

Adjournment Debate

important concerns registered by the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson), I would like to say that the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox) and, in fact, the Government as a whole are very much concerned about Canadian content rules and regulations, certainly as they apply to the entire broadcasting industry; in this case as they apply to the Canadian Pay TV system. The regulations on this subject should enable Canadians to watch an increasing number of quality Canadian TV programs.

It was the hope and desire of the Government, and certainly of the Minister, when it was first suggested that Pay TV be brought into the country, that the CRTC would look very closely at this very important area. If we can produce quality Canadian programming this will indeed help the entire Canadian production industry as it applies to TV, and also as it applies to films.

There has been a difficulty facing the Canadian program production industry in that it has not had sufficient financial wherewithal to develop a serious and viable industry in this country. It was definitely hoped that Canadian Pay TV would be able to contribute, through its financial resources, to this very important program production industry.

The Hon. Member for Trinity referred to the fact that the CRTC held hearings on Canadian content rules and regulations. It did, indeed, do this in December of 1981. I understand those rules and regulations and the updating of the regulations will soon be forthcoming. Given all that, we also have to look at the fact that our Canadian artists, including writers, producers, actors, actresses and all the technicians, have a great stake in this area. It is certainly the hope of the Government and of the Minister that the CRTC look at this question as it applies to the current controversy regarding Pay TV so that in fact the Canadian production industry will benefit. We do share the concerns of the Hon. Member for Trinity.

COMMUNICATIONS—PORNOGRAPHIC PROGRAMMING
ADVERTISED BY FIRST CHOICE PAY TV. (B) PROVISIONS OF
BROADCASTING ACT BE AMENDED

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to support the comments of my hon. friend, the Hon. Member for Trinity (Miss Nicholson). My remarks are complementary to hers.

I would like to begin by reviewing a few of the events since this question was first raised. The Minister has since spoken with the CRTC and the CRTC has called in First Choice to explain its plans. In the meantime the Canadian Association of Broadcasters has reiterated its support of the Task Force on sex-role stereotyping on the positive portrayal of women in the media. I want to bring to the Minister's attention the recommendations of this Task Force.

Pay TV was not part of the Task Force at the time it was sitting but a recommendation in that report suggests that Pay TV should come under the same guidelines as other forms of broadcasting. It said that while there were no representatives on the Task Force, recognizing that if they are participants in the Canadian broadcasting system—referring to Pay TV—they would come under those same guidelines. They also apply

to educational broadcasting. It was urged that they "recognize the public concern about sex role stereotyping; adopt the applicable programming recommendations set out in this report; exercise sensitivity to, and awareness of, the problem of sex-role stereotyping in the acquisition of programming material or rights" and "ensure that women are adequately represented both on and off air." The report is very clear on that point. It would be absolutely ludicrous if Pay TV did not come under the same guidelines. That is to say if we were to have positive images of women on certain channels and pornographic portrayals of them on other channels. There would be an absolutely ridiculous result. Certainly the work of the Task Force would have been wasted if that was the result.

● (1825)

The public members of that Task Force made some very specific recommendations about pornography. I quote:

To clarify the meaning and intent of the CRTC's initiatives in eliminating abusive comments or pictorial representations of both sexes, the public members recommend:

that the CRTC and all licensees recognize the special problems of pornography and violence against women.

Male dominance and female submissiveness are at the very heart of the stereotypes of men and women. Pornography is the extreme portrayal of dominance and the exploitation of women's sexuality. Pornography, or any portrayal of violence against women, is the ultimate expression of dominance/submissiveness, the objectification and the abuse of women. As such, pornography or the portrayal of violence against women has no place in the broadcast media. And as one mechanism for implementing this, the public members recommend the following specific initiatives—

—that the CRTC amend its television regulations to include, among those subjects that may not be broadcast, abusive comments or abusive pictorial representations of either sex.

That was a very specific recommendation from the public members of the Task Force.

When the Minister says he has confidence in the CRTC and the chairman, I hope that confidence will be found to be warranted. Initially the CRTC was not very sensitive about women's issues. It certainly was improved.

The Minister can act on the more long-term problem the First Choice submission has raised. What is needed, and what I am proposing and trying to get all-party support for, is an amendment to the Broadcasting Act to add sex as one of the prohibited grounds of broadcasting. This would be in Section 61B of the Broadcasting Act. Let me point out what protection races and religions now receive, and I quote:

No station or network operator shall broadcast any abusive comment or abusive pictorial representation on any race, religion or creed.

The amendment we need to pass would add, "or sex", so that women get the same protection that members of races, religions and creeds get in this country. It is absolutely ridiculous and unacceptable that we say it is all right to abuse women on our television screens, although we must be sensitive to issues of race and religion. Women deserve and need very much the same protection other people receive. This gets to the heart of the problem. I would suggest that the First Choice application is contrary to the Broadcasting Act on a number of