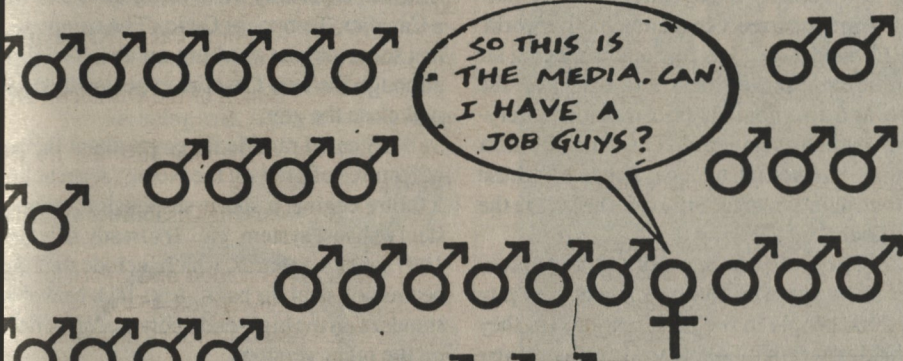


# Media is still an all man's land

By Sarah O'Donnell  
(CUP)

Newspapers, magazines and television programming continue to carry negative and

third of characters on television carry the double X chromosome. During prime time, the number of major female characters shrinks to one-eighth of the total cast.



en non-existent coverage of women.

"The main problems with the media's coverage of women are under-representation, narrow range of representation and misrepresentation," said Lynn Hissey, a professor of women's studies and communications at Simon Fraser University.

Women make up 52 per cent of North America's population, but only about one-

The inaccurate representation of women on television is compounded by the narrow range of women who are portrayed.

"Virtually all women on television are white, and this would be true of film as well," said Hissey. She also noted that the women portrayed on TV seem to be well-off, consuming fairly heavily, conventionally attractive, slim, relatively tall, able-bodied and hetero-

sexual.

Hissey cited Roseanne and Murphy Brown as excellent examples of current TV programming because of the way they deal with real gender issues and women's concerns. Both of these shows were created and produced by women.

To achieve more programs of this calibre, Hissey said it is necessary to get more feminists working in the various media.

"Encouraging independent productions [by women] is also important so that shows aren't so reliant upon advertisers and their pressures. Advertisers are enormously powerful in regards to what kind of images we're getting and what we're seeing," Hissey said.

Television is not the only culprit responsible for the misrepresentation of women.

Media Watch, a national group which analyzes media content, found only 28 per cent of the bylines in newspapers were women's in a 1992 study of the Canadian newspaper industry.

"We know that graduates from journalism programs right now are about 50-50,"

said Media Watch volunteer Josey Mills, but the number of women's bylines "doesn't reflect the number of journalism graduates or the population."

Under-representation is particularly obvious in certain facets of news coverage. For example, "authoritative sources who are quoted are usually 90 per cent men," said Hissey.

In the hopes of eliminating these imbalances, groups such as Media Watch are trying to encourage news sources to quote more women experts in their stories.

Many magazines also lack a significant amount of women-centered content. Most of the staff at Canada's national magazine, Maclean's, "felt that Maclean's has a lack of sensitivity in its portrayal of women," according to a 1992 staff survey.

According to Mills, these trends have not been improving in recent years. "It's pretty frightening, the trends don't change," she said. "There are no significant yearly changes when we do the content analysis."

(Source: *The Ubysey*, University of British Columbia)

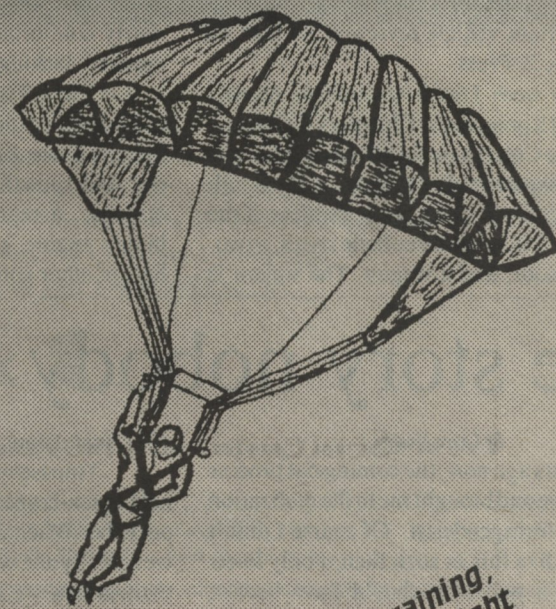
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