

Broadcasting Guidelines

the hon. member for York South (Mrs. Appolloni) and others have spoken in this Chamber expressing their concern. I expect that in the next few minutes there will be some urging that we accept the motion put forward by the hon. member opposite, but I want to reinforce the argument put forward by the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Philbrook) that in the CRTC survey of programming on violence that is available to Canadian people it is stated that 97 per cent of this comes from the United States. Of the violence that is available to the Canadian viewing public, both from off air and through cable, roughly 3 per cent of it is generated by Canadian broadcasting.

● (1650)

It seems to me that pursuing this motion would present two very great difficulties. If we really want to reduce the amount of violence which is available to Canadian viewers, we would have to jam signals from American stations, and I suspect hon. members might find their in-baskets with more mail in them than usual if the government were to proceed with that in an effort to reduce the amount of violence which is shown on screens.

In terms of the 3 per cent that is generated within the country, hon. members should think about the difficulty in drawing acceptable guidelines. I suggest that the end result would be a division. There would be those who would think that the guidelines would be too restrictive and impinging on freedom of broadcasters to present what programming they feel desirable and upon the freedom of viewers. Other groups would feel that the guidelines would not be restrictive enough. As the parliamentary secretary on behalf of the minister I have had the opportunity to talk with various groups which have come to the department expressing these very concerns. Some feel very strongly that there should be more restrictions. These various groups have varying motivations.

I have also heard the representation that freedom of broadcasting is one of the fundamental rights in our democratic system and that it should not be interfered with and drawing these guidelines would be largely ineffective because 97 per cent of the violence that is available is generated in the United States.

Earlier today I was talking to the hon. member for Ottawa-Vanier, and he raised a point which I think should go on the record. Had he been able to be here he would have wanted to speak in this debate. The hon. member suggested that if there is violence in programming, broadcasters should forewarn parents and children at the beginning of that programming. I watch very little television, but I have had occasion to see on the television screen at the beginning of particular programs a statement that part or all of the contents of certain programs might be offensive or harmful for family viewing. I think that is the way we should be proceeding. That way there is still a choice on the part of viewers as to whether they choose to watch or not. That would not interfere with either the freedom of the broadcaster or the freedom of the viewer.

One of the most persuasive ways to make viewpoints known would be for those people who share the view set out in the bill of the hon. member for St. John's East to make representa-

tions to broadcasters, and more particularly, to sponsors. I do not think there is anything more persuasive to a broadcaster or a sponsor than off switches on televisions. Sponsors spend large amounts of money to sponsor programs, and if the viewing public feels that those programs are not acceptable or to their liking, I think turning off the switch is one of the most effective ways of convincing producers that there really should be a different thrust.

I want to speak in support of the minister, who has on a number of occasions spoken about this point across the country. She has tried encourage people who feel strongly about this to communicate their points of view directly to television stations and to advertisers.

Mr. McGrath: That is a cop-out Ross.

Mr. Milne: My memory is not terribly long, but I do remember the debate which went on at great length in this House on Bill C-58. Many adamant viewpoints were expressed. Bill C-58 was a measure put forward as a means of helping the broadcasting industry in Canada to be strengthened. When we consider that 97 per cent of the violence that is shown on the screens in Canada is American generated, there really needs to be a considerable strengthening of Canadian programming.

According to the background on this subject I have read, Canadian programming is predominantly non-violent. The broadcasting industry in Canada generally does not use the medium of violence to attract an audience, but those who feel strongly that violence is detrimental should let the industry know. I certainly respect the opinions of the hon. member for Halton and the hon. member for Oxford (Mr. Halliday). They are both medical doctors who obviously have researched this subject and know about the impact on behavioural patterns of children when they are subjected to or have the opportunity to watch a great deal of violence.

We should seriously discuss the Canadian broadcasting industry in this House, and we should be discussing what can be done to strengthen it. Those people who speak about this matter should be making that one of the cornerstones of their argument. We need a much stronger and more dominant broadcasting system. If the majority of people are against watching violence on television, then that same majority want to view good programming which is generated by Canadian sources.

Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Don't talk it out, Ross.

Mr. Milne: It was interesting when Bill C-58 was being debated—

Mr. McGrath: Don't talk it out.

Mr. Paproski: Let it go to the committee.

Mr. Milne:—there were very few people who—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At 5 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.