

# **Out of Sight...Out of Mind**

Class War Federation

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Nobody knows how many thousands of working class women, who have failed to conform to society's expectations, have been shoved away in mental hospitals. As a result of 'unacceptable' behaviour such as being too aggressive or being a single parent, countless women have faced the ultimate sanction of being incarcerated in a mental hospital.

## **Sexist Stereotypes**

When women fail to fit in with society's stereotype of what a woman should be, ie passive, feminine, heterosexual, they instantly become targets for the mental health industry. Then they want to make us all "normal". Women who behave in an 'unfeminine' way by being aggressive and violent are reacted to with horror. In the same way that proportionally more women are imprisoned than men for more trivial crimes, more women are labelled as psychopaths. Because occasions of women perpetrating violence such as stabbings is relatively rare, it is treated all the more harshly when it does occur. Women constitute only 4% of the prison population, yet go on to make up 20% of patients in Special Hospitals. This way of dealing with "wayward" women has been going on for years, many working class women prior to the '50s were interned in mental hospitals for the 'crime' of being an unmarried mother. What made this even worse is that many were pregnant as a result of rape. It was another way of making what happened to women their problem, their responsibility, even rape. Because many women have been unable to conform to society's expectations, they have been labelled "mad". It's just another way of hiding social problems — "society is not sick, therefore it must be you". This has been underlined by much of the mental health industry desperately searching for biological explanations for a variety of psychological conditions and ignoring social factors such as poverty, sexism, homophobia, racism etc.

## **Not Mad — Just Angry!**

Some have been lucky and got out, others have become so deeply institutionalised they are unable to exist on the outside and stayed in the "care" of mental hospitals. Once inside, your class background determines your treatment: working class people are far more likely to be labelled as depressives etc.

## **Harsh Treatment and Cushy Numbers**

Middle class people with money can afford to go to clinics and to receive psychotherapy, and if they are really rich they can afford to have their own psychiatrist. No money means pills, intravenous drugs with unpleasant side effects and, in the past, usually ECT treatment (electric shocks).

## **It's A Class Issue**

This is a class issue; if you're rich, madness becomes eccentricity, unwanted pregnancies can be dealt with quietly and efficiently. Money can resolve such problems leaving working class people,

particularly women, on the receiving end. We look forward to the day when we can incarcerate some of our class enemies!

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