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women's media action ♀

No. 29
Sept/Oct
1984

30p

wonderful strong powerful

SPORTSWOMEN
see p.5

bold
images

trivial
words

shapely golden girl of the

Being
a 5-ft. 3-in. feather in the wind. Benoit

amazing little girl's oxygen intake

T&B
10

ROMANIA

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Games of the XXV
LO

ROMANIA

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An elfin faced, 24 year old,

172

Over the last lap Puica, a 34-year-old bleached-blond,

The sturdy, perky little lady, aged 28, is the first yachtswoman ever to take up an Olympic tiller. What she isn't, and emphatically, is a "helmswoman", or even worse to the ears, a "helmsperson".

below the bubbly exterior is a very determined young lady.
The tiny figure of Zola Budd, whose skinny legs

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Women's Media Action is a feminist group whose aims are :

- a) to eliminate sexism and stereotyping of women in the media,
- b) to fight for positive and balanced images of women in all aspects of our lives,
- c) to inspire, encourage and support women to refuse to be passive recipients of media sexism.

We campaign against :

1. The portrayal of women as sex objects by using women's bodies to sell; e.g. women draped over cars, women as depicted in The Sun, advertisements for tights, etc.
2. The depiction of violence against women as acceptable, enjoyable, or the fault of women; e.g. the reporting of rape in a way intended to trivialise and titillate; posters advertising films, videos, etc. exploiting violence against women.
3. The assumption that domestic matters, child care, nurturing are solely the responsibility of women and girls, and at the same time trivial; the assumption that technical, political, scientific and economic matters are men's domain.
4. The stereotyping of human qualities into feminine and masculine; 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 as possessions of men.
7. The use of language which implies that the masculine includes the feminine, i.e. that men are the norm to which women are an exception, e.g. "history of man", "he" to mean "he or she", "trade unionists and their wives", etc.
8. The use of details in reporting which describe a woman's personal appearance, age, marital status or lifestyle, where these are irrelevant; e.g. "Mrs Judy Rankin, who is exceptional among professional golfers in being petite, feminine and married..." etc.
9. Words which belittle and trivialise women; e.g. "girl" (for women of any age), "bird", "chick", "bit of stuff", etc.
10. The inference that heterosexuality is the only normal and acceptable mode of behaviour.
11. The discrimination against women on grounds of race, class or physical ability.

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EDITORIAL GROUP FOR THIS ISSUE:

Jane Apsey
Veronica Rago
Teresa Vermeulen
Jenny Chibnall

WITH THANKS TO:

Sue and Jean

SUCCESS!

One success has been the withdrawal of the Hoover advert with the headline 'Who's built a Turbo for women drivers' which appeared in the Sunday Supps. - the implication being that housework is exclusively women's work and that women are unlikely to be interested in driving turbo-charged cars. Hoover have had their advertising agency develop an alternative headline, as to quote from a letter one of our readers received 'We do of course continually monitor the effect of our advertising and letters such as yours do influence our thinking.'

As usual the Advertising Standards Authority, despite over fifty complaints, did not uphold any of these, they merely 'commended the agency for its readiness to accommodate the sensitivities of the minority who have been offended.' (August, 1984 ASA Case Reports.)

This grain of encouragement from Hoover does seem to make letter writing an effective form of action, but what can we do about the ASA!?!?

Weekend in Wiltshire

We are planning a weekend away at Lower Shaw Farm from the 12th to the 14th October. This is open to all our readers - please return the coupon below by the 30th September if you'd like to come.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED :

- * slide show and discussion
- * examining the construction of images
- * painting, collage and lots of other creative activities
- * games, fun and dancing
- * aims and objectives of Women's Media Action; ideas for future campaigns, etc.

Vegetarian meals provided.

Bring photos of yourself, hated ads and press cuttings, etc - and don't forget warm clothes!

Place: Lower Shaw Farm, Shaw, Nr Swindon, Wilts
(0793)771 080

Time: 6pm Friday 12 to 4pm Sunday 14 October

I am looking forward to being at the Women's Media Action Weekend. I enclose £10 deposit £22 full fee

Name:

Address:

Special needs:

Need a lift/can offer a lift from:



RIGHT OF REPLY

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom is a non-party, broadly-based organisation which is working to make the media more accessible, diverse and accountable. They have been campaigning for some time for individuals and groups who have been misrepresented by the media to be given a 'right of reply': that is, equivalent space to put their case in their own words and set the record straight.

The CPBF now have a women's section and several sub-groups have been formed to work on various topics including the right of reply for women against media sexism. If you would like to be involved in the discussions come along to their first meeting - Wednesday 19 September, 6.30 pm at 9 Poland Street W1.

Other sub-groups will discuss a code of conduct on media sexism (meeting: Wednesday 12 September) and women as media workers (Thursday 13 September). Dates and times as above. There will be a general meeting at the 'Intrepid Fox', 99 Wardour Street, London W1 at 6.30. At the first general meeting on 26 September, Cynthia Cockburn will talk on male attitudes in Fleet Street.

WHAT TO DO:

In the meantime, until we win the right of reply against media sexism, the Campaign general notes on combating media bias should prove useful:

1. GET YOUR CASE TOGETHER - Why does the story offend? Is it factually inaccurate? Have you been misquoted? Has it caused you personal distress or difficulty? Have you been harassed by journalists? Is the item in breach of the NUJ Code of Conduct? (eg Section 10: 'A journalist shall not originate material which encourages discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation.') Actions under the code can be undertaken by NUJ members on behalf of members of the public. Penalties include fines of up to £1,000 and expulsion from the union. Get in touch with other people who may be supportive or who have been misrepresented in the same piece, - work on your case together.

