Mass Media — Whose Media?

Class War Federation

Contents

Note: This article has been slightly edited by James Hutchings to make it more international — a reference to pounds has been changed to dollars, and the list of positive and negative role models has been changed.

Sexism is taught to us via the family, education, religion and the mass media: through all of these the powers that be can inject their ideology into our lives so we think in their terms and have their ideals and culture. One of the most effective ways this is done is via mass media ie newspapers, magazines, films, TV, music etc: not only are they selling us products they are pushing their prejudices, myths and stereotypes. We aren't saying that people are too stupid to know what's going on, but it's a constant bombardment, sometimes subtle, sometimes totally blatant, when it comes to sexism. Women are valued and seen in terms of their body, their femininity and their ability to please men. Advertising is a multi-million dollar industry which makes most of its money by telling us that everything about us is wrong! You're either too fat, too thin, wrong hair colour, smell, or dress wrong! Women's bodies are used to sell all types of products that are not even sexual eg spanners, washing-up liquid, tyres, spark plugs, however the people that the advertising is aimed at is men — anyone would think that women can never drive cars or be mechanics. Women characters in films and TV are usually pathetic images of what titillate most men; spineless idiots who wouldn't last 10 minutes in real life. However sometimes the media has thrown out some oddities — ordinary women that we can identify with. Here's a list of women who provide a positive or negative image of how women should be:

Positive: Xena warrior princess and Gabrielle, Roseanne and Darlene off 'Roseanne', Linda Hamilton in the Terminator films, Dolly Parton.

Negative: all supermodels, Barbie, the Spice Girls, Sharon Stone, Lady Di, Margaret Thatcher.

Images of Women

It has to be said that it was much easier to come up with candidates who show women in a negative than a positive way. What do we mean by this? The good characteristics shown include independence, being assertive, and having a healthy disregard for authority. While the negative characteristics include blindly accepting authority, being dependent on men, or being an object to be bought and owned. In reality, women are rarely like the negative characters portrayed in the media. We are aware that we have to fight to determine our own lives and that it will not be handed to us on a plate. Throughout history, working class women's voices and identity have been denied — it's time this changed. Our struggle is part of the class struggle, and revolutionary organisation who denies this is useless in the fight to build a better world.