

International Obligations – The media, pornography and the sexual objectification of women.

OBJECT 2006

The Beijing Platform for Action

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/media.htm#object2>

An International declaration of women's rights set up in 1995 and signed by the UK Government. Section J2- Women and the Media, (243), calls on Governments to :

- a. **Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls** and their multiple roles;
- c. Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of **non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images** of women in the media;
- d. Encourage the media to refrain from presenting **women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities**,
- e. Promote the concept that the **sexist stereotypes displayed in the media are gender discriminatory, degrading in nature and offensive**;
- f. Take effective measures or institute such measures, including **appropriate legislation against pornography**

The Beijing Platform for Action Reviewed

In 2005, a review of the BpFA stated that there had been :

“few advances in the representations in publicity or the news”

It reiterated the need to:

“increase efforts to sensitize mass media journalists and those who work in ICTs to gender and women's issues, placing special emphasis on how

Object asks why the UK government has comprehensively failed to fulfil any of these objectives – in terms of media representation and, as importantly, public education.

the **media contributes to reproducing stereotypes of men and women that reinforce inequalities between the sexes**".

CEDAW

The Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, an internationally, *legally binding* document ratified by the UK Government in 1986.

CEDAW Article 5 of states :

Parties shall take all appropriate measures :

To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women

UK Government Report 1995

The UK Government's report to CEDAW (1995) specifically recognises the power of the media in perpetuating dangerous stereotypical attitudes :

It is now generally accepted that stereotypical attitudes .. and .. the power imbalance between the sexes contribute to male violence against women

The role of the media in its presentation of women is accepted as an important one "

Object asks why, *despite* acknowledging the importance of the media, the UK Government has done nothing to modify this 'harmful cultural practice'.

The Women's National Commission

In addition, the Government's own advisory body on women, The Women's National Commission, in its 2005 CEDAW report states :

Women in the Media :

20. **The portrayal of women in the media, especially in the press, is highly stereotyped.**

Not only is there a scarcity of women portrayed in high status or traditionally 'male' roles, but there is an **enormous emphasis on female attractiveness, and women are sexualised.**

This **gendered portrayal, including female sexualisation, extends to girls and young women,** especially in music and fashion. Further, the spread and accessibility of internet porn must harm women as it promotes sexual violence.

The WNC Recommends :

That women's portrayal in the press is regulated to put a **stop to degrading images objectifying women being published,** and to ensure good role models are presented

On Lap Dancing the WNC states :

Women as Entertainment

In response to Article 6, 'exploitation of women' :

30. The use of **women in degrading entertainment exacerbates violence against women.**

The WNC Recommends :

That lap-dancing and similar clubs be regulated to ensure that local crimes against women do not increase, including by refusing licenses

<http://www.thewnc.org.uk/pubs/cedawreport05.pdf>

Object asks why the Government is ignoring its own advisory body on women