2. CONTACT EDITORIAL SIDE - Firstly, try to contact the journalist/s responsible for writing the offending item. Confront them with the implications of their actions. Ask them why they told lies/distorted your position. Editors are not renowned for making themselves available to those who wish to complain about their product. Don't be fobbed off, however, write to the editor as quickly as possible and, if possible, get a delegation together and go to see him/her in person. (It could be very useful to ask for the help of trade unionists at this stage).

3. CONTACT THE RELEVANT MEDIA UNIONS Get in touch with union workplace (chapel) officials. The relevant unions are: NUJ, NGA, SOCAT 82, EETPU (for complaints against the Press); NUJ, ABS, ACTT (broadcasting). State your case to the workplace officials (referred to as Father or Mother of the Chapel) and ask for help: eg help to get into the building to meet the editorial side, help to meet the editor and to negotiate with him/her over getting a right of reply, independent action by the unions (eg printing a statement or disclaimer in support of your objections), action against the journalist under the NUJ Code of Conduct.

4. CONTACT OTHER MEDIA - eg local radio stations, alternative media, Channel 4's Video Box - and don't forget WMAG!

5. IF ALL ELSE FAILS - consider picketing; a letter-writing campaign; or more direct actions like occupying the newsrooms or editor's office. Involve the workplace unions in these activities. It is important that they know what you are doing and are invited to take part.

This is an abbreviated version of 'Media Bias and what to do about it' - a leaflet produced by the BPBF. Further information and advice on challenging the media from:

Right of Reply Unit
Campaign for Press and Broadcasting
Freedom
9 Poland Street
LONDON W1V 3DG

tel: 01 437 2795 (10am-5pm)

Jean Harding

MÔNITÔR

: OLYMPIC PRESS COVERAGE

A group of us were discussing women and sport at about the time of Wimbledon this year. Though most of us had little interest in sport, it was difficult to ignore Wimbledon. Womens tennis is deemed to be slower less powerful and therefore less exciting than men's. Perhaps for this reason reports on women at Wimbledon in the National newspapers did not seem to concentrate on tennis.

The Mirror ran a central page spread on women's fashion over the years at Wimbledon - frilly knickers and all, as remembered by a top male designer. They also reported off court rivalry between Navratilova and Mandlikova, using phrases such as "the claws came out". Reports of Navratilova's "friend" getting a divorce from her husband made front page news.

The Sunday Times had an article on "the return of girls to Wimbledon" apparently praising a supposed return to femininity to our ominously butch centre courts. It seemed that the papers wanted us to believe that the excitement of watching Navratilova play could be best explained by her "non-femininity"- she is hardly a real women in their view.

We decided we would attempt some monitoring of the media's coverage on sports women. This being an Olympic year we had the opportunity to see a large amount of reports on women in sport.

It is not always so easy to see sportswomen mentioned so frequently in the media. We looked at a selection of national newspapers for each day of the Olympics.

patronising

Sportswriters are often patronising towards women, assuming that sport for women is not really deserving of full coverage. Note how little women's cricket and football is mentioned. We carried out a rough count of articles in various newspapers restricting ourselves to the sports pages, The percentages of articles referring to men, women or both sexes is in the table below.

OLYMPIC COVERAGE IN THE SPORTS PAGES

	Percentage of articles referring to:		
	MEN	WOMEN	BOTH
The Telegraph	71	18	12
The Sun and The Star*	65	25	10
The Mail	64	28	7
The Guardian	64	23	14
The Express	63	33	5
The Times	53	19	27
The Mirror	50	36	13
Average percentages	61%	26%	13%

NB: Rows may not add to 100% due to rounding

* Counted together due to boredom!

To put these figures into perspective it must be born in mind that the British Olympic team had 233 male competitors (68%) and 109 female competitors (32%). Perhaps of more relevance since the papers did not only mention British sportspeople, of the 221 Olympic events 65% were for men only, 28% for women only and 7% and men and women competing on an equal footing.

From these figures it would appear that women in the Olympics do not suffer from underreporting.

Only The Telegraph has a particularly bad record. The Express and The Mirror even seemed to have a bias towards reporting womens events!

We felt that the high coverage of women's events stemmed from nationalism, as it is not typical in sport's reporting.

Sexism could be forgotten in the dash to write about our British heroines and heroes.



Nevertheless full coverage does not imply a less patronising attitude. From our earlier discussions we had identified four obvious stereotypes in the media's view of sportswomen and certainly these seemed to apply in the Olympic coverage.

Perhaps the most obvious of these is that of the Emotional Vulnerable Woman, not able to concentrate on sport alone.

Note The Times report on a yachting event (in which incidentally, men and women compete together) headed "Cathys at the Tiller".

"Pete was doing all the talking, The Olympics were getting to Cathy. She was nervous. After all her role is unique in Olympic history. The sturdy, perky lady, aged 28, is the first yachtswoman ever to take up an Olympic tiller. What she isn't and emphatically, is a "helmswoman" or even worse to the ears a "helms person".

The Telegraph ran an article on one of the best female sprinters under the heading "Decker aims at Gold and Marriage". Zola Budd is a powerful runner yet the papers maintained a patronising attitude towards her as exemplified by The Stars description,

"Zola is just 18, but looks nearer 14, has the look of a startled rabbit whenever she's caught up in the glare of publicity and gives the impression of being very lonely both on and off track".

sex object

Olympic sportswomen do not escape the Sex Object stereotype. Typical of the references is that made to "the bleached blonde" Price. The Star in the same article quoted above said of Mary Decker,

"After all, the 26 year old Decker recently appeared in tantalising topless pose on a beach and would give any Star bird a real run for her money. Mind you what can you expect of The Star.

deviant

Another media image that we are concerned about is that of the Powerful Muscled Women as being in some way Deviant. An article in The Sunday Times earlier this year on an East German sprinter insinuated that if she was not on drugs to improve her physique she must be part-man. This particular image was not as much in evidence at the 1984

Olympics as it has been in previous years doubtless because of the absence of the Eastern Block competitors. Yet the Radio Times suggested that muscles are clearly undesirable in a woman,

"As well as her two pool sessions a day, totalling four and a half hours, she also does regular weight training. Good shoulders she knows are essential for a swimmer, but nevertheless she feels self-conscious about acquiring muscles, "When I've finished swimming, I'm going to get rid of them she says".

