

Opening Address

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE DANISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION

By Hans Jørgen Jensen

*Generaldirektørens tale ved åbningen af konferencen om kvinder og de elektroniske massemedier.
TV-byen, mandag 7. april 1986, kl. 17.00.*

Dear guests and colleagues: It is a pleasure for me to welcome the participants of the "Conference on Women and the Electronic Massmedia" to Danmarks Radio. I am glad, that the organizers of this conference have approached me and asked me to make the official opening of the Conference. One reason for my pleasure is, of course, that I am always flattered, when somebody thinks that I am qualified for at specific task! But the main reason is that I sincerely believe that it is important to analyse and discuss themes as those dealt with by the Conference.

Looking at the programme for the Conference I have the feeling that one could look at the problems, which you are going to discuss, from two angles. One is the more narrow angle, which you are going to approach towards the end of the Conference, and which is the question of the status of women in TV-production. To what extent do women participate in TV-productions in an institution as Danmarks Radio and what picture of women do we present? And the other - and in the years to come perhaps even more important - angle is the question of what will happen, when a lot of foreign programmes will invade Denmark? Programmes which may have quite a different approach to the question of equality between men and women, than we have.

I am not a scientist in these fields and you will probably yourselves be better suited for a profound discussion of these themes than I am. Nevertheless, I would like to make a few comments, as to how I look at these problems.

As far as the question of women's participation in Danish TV-production is concerned, I would like to say that in the course of the last 9-10 years we have become more and more conscious of the importance of obtaining a better balance on the producerside. I will not say that we have been very successful nor that radical changes have appeared. But some progress has been achieved. The number of female heads of programme departments has increased, and especially as far as the TV-News Department is concerned, we have several female producers, reporters, and editors. The same goes for the Children and Youth Programmes Department. But I admit that it takes time to obtain changes.

What I think is probably more important is that the Danish society more and more takes it for granted that we are very careful to avoid any sort of discrimination in our programming when representing men and women. The new generation which has grown up is very conscious and reacts very strongly if and when we commit a "faux pas" in this field. The reaction from the public is perhaps the best lesson for programme makers. This does not mean that we don't have problems. Certainly we have. Not least when we have to use representatives of for instance business life, industry, trade, labour movement and also political parties. It is a fact that women are minorities in these groups, and in most cases the official representatives of these groups are men - and often elderly men in grey (or black) suits and necktie! (As this one here) The problem was evident at the referendum which Denmark recently had on the EEC-problems. Almost all representatives of the political parties - and many of the experts in this field - were men. This is a fact which we cannot change. But I must admit that it left an impression of the EEC-questions as mainly being questions interesting men - which of course is nonsense.

So we still have a long way in front of us, before we will be approaching something which would seem to be a 50-50 representation of men and women in TV.

The other problem which will be facing us in the years to come, is the problem of the impact of foreign TV-programmes, where we can expect a great number of foreign programmes to reach the Danish public. Many - and maybe even the majority - of these programmes will no doubt have another angle of approach to the equality question than the Danish public has been accustomed to. And I have a feeling that many of these programmes will be featured in a way so that they do not call for reflection, discussion and perhaps even anger, because many of the programmes will be influenced by commercial considerations - and that will often mean that you should not upset people and should certainly not try to change the accustomed images of men and women.

We in Danmarks Radio are very conscious of the problems, which foreign competition will present to us. We cannot - of course - change the foreign programmes, but we must do our best to give the Danish public a Danish alternative. And a good one. In the end it comes down to a question of quality. This is in itself a difficult question for a broadcasting institution with limited financial resources. But we are trying to mobilize all our strength in order to be able to give the Danish public a good quality-based alternative to the foreign programmes. I do hope that we will succeed, for in the end it is also a question of the position - and, to go to an extreme: the survival - of Danish culture. And our view on equality of men and women is part of this culture.

I shall not prolong my speech. You will, yourselves, discuss these problems and many others much more in depth during the next few days.

I shall therefore limit myself to welcome you once again. And with these words I hereby declare the Conference on Women and Electronic Massmedia opened.

Thank you.

Mass Media Fail to Inform Women

By Sissel Lund

Danish Summary: Der eksisterer store og tydelige forskelle mellem mænd og kvinders mediebrug. Kvinder forbruger flere underholdningsmedier end mænd, der typisk forbruger de prestigestærke medier som aviser og nyhedsmagasiner. Mange undersøgelser understreger disse forhold med det resultat, at det på overfladen ser ud som om kvinder er dummere end mænd, fordi kvinder søger mod de lettere underholdningsmedier. Et medie, der især udnytter dette er ugebladene, hvis form og indhold - og dermed salgs politik - er at skrive "om og for fru Jensen".

Foruroligende er det dog at alle hidtidige undersøgelser konkluderer de her beskrevne forhold, hvor ingen tidligere har spurgt, hvilke informationer kvinder får ud af underholdningsmedierne og hvad disse informationer bruges til.

I en undersøgelse fra 1980 blev forskellige personer spurgt, hvad de forskellige medier betød for dem. For kvinder var TV bedst, når de ønskede informationer om nye emner. Mænd foretrak aviser. Ugeblade var for kvinder gode til at give impulser til forskellige aktiviteter - mænd syntes aviser. Kvinder mente, at det at læse bøger var den bedste måde at slappe af på - mænd syntes aviser og endelig mente kvinder, at det medie de var mest afhængige af var radio, mens mændene også her svarede aviser.