk of being kept firmly in the fringe cinemas. This would be a shame, as the emotions and problems presented to us in Lianna are those which crop up with the same kind of frequency and insistency in heterosexual relationships and marriages. The fact that the two central characters are lesbians does not prevent heterosexual viewers from sympathizing with them and feeling for them.

I think this is the director's greatest success in Lianna. Too often lesbians only ever feature in films, plays or stories as extraordinary women with unusual looks and in unusual circumstances. The film counters the stereotype partly by portraying the love affair in a mixed social setting and partly by giving us a lesbian heroine who is feminine rather than feminist. Lianna is married, a housewife with two children and a career-minded husband. Scenes from her life emphasize her commitment to this role: she serves food to her family, she takes her kids to the park, she picks up her husband from his work. She is small, slim and conventionally pretty, with a wardrobe of feminine clothes.

Lianna falls in love with her evening class teacher. That this person is a woman not a man confounds our prejudiced expectations and begins a rather pleasing ironical link between heterosexual relationships and this one (and therefore, by implication, other lesbian relationships too), which runs throughout the film. The difficulties Lianna encounters when leaving her husband and children to be with Anne are those of childcare, employment, housing - tiresome practical details - as well as the worry of friends' loyalties. Contrary to stereotypes, Anne is not an open defiant lesbian. Far from having 'come out' in the closely-knit college community in which they live, she is anxious about losing her job and tries to keep the affair with Lianna as secret as possible. She has a lover in another town to whom she intends to return. Lianna's initial joy and certainty turn to misery and confusion, as Anne fails to come to any decision about her predicament.

Such attempts to demystify the lesbian affair are the film's strengths, but in one

15
important aspect the attempts backfire; that is, they rob lesbianism of its political threat in a patriarchal, heterosexual society. It is true that lesbians who are open about their preference are slightly more accepted on the whole in a university environment than in the working class world in which most of us live. But I was disquieted to see Lianna's enthusiastic openness about her new affair with Anne; wouldn't most housewives in such a position feel some doubt, confusion, even remorse? After all it's quite something to walk out on your husband and children (your own children!), let alone to change your sexual habits.

Giving up the image of heterosexual wife and mother is throwing the most prestigious role society offers a woman. The worlds of film makers and university academics may be nonchalant about making this kind of change, but for most women it is a tremendous step involving bewilderment and pain as well as fulfilment.

I was rather surprised too that more is not made of the blow to the husband's pride when Lianna leaves him for Anne. Throughout the film he gets all the punch-lines, and this occasion is no exception. I would have expected this news, of all news, to have flawed him, but no - back he comes with ready sarcasm.

The effect that playing down such a change has on us, the viewers, is to make it increasingly hard to identify with Lianna as she supposedly evolves into the woman she has always been within. Anne, however, comes more and more to life for me, as she is forced to confront the conflicting aspects of her life.

But what made me most dissatisfied about Lianna was the 'sensual' side so proudly announced on the posters. The director, John Sayles, claims to have made a film about lesbians out of a kind of intellectual benevolence, but his attempts at sensuality come over as crude and voyeuristic. Two scenes in particular were offensive to me. One of these, featuring eyeing up women on the street, seems like an episode from The Likely Lads, only more vulgar. The other, with Lianna and Anne making love, was so openly voyeuristic it made me squirm; later it made me angry. Putting two women together and instructing them to act like lesbians making love for the benefit of the (male) viewer is what pornographers do. John Sayles knows this; did he not realize how this lengthy and embarrassing scene would belie his stated intention to portray lesbians sympathetically and realistically?

Your Face Is Their

Fortune

TIRED of using lotions and creams that have no positive effect on your skin but which have burned a hole in your pocket?

It is high time consumers, especially women, realise that most cosmetics do not live up to their claims as advertised.

Advertising is a very important part of the cosmetic industry because the products sold are not basic or essential to health. Thus, very often, fantastic claims are made, much pseudo-scientific language is used, and the packaging is highly attractive.

The result is that millions of women pay exorbitant prices for products that they can do without. The cosmetic industry is getting rich with your money!

