

members of this House to register their concern for our country's children by allowing this bill to go on further to another stage of consideration, where it can be more carefully scrutinized and examined.

Mrs. Grace MacInnis (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Speaker, once again it gives me a great deal of satisfaction to be able to support this bill introduced by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath). I think he has waged a long fight on this matter and has been doing a very great public service in bringing it increasingly to the attention of people from coast to coast. I am glad to see that there is every prospect this afternoon of moving it one stage further to committee, which represents a definite advance toward the bill becoming legislation.

We are here considering the effect of advertising on children. Last January I was very much interested to read an article that appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* written by Charles King. In this article he referred to some United States figures, which I do not think are too much out of line since the United States is Canada writ large. We very often find that we are just a little behind certain trends that have gone a long way in the United States. I sometimes wish we could reverse that situation.

This article reads as follows:

According to Dr. Gerald Looney, a pediatrics professor at the University of Arizona, American children spend more time watching television than doing anything else but sleep.

That gives some idea of the magnitude of the problem.

If this news weren't depressing enough, he went on to estimate that by the age of 14, each American child has watched on his tiny screen the violent assault or destruction of nearly 18,000 human beings.

To me this is a very important reason this bill should be passed and we get rid of advertising, at least on children's programs. These programs continually bring up the subject of violence as though this were something unreal, a fantasy. I think one of these days we will discover that a great deal of violence, which is showing a marked increase on our continent, is due to the fact that from their very early stages little tots became accustomed to seeing people blown up, mutilated and in many other ways destroyed. They think of this merely as a picture rather than transferring it into real life. They see pictures of things happening in Viet Nam and in other parts of the world, and to them it is still only a picture. Finally, those people who are at all abnormal or deranged commit acts of violence in our midst which to them are still unreal and fantasy.

This is one reason that I believe we should eliminate advertising on children's programs. The line between fantasy and reality as far as children are concerned is non-existent because they have become brainwashed. They see violence in all its forms when they are young and they carry this with them into adult life. It is deeply ingrained in them in their early years. I think earlier speakers have touched on this point.

The *Ottawa Citizen* article continues:

And to relieve the monotony of mayhem, he's been treated to 5,000 solid hours of commercial messages coaxing him (or her) to put the arm on Mom or Dad to buy 350,000 individual items at the neighbourhood supermarket.

Broadcasting Act

That is another evil of commercial advertising as far as children are concerned. I do not care what the advertising code says about their being opposed to undue pressure being exerted on parents by children. This sort of thing goes on daily. I am sure the hon. member for St. John's East remembers very well, as I do, that during the days of the earlier food prices committee the representatives of the cornflakes and other breakfast food people appeared, and reference was made at that time to commercials that urge children to put pressure on Mom and Dad, because Yogi Bear would get them if they did not buy the particular cereal that was being advertised.

This kind of pressure on parents in wrong, and wrong from every angle. It is wrong that parents in low income families are pressured by their children to buy things that they neither want nor can afford, thus throwing their whole family budget out of alignment. It is wrong that parents are pressured by their children to accumulate a lot of things. Always there is this ethic that we must have more and more, instead of the much better ethic of getting out and doing things and developing ourselves.

If we are to pay any attention to what the Club of Rome and other people tell us about developing a different kind of ethic, instead of always asking for more and more, then we must start with the tiny children of today. We must make them selective and more careful in outlook. We must get them to do things in a practical way instead of letting them sit