

Broadcasting Act

Material explaining the National Code of Advertising speaks of the danger of measures which will take too much out of the public purse. I think there is a need for measures which would prevent too much being taken out of the private purse in the form of training children to bombard their parents to buy things which are not needed.

I have one final note. In the committee on food prices we are beginning to have a great deal of concern about consumer buying habits. There are people who buy things on impulse and there are people who are pressured into buying things through advertising, through promotions, and so on. It seems to me that if we are ever to inculcate good buying habits in consumers, the place to begin is with children of early age. That is why I believe this is an especially valuable bill. So, in turn, I conclude by commending the hon. member for St. John's East for bringing forth this bill. I wish the bill speedy passage through the committee.

Mr. Douglas Roche (Edmonton-Strathcona): Mr. Speaker, as enthusiastically as I can, I wish to support the introduction of this bill and its speedy treatment by the committee. As the father of five children, I and the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) who introduced this bill, who is the father of six children, perhaps have a little bit of experience with regard to the effect of television advertising in the family living room.

Sometimes my children ask me what a Member of Parliament can accomplish in Ottawa, or what a Member of Parliament does. To tell the truth, sometimes it is a little difficult to answer the question. Today, however, the children of the hon. member for St. John's East have seen with their own eyes what a Member of Parliament can accomplish, indeed directly on their behalf because this bill has been presented before, has been talked about a great deal—one might even say it has been talked out—and now it appears it will be successful in at least being transmitted to a committee with, I may say, the endorsement of three very fine speeches which have preceded my very brief speech in support.

The hon. member for St. John's East has given a lesson today, not only to his children but to new Members of Parliament, in that he did not quit when he first brought in this bill, but reintroduced it and kept at it, until he has now a good deal of public support which I predict will be shown to be increasing as the public begins to examine the implications of the measure the hon. member has introduced. I shall quote a very brief passage to show the importance which so many people attach to the subject of children's advertising on television. This is a quotation from the February issue of *Saturday Night*. It appears in a column written by Robert Fulford, who puts the case very succinctly:

Children's advertising is one of the truly grotesque scabs on North American capitalism. Advertisers use it to con children into getting their parents to pay more than they can afford for toys that are almost always close to useless. The toys seldom perform as well as the TV ads say they will, and when they do they tend to last only a few days or at most a few weeks. In the toy business everybody knows it's an axiom that if a thing is advertised on TV it's probably lousy.

As a father who has bought more than his share of toys advertised on television, I say "Amen" to that. The hon.

[Mrs. MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway).]

member for St. John's East referred to the idea that society needs measures of protection for children. Indeed, in many areas of life we do have measures specifically for the purpose of protecting children. He says that here is one area where the rights of children and those who protect them are being violated. That leads me to two brief comments on the bill. The hon. member asks, in talking about programs devoted to children, what is a program devoted to children? He answers that question by saying a program devoted to children means programs such as those defined by the commission by regulation.

I think this will open up a whole area of programs which are shown during the time children are customarily expected to be awake. This, of course, takes us right into mid-evening. I suggest there should be an examination of the type of programming available during that time because, as was said by the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) who spoke so eloquently a few moments ago, the whole question of violence is involved.

When we examine the question of advertising and programs, this leads to a discussion of programs shown during the time which might be said to be children's time, or the time when the family has access to television. When we examine the programs and advertisements which are shown at the time known in family circles as children's time, I suggest the producers of television programs in this country and in the United States, since we import a great deal of programming from there, have a good deal to answer for, because I am appalled by the amount of violence depicted on television.

As a father—and I am proud to speak as a layman and a father on this subject—I think of the effect this type of television viewing has, in my judgment, on the minds of children, rendering them less compassionate toward society. If children grow up exposed day after day to nothing but torn and twisted bodies and various kinds of social abuses, I think this has a tendency to diminish the human qualities in our society. As parents, it is ridiculous that we should sit quietly in our living rooms and watch this. I hope no one will say, why not turn off the set? That is not the proper answer. It is much easier said than done, and it is a cop-out. I think that is the first point that will have to be examined as soon as the committee starts its examination.

• (1740)

The second point concerns advertisements that are shown during what I called a few moments ago children's time. I do not mean only advertisements that are directed at children, such as those telling them to buy this toy or to eat that cereal. Those are advertisements for what might be called adult products which are shown on programs that are accessible to children. I submit that the crassness of much of the advertising to which the whole family is subjected needs to be examined, as well as the advertisements to which children are subjected.

I support entirely the principle, the keystone of this bill, namely, that all advertising in programs defined as children's programs be banned. I suggest that the committee look at the quality of programs available in children's time and at the advertisements to which children are subjected. I have before me—I will not take the time of the