The final stereotype that we found of the sportswoman as an Obsessive and Driven woman. The suggestion seems to be that an explanation or apology is often needed for women who excel in sport. Thus ones see's descriptions such as that of Fatima Whitbread.

"Fatima Whitbread has captured every ones hearts with the fairytale story of how she was rescued from a children's home as a difficult 13 year old and adopted by national javelin coach Margaret Whitbread".

Sportsmen, however, are not exempt from this form of coverage (eg. Daley Thompson's hard struggle from a poor background), but it often seems that men are depicted having achieved despite their disadvantages, whereas women are shown to have been driven to succeed in an "unfeminine" pursuit.



This image of the "driven" women is often reinforced by emphasis on the coaching she receives. There were constant references to women's coaches and trainers in Olympic reporting. The Times had on a long piece on Mary Lou Retton's coach,

"The coach, Bela Karolyi, and his wife defected from Rumania in 1981" because the Government wanted to run my programme". He now lives in the U.S.A and is driving the tiny, deceptively muscular - she looks like the neighbourhood fatty - American Mary Lou Retton to fame in the games.

....Karolyi slammed his fist into his palm, "in gymnastics there has to be

cont. p. 8 col. 2

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The Managing Director
Benson & Hedges Ltd
13 Old Bond Street
London W1

Dear Sir/Madam,

We would like to raise our strongly felt objections to your current ad for Silk Cut Cigarettes. We realise that you will say that the ad is merely a clever visual pun, but we are nevertheless convinced that there was a deliberate intention in the advertiser's mind of subliminal sexual innuendo.

Whether or not you hold this to be so (and you may not have thought of it consciously yourselves), you should nevertheless pay attention to the fact that this ad is profoundly disturbing to many women, even though some may not be able to articulate their reason for this. For those of us familiar with images of mutilation in pornography and so-called 'erotic art', the reason for our discomfort is abundantly clear.

We trust that you will have sufficient regard for the sensibilities of women, for the very real fear of sexual violence felt by women, and for the contribution made by ads such as yours to a prevailing climate of such violence - and that you withdraw this ad immediately.

Yours faithfully,

Julienne Dickey
for WMAG

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

- 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

SLIT SILK IS
SLIK PORN

The offending ad was on billboards, and now in double page spreads in the 'quality' newspapers, and in magazines. A Silk Cut Campaign was formed in London which carried out some direct action. So, what do you think? Let us know. See Page 8 for the Advertising Standard's Authority view of cigarette advertising.

TAR As defined by H.M. Government
Government Health WARNING:
SERIOUSLY DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH

Dear Ms Dickey,

Thank you for your letter of 25 July. I was not only surprised to receive your letter but also, somewhat dismayed. I am surprised, because in our consumer research, the comments you make did not arise. I am dismayed, because you appear to feel that we have intentionally set out to insult women in general - we have never and will never set out to do so. Therefore I must apologise for any perceived insult on your part, and assure you that from our extensive research guidance you are in, from our point of view fortunately, a tiny minority.

Yours sincerely,

N Northridge
Brand Manager
Silk Cut

CIGARETTES

Have you ever wondered why cigarette ads don't display glamorous or scantily-clad women? Well it's not because they're more 'enlightened' - it's because it would contravene the Advertising Standards Authority Code of Advertising Practice - specifically clause 2.8 reads 'Advertisements should not claim directly or indirectly that to smoke, or to smoke a particular brand (a) is a sign or proof of manliness, courage or daring, (b) enhances feminine charm.' Clause 2.10 states 'Advertisements should not include copy or illustrations which are sexually titillating or which imply a link between smoking and sexual success; not should any advertisement contain any demonstration of affection in such a way as to suggest romantic or sexual involvement between those portrayed.'