One cosmetic company, Avon, recorded sales of about M\$5 billion in 1981. Another company, Unilever, made worldwide sales that exceeded M\$40,000 million, in 1979, on toilet preparations alone.

The term 'cosmetic' could apply to any substance or preparation claimed to be capable of being used for cleansing, improving, altering or beautifying any part of the external surface of the body. It ranges from items like soap and shampoo to items such as perfume, face cream and lipstick.

Within this wide range of products, skin care cosmetics make the most exaggerated claims. While perfumes do provide you with fragrance, and rouge adds a touch of colour to your face, skin care products do almost nothing for your skin.

According to Dr Vernon Coleman, a fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine, 'the nonsense talked by the beauty experts and the manufacturers of skin care products' makes the misleading claims of the drug industry sound mild in comparison.

Rubbish

He added, 'I have never come across so much pseudo-scientific rubbish as I have during the months I've been investigating the cosmetic industry.'

One good illustration of what Dr Coleman meant is Estee Lauder's Swiss Performance Extract.

The brochure says, 'Clean. Pure. Clear as mountain air. That's the goal Estee Lauder has in mind for every complexion when she formulated her new extraordinary new SWISS PERFORMANCE EXTRACT, Super-rich nourishing lotion.'

'Observing that Swiss women who live in clean mountain air look young and radiant years after other women begin to age, Estee Lauder created SWISS PERFORMANCE EXTRACT for the women of this country.'

So, since you cannot have the clean, fresh air of Switzerland, Estee Lauder brings it to you in a bottle. The mere suggestion is an insult to the intelligence of Malaysian women.

As for being pure, no lotion in a bottle can be absolutely pure as it is a mixture of different chemical substances, and the claim 'clear as mountain air' is an absurd suggestion.

Moreover, are there any studies to indicate that Swiss women look young and radiant longer than other women?

No amount of application of creams and lotions is going to make you look any younger. How soon you age depends on the mental, physical and emotional state of your health.

If you eat well and lead a stress-free life with ample exercise, you will definitely look young for a long time to come.

In any case, why would lovely brown-skinned Malaysian women want

the pale Swiss skin when many Swiss women would give anything to bask under the Malaysian sun for a tan?

Impression

One advertisement of a skin care product by Harriet Hubbard Ayer says, 'Protect and moisturise with our Reconditioning Emulsion. A new 24 hour beauty care formula that actually reconditions the skin to restore its elasticity and delicate moisture balance.'

The impression given to the reader is that the product will replenish any moisture that is lost by the skin. This is not possible in human physiology. Products

sold as moisturisers do not actually add water or oil to the skin. They only help to prevent loss of moisture by the skin.

Another misleading impression often given by advertisements is that skin creams are 'nourishing'. Certain products are even given nourishing-sounding names, such as Nutribel, a cream by Lancome, which claims to be able to help 'preserve the supple skin of youth.'

Now, any nourishment the skin requires is derived from the food we eat. If at all any substance is absorbed by the skin, it is quickly disseminated throughout the body. It definitely does not remain on the skin.

It is also often claimed by many manufacturers that their skin care products are able to restore the PH balance of the skin.

What exactly does that mean? The term PH refers to the level of acidity of any

Taken from Utusan Konsumer, Dec. 83 (Malaysian consumer newspaper)

substance. Skin specialists have established that the human skin is normally acidic. Why this is so is not clearly understood.

But scientists do know that if the skin's acidity is altered in any way by any artificial factor, then the skin will restore itself quite quickly without any outside interference.

Vitamin E and vitamin F are very popular constituents of skin creams. Not much is known about these vitamins but from the little that is known, there is nothing to suggest that rubbing creams with such vitamins in them, has any useful effect on the skin.

Collagen is another popular ingredient in skin care cosmetics. Our skin tissues are made of collagen and it is a very important constituent of healthy skin. The vital question is: Can collagen be absorbed through the skin when applied as a cream? It is doubtful.



Ten-O-Six: for a lifetime of beautiful skin.
You can actually feel it working.