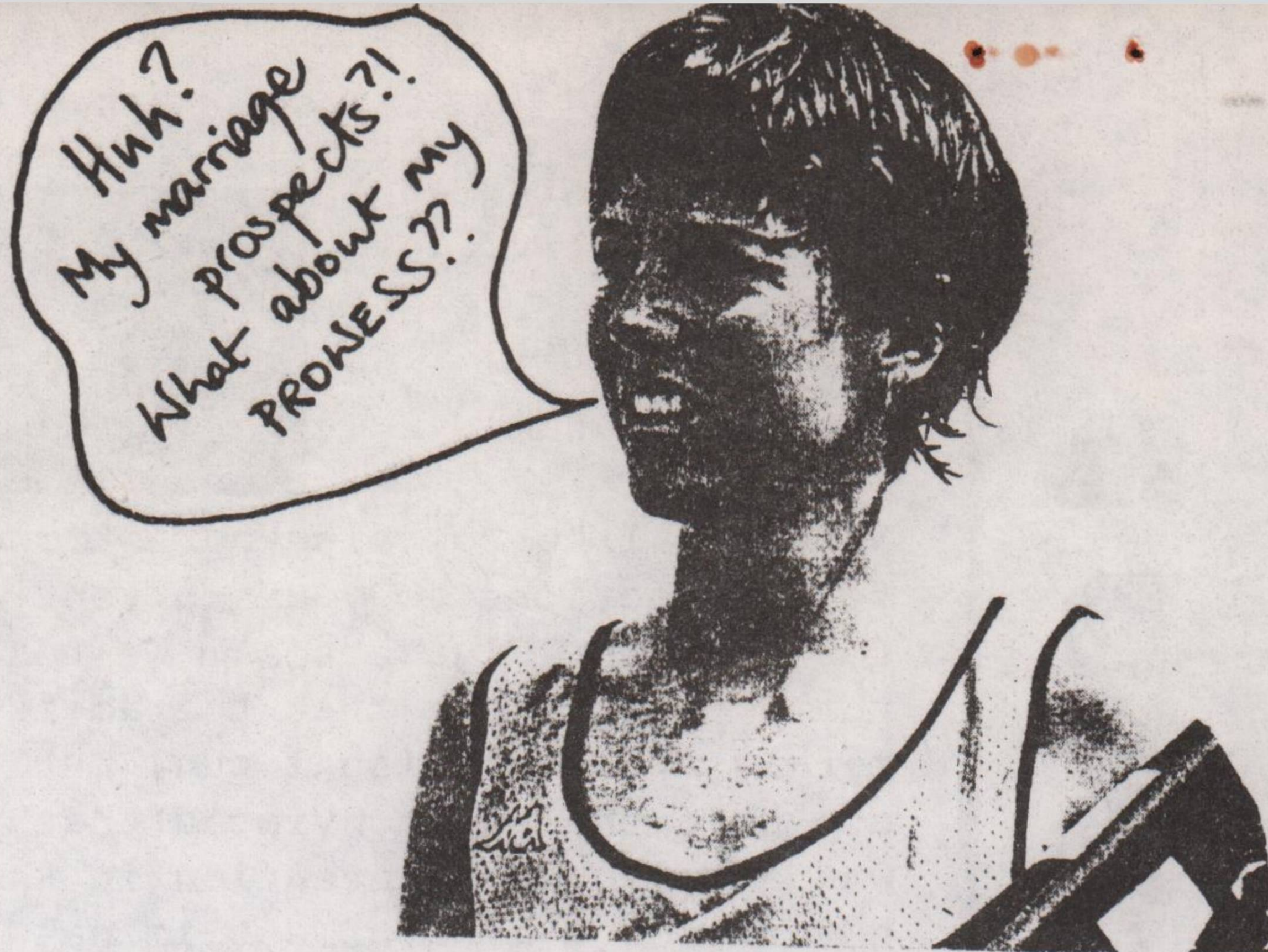
AND THE A.S.A.

One immediately wonders why if the ASA can take this stand with regard to the advertising of cigarettes, and, incidentally, alcohol, they refuse to pay attention to the sexual objectification of women in all other ads.

So how do cigarette advertisers cope with these restrictions? The first noticeable effect is the considerable expansion of their creative powers - with the consequence that they win much admiration and a number of awards. As women we can be grateful that our bodies have been removed at least from these ads - but perhaps we need to be suspicious of what the advertisers are getting up to now, given that it is unlikely that they have purged sexist attitudes from their thought processes! It is possible that they have simply become more devious, and are utilizing more subliminal imagery - one recent ad certainly open to debate for this is that for Silk Cut.

Julienne Dickey

Grantham Women are planning a festival for 16 and 17 November and they need some help. They say 'the aim of the festival is to spread knowledge and confidence throughout the local community.' The main areas on which they will concentrate will be women's art, history, work and health. But they need financial support as rural Lincolnshire is an extremely conservative area' and they need to raise £3,000. Contact them at 8 Elan Street, Grantham, Lincs. tel 72246 if you can help.



a risk and a versatility. Mary Lou and I are striving to show the world what is capable of a human being. ok ok.

On the opposite page is a piece headed "Sarah very happy Coach very angry" "He is frankly unapologetic, if I had not taken over the last two weeks of preparation, Sarah might not even have reached the final let alone won a medal. Higgs is critical of the way that the whole British training camp was conducted. He thinks the whole team, on the face of it performed moderately but not unsatisfactorily, were not worked hard enough.

In fact most popular papers, when mentioning Sarah's coach, clearly believe that she would be nowhere without him.



Having started this overview of the national newspapers Olympic reports, the worst was feared from the predominately male sportswriters. However we were pleasantly surprised. We found nothing like the degree of sexist reporting we had expected.

As mentioned earlier we thought this was mainly due to the strong patriotic feelings that the Olympics always seem to inspire.

The lack of Eastern block countries (after all our enemies!) probably also served to soften the style of reporting. Possibly also the obsession with the historical Olympian ideals of the pursuit of excellence overrode other baser feelings!

Nevertheless we should expect these prevalent media representations of sportswomen as being "flawed" achievers to be challenged and not reinforced.

The Media in Pakistan

Miriam Habib is Women's Editor and Staff Writer of the national English daily The Pakistan Times, a position she has held since 1964. The following is taken from the text of an address given by her to the International Interdisciplinary Congress for Women, held in the Netherlands in April of this year.

"A phenomenal acceleration is under way in the international media industry, indeed the jargon of technology and development refers constantly to the 'information society' which almost all countries of the world have entered, albeit in varying measure. Information will be the commodity of the future, in commerce, government, the professions and entertainment. The one who commands information channels and technology will also command the thinking, attitudes and allegiances of millions over the globe. National frontiers will dissolve under sound and light waves, the individual through a thousand devices will have access to a bewildering multiplicity of messages which will both perceptibly and imperceptibly condition thinking and behaviour.

The implications for women in all societies could be both grave and hopeful depending on how the information apparatus and the media, specifically print, electronic, film and advertising are projected and received by women and men. The media are now a 'given' in any human community, inextricably meshed into the myriad sensory stimuli to which persons of all ages are exposed. TV, for instance, is a widespread presence its impact ranging from a mere 'wallpaper' effect to one that commands active participatory interest. If the crystal-gazers are to be believed the passive role of the viewer as one who accepts, either quality or poor messages, can be changed to one of dialogue where the programme content can be altered to suit the recipient's taste while it is actually playing. However, societies need not wait for this technological miracle. Women, if aware of their self-hood and conscious of their own potential to influence rather than merely be influenced by the media, can even now continually articulate and act towards the optimum use of the media for a more realistic and dignified portrayal of their sex. An overall strategy that

precludes negative images, that seeks a positive input from the start is obviously preferable to one that militates for corrective action after our globe is saturated with unreal and degrading images of women, whether these emanate from the western or the developing worlds.

In Pakistan we may be fortunate that advertising has not assumed such ugly contours and that the female is not as widely used to sell products. However, media exposure increases every day and the absence of glaring exploitation in advertising is offset by comparative invisibility or poor projection in other areas. Let us look at the situation in Pakistan from what evidence can be mustered.

'A Study of Sex Role Images in Text Books' (1982) is an appropriate point to start our survey as the young minds grow on what is fed to them. The study by Mohammad Anwar of the Punjab University was commissioned by the Women's Division. 105 text books were analysed for comparative depiction of male and female characters. A few of the findings as produced in the summary released by the Women's Division are interesting.

Among Pakistani characters the ratio of male to female was three to one. In nursery books 95 per cent characters were male and 5 per cent female. Three fourths of the characters were urbanites while one fourth were rural (the reverse of reality). More than half the characters were shown to be upper class, one third were middle class and the remainder lower class.

Females were least likely to be 'learned', 'freedom fighters', 'Leaders', 'patriots', 'generous'. The most frequent attribute of a female was domestication.

These findings make their own comment - it seems there is a conspiracy against the Pakistani female that commences in the kindergarten. But as mentioned earlier, the truthfully observed and reported facts pave the way for intelligent reform. In the case of text books the writers need to be instructed through clear directives to show girls and women in more varied and positive roles. The nation has a duty towards its women, they deserve better than to have a sense of inferiority imposed upon them virtually from birth.

It has become a fashion to call upon the media to promote every cause going in the country, From tree plantation to savings to the transformation of society in general, There are great expectations from us for ushering in the attitudinal change that brings about social change. The Population Welfare Plan stresses the media's role. The latest to advocate a crusader role for the media is the Working Group on Women's Development in the country's Sixth Plan. A more definitive attitude in the projection of women is demanded. The report says, 'Without ambiguity both at policy and implementation level, the mass media should emphasise and facilitate the integration of women in the development process.'

stirring words

Now these are stirring words but one asks how can this desired objective be achieved unless women themselves become producers and purveyors for media messages. The first crucial prerequisite for an enhanced quality of portrayal therefore is a far greater presence of skilled, educated women in the print, electronic and other media.

How does Pakistan fare in this field? No comprehensive census is available. Radio and TV estimate four to five per cent women; in print it is less. The organisation where I work call itself 'Progressive' provides an illustration. Out of about seven hundred employees at every level we are seven women in all. A startling one per cent.

recommendations

The Pakistan Women's Institute study suggests, quite logically, that since 30 to 35 per cent of the adult population comprises women an equal proportion of media time and space should be devoted to dissemination of material of direct and indirect benefit to them. One may add, similarly the same figure could be kept as a target for employment of women at all levels of the communications industry.

For this a talent search would have to be undertaken and special career training plans instituted to encourage women to join media vocations.

Necessary directives are required to prod media managers and decision-makers who are in need of attitudinal change themselves.

More creative programmes to inspire women in education, health, income earning activity and self-development should be commissioned and used by the disseminating agencies.

It is tempting to make a long list of recommendations, most of which have already been offered by others and ourselves elsewhere. The important thing is to foster feedback and interchange, that is what communications is about: it should not be a one way flow from the top downwards, the consumers, the recipients should have a voice in what they expect from the media.

Women communicators can seek to emphasise the common denominator of all women's experience. Their multiple roles and responsibilities are not so divergent. It is a question of degree. A mother feeds her child, she works for a wage, she encounters ill-health, she faces discrimination and succumbs or overcomes it. Such experiences may be shared by a semi-literate woman in an Asian country and her more sophisticated counterpart in a developed society. The chasm dividing mutual perceptions of the so-called 'advanced' and 'backward' civilisations requires to be narrowed and a sense of international sisterhood created through informed co-operation. An approach of this kind, while global in concept, cutting across national GNPs, systems and economies, religions and races, may build towards the grand confluence optimistically forecast in Alvin Toffler's 'The Third Wave' where the family of nations move from positions of equal and complementary development towards a co-operative age nearer the ideal for all of mankind."

Miriam Habib

NATIONAL FEMINIST FILM AND VIDEO CONFERENCE

3 and 4 November
at

The Triangle
34 Clarence Road
Moseley
Birmingham B13 9sz

Tel: 021 449 7152

The theme for this year's conference is class. More details available from the above address.

Censorship and the GLC

The Greater London Council invited local authority licensing officers and interested parties, like ourselves, who had submitted papers both for and against censorship to their Cinema Policy Committee, to meet and discuss licensing with the British Board of Film Censors. The British Board of Film Censors showed themselves to be willing to meet interested members of the public, even enthusiastic about it, suggesting that the conference become an annual consultation. The conference was in the form of an address by James Ferman, who has been chair of the Board since 1975, followed by a general discussion. It was generally most encouraging. Some of the women on the Board identified themselves as feminist and the Board in general seemed aware of, and sympathetic to, feminist criteria. All but three members attended the conference. The question of the treatment of violence against women formed overall the main topic of discussion. When one pro-pornography male lobbyist claimed that 'in a free society' we must 'take the risk' that films may encourage violence, one of the women censors was quick to point out that it is women who take these risks.

James Ferman made the encouraging point that society has changed since the 70's and that the theory behind Emmanuelle that 'to be a complete sexual creature' a woman must get through 'the barrier of doing what she does not really want to do' is no longer acceptable. He described this film as 'the apotheosis of the male chauvinist view that women are not subjects but objects for the gratification of men' and on those grounds has cut the film for video release as being 'depraving and corrupting' in denying 'a woman's right to choose and to control her own sexuality and her own body' and 'eroding the sexual sovereignty of women'. I must point out that he also believes that 'sex and aggression are two of the fundamental drives which motivate us all', an 'us' which surely does not include women?

Nonetheless they do know what we are talking about and I think it's important we should have some dialogue with them. We plan to arrange a meeting with one (or more) of the women on the Board in November. Would you like to come to such a meeting or send us questions you'd like considered? Let us know.

Jenny Chibnall

♀ ♀ ♀

♪ The hours I save in the Spring tra la! ♪

SPRING-CLEANING

IS **SING**

CLEANING

with IDLENESS!

(RECOMMENDED BY THE W.M.A.G.)



BILLBOARD GRAFFITI

First meeting for women interested in strategic action.
Wednesday 19 September at 6.30
in the basement of A Woman's Place,
Hungerford House, Victoria Embankment,
London WC2

WOMENS PLAYHOUSE TRUST

The Women's Playhouse Trust was formed almost four years ago at a Conference of Women Theatre Directors and Administrators held at the ICA. Playwright Pam Gems suggested that women need a theatre controlled and directed by them and for them. From that original idea has evolved a controlling body of prominent women from the arts and public life including many leading actresses.

The aim of the WPT is to promote and encourage opportunities for women, both technical and artistic, in theatre and to this end it is pursuing the purchase of a central London theatre, having previously failed to acquire both the Garrick and the Mermaid. To sustain the momentum the founding directors (Sue Parrish, Nicole Penn-Symons, Rosemary Squire and Jules Wright) earlier this year decided to go ahead with a production funded partly by the GLC but mainly by a major unspecified sponsor and private individuals, for which the Royal Court donated their theatre and staff free.

This production was a lesser known Restoration comedy, The Lucky Chance, written by Aphra Behn in 1686, the first known professional woman playwright and a woman villified in her time for daring to write in the bawdy style of her male counterparts. Apart from the appropriateness of Behn as a pioneer of her time, Restoration comedy is a strange choice for a reputedly feminist organisation as it relies heavily on stereotyped roles and championing of male sexual lust with the consequent subordination and condemnation of women.

Furthermore, Aphra Behn has not offered any noteworthy female slant on her depiction of frivolous stock characters and sexual entanglements in the 17th century leisured classes. That said, this was a production of the highest standard directed by Jules Wright with a strong cast lead by Denis Lawson (of Mr Cinders at the Fortune and Pal Joey at the Half Moon fame), Kathryn Pogson and Harriet Walter (both renowned RSC actresses) who managed to capture a certain knavish awareness of the absurdities of the disjointed plot to a modern audience. The male characters were most strongly realised with Alan Rickman as the destitute and desperate Gayman, cunning in his relentless pursuit of a married lady and Jonathan Adams as the lascivious old Sir Feeble Fainwould turning in the most memorable performances. Music by Ilona Sekacz was a curiously effective

mixture of baroque elegance and modern blues juxtaposed sharply to emphasise the feeling of self parody, borne out by Jacky Lansley's saucy choreography.

In the same week in London in July another of Aphra Behn's plays, The Rover written in 1677 and considered at the time to be her best play was given at Upstream Theatre in Waterloo. This recounted the sexual adventures of three young soldiers, in particular Willmore for whom every woman was a potential conquest and whose brains were clearly in his trousers. The young ladies were scheming and full of guile - the only way they could each win the man of their choice - and the only woman (Angellica, a high class whore) to confront Willmore with a stern reproach of his philandering habits was strongly condemned by him for her own lack of morals! Clearly Behn's sympathies were with the sexual libertine. Under Peter Stevenson's direction the cast were not quite up to the finesse and subtlety required to drag this play of the gutter though Peter Neathey as Willmore tackled the part with considerable energy and gusto, effectively upstaging everyone else.

The WPT is planning a repertory programme of six plays a year including classics, revivals and new plays and has already commissioned Louise Page whose play Golden Girls is currently being staged by the RSC in Stratford. This young writer covered new ground in her recent play Real Estate at the Tricycle, London by depicting the male characters as sympathetic, caring and domesticated and the females as ruthless and ambitious in a provoking study of the relationship between mother and daughter.

Although the Women's Playhouse Trust is not a separatist venture and welcomes men as colleagues and actors it is a historic step for womankind giving a much needed boost to female confidence in the world of the arts.

Jean Tuffley

IS THERE ANYONE IN THE BRISTOL AREA WHO WOULD LIKE TO SET UP A WOMEN'S MEDIA ACTION GROUP? IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT:

Maggie Armour
25 Collingwood Road
Redland
BRISTOL 6

A NOREXIA AND
B ULIMIA
N ERVOSA
A SSOCIATION

REVIEW OF THEIR
NEWSLETTER - 1ST COPY
JUST OUT - 25p

by Teresa Vermeulen

A recent workshop on "Addictions and How to get rid of them" reminded me that it's not only women who use food for comfort, consolation, anger-outlet, etc. As this workshop revealed, men do too, all the time. Yet the people with food problems which cause illness: anorexia and bulimia, are almost inevitably women. Women are the focus of all our society's tensions and guilt about food: we have so much of it, here in northern Europe, and feeding is associated both with the most intimate of family scenes (mother breast-feeding her baby), and with the most ostentatiously social of group gatherings (parties, celebration dinners, wedding feasts).

Food advertising, which is almost invariably aimed at women, plays relentlessly on this guilt. It's no wonder that women, particularly young women, who are still trying to build up confidence in a society which oppresses and stereotypes them, become vulnerable to food problems.

ABNA has been recently formed to act as an advisory service to women who suffer anorexia or bulimia. All the founding members are sufferers or ex-sufferers of anorexia or bulimia, and they're keen for others to join them. They've recently produced the first copy of what will be a regular newsletter. It contains several accounts of anorexia and bulimia, by women who've had to cope with them, and by relatives who've helped women close to them get through food problems and illnesses.

ABNA hope that, with their help, women reading the newsletter will set up self-help groups, so they include contact addresses in the newsletter. For a copy, and for any information about ABNA, write to them: c/o Grouplinks, 25 Bertram St, London N19 5DQ Or 'phone: 01 387 4449 (Jane), 01 885 1259 (Katie)

*****~*****

PORN FOR THE TOYSHOP

Any of you who've seen the hoarding ads currently used by Pedigree Toys to market their *Sindy Doll* will know that the slogan makes reference to "Playboy", the pornographic magazine. "Miss August - Playmate of the month" it goes, and beneath the writing there's a picture of a *Sindy Doll*, wearing jeans and a jersey, lying on a beach.

If this exploitation of little girls' sexuality to the end of increasing Pedigree Toys' profits gives you the creeps, you should write and complain to them at the address below:

Pedigree, Market Way, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7JH

Write to the ASA too - they'll no doubt get a woman to write back to you saying there's nothing offensive about this ad and making you feel the most outrageous extremist ever to put pen to paper - but please tell them, and Pedigree too, if you are a parent. It might make a difference.

PETITIONS IN!



Would any of you who still have *Pretty Polly* petitions please send them in to us in the next week or so? We want to deliver them to the *Pretty Polly* board of directors (with copies to the ASA - groan - of course).

"SHUT UP AND LISTEN - Women and local radio"
by Helen Baehr and Michele Ryan
pub. by Comedia Press

Cardiff Broadcasting Company (CBC) was the first independent local radio station to be partly owned by the community it serves. The Cardiff Radio Trust owns 50% of the voting shares in CBC, and is run by a council elected by listeners and organisations in the transmission area: South and Mid-Glamorgan. Women's organisations have made an effort to ensure representation on the Trust, and on CBC's Board. These unusual facts made CBC a good place to investigate women's position in local radio. In 1981, the Equal Opportunities Commission awarded Michele Ryan a grant to work as Equal Opportunities Educational Broadcaster for a year. Another grant, from Central London Poly, made the post full-time, and this book gives us her findings.

Michele Ryan addressed herself firstly to two questions: why broadcasters appear to have such a low opinion of female listeners, and why so few women achieve positions of influence working in radio. The answers she comes up with provide a revealing insight into an archaically patriarchal system, ridden with useless jargon and illusory status. It can all seem rather discouraging, but the last section of the book is addressed to women who'd like to work in broadcasting, and gives helpful advice on how best to enter the various work areas.

Teresa Vermeulen

According to "Labour Weekly", the Labour Party has asked Women's Sections of its local branches to note examples of sexist advertising, and inform party headquarters at Walworth Road.

Recently, Exeter Labour Women's Council complained about a large poster for the film "Angel" - the one featuring the "high-school student by day" and "Hollywood hooker by night" - which was put up outside a school. Adshel, who owned the advertising space there, apologised and took it down.

However, when the party's chief women's officer, Joyce Gould, wrote to the ASA with a complaint about the Winston cigarette ad which makes a "joke" about a tart leaning on a bar, all she got back was their standard "unlikely to cause grave or widespread offence" letter.

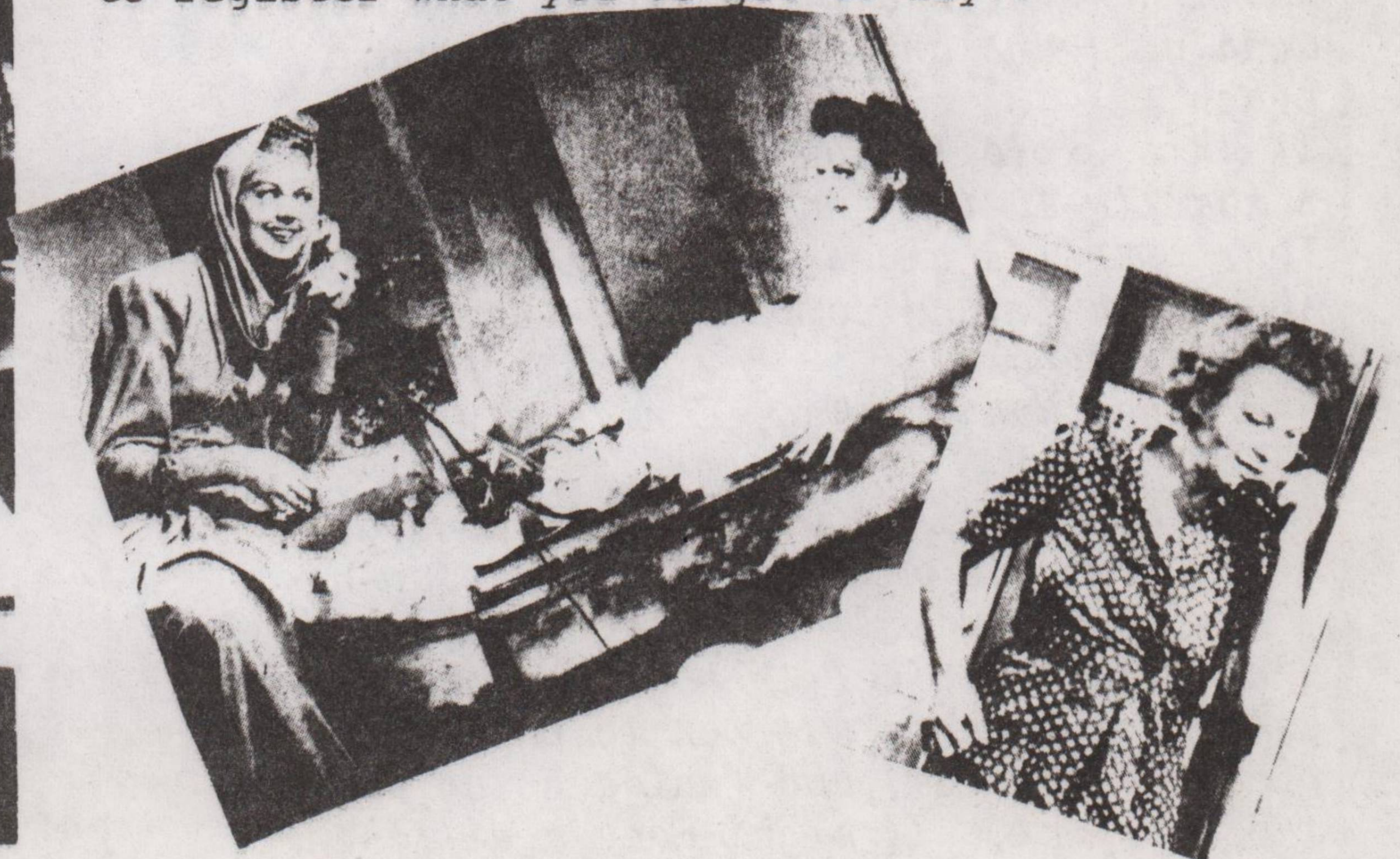
If you're a Labour Party member, we suggest you raise the subject at your next Women's Section meeting.

* *



why don't you...

phone in your complaints! There should always be a Duty Officer present at your local TV or radio station just waiting to register what you've got to say!!



W.M.A.G and other news

Fleet St. Action

The Women's Media Action Group, along with other groups, is organising a collective action against the misrepresentation of women by Fleet Street. Page 3 need not remain an institution. Come and help us challenge it. The planning meetings are:

16 September at 2.00pm and

18 November at 5.00pm

both at:

A Woman's Place
Hungerford House
Victoria Embankment
London WC2

For details contact:

Veronica 01-274 6295



CHANGING WOMEN THEATRE GROUP ARE PRESENTING PATTERNS BY BARBARA BURFORD....

Nine women return to the garment factory from which they were made redundant when it closed at Christmas. It's Midsummer eve and they are trapped together in an old room there forced to face the differences and prejudices of their diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. CHANGING WOMEN is a multi racial company working to make theatre more accessible and they will be doing both practical and discussion workshops during the days of their performances which are:

Drill Hall, Chenies Street,
London WC1 (Goodge Street tube)
from 10 October to 3 November
Tuesday to Saturday 8pm
10 October 7pm

Oval House, 54 Kennington Oval,
London SE11 (Oval tube)
5 November to 18 November
Wednesday to Sunday 7.30pm

our course

COME AND DO OUR COURSE!!!!

WHAT IS IT?

IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

WHERE IS IT?

UFTON CENTRE, UFTON ROAD,
LONDON N1

WHEN IS IT?

STARTING THURSDAY 4 OCTOBER

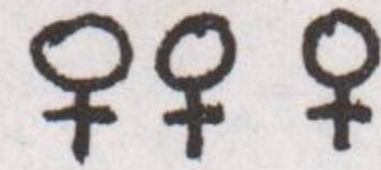
FOR NINE WEEKS 7.30-9.30

FEE 75p/25p (UB40) per session

SEE YOU THERE!!



OUR BULLETIN SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW BEING DEALT WITH BY JENNY CHIBNALL, SO ANY ENQUIRIES CAN GO TO HER C/O THE USUAL ADDRESS.



LESBIANS AGAINST MALE VIOLENCE

need press cuttings (especially local ones). porn magazines, photos of adverts etc to make a slide show and an exhibition of porn and violence against women to take round schools/women's groups etc. Please send us any you think may be of use,

Ta,

To: LAMV

c/o AWP

Hungerford House
Victoria Embankment
London WC2

action!

"HEY, SHEILA! THE TIDE'S GONE OUT!"

But what does Sheila care? Absorbed in her favourite paper, **WOMEN'S MEDIA ACTION** she hasn't even noticed that her boat is still moored to the quay and the sea is yards away! In fact, it's fairly certain that Sheila won't move an inch till she has scanned **WOMEN'S MEDIA ACTION** from cover to cover—and by that time her friends will probably be clamouring for a peep at it, too!



Are you one of the gay band of **WOMEN'S MEDIA ACTION** readers? If not, place a regular order for it by filling in the form below right away. Then you can be sure of a bimonthly treat, packed with fascinating picture-stories and stories-to-read—campaigns, colourful adventures, mystery and humour.

womens media action

Every Woman's Favourite

GOODIES! ORDERS! SUBSCRIPTIONS!

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WMAG BULLETIN : 6 issues £3.00
1 issue 30p (+ large SAE)

STICKERS : 20p for 20

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- 'This is offensive to women'
- 'This degrades women'
- 'This condones violence against women'
- 'Keep my body off your ads'

BADGES 20p each

- 'Stop Sexist Ads'
- 'I am NOT made in your image'
- 'Underneath we're all ANGRY—
- stop sexist ads'

WOMEN'S MONITORING NETWORK REPORTS

- 1. Women as sex objects 50p
- 2. Violence against women 50p
- 3. Stereotypes of women 50p
- 4. Sugar & Spice -
sex-role stereotyping of children 60p
- 5. Women and agism 60p

INFORMATION SHEETS : FREE

- All about WMAG
- How to complain
- Recommended Reading
- WMAG Aims and Objectives

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MY FRIEND'S NAME:

ADDRESS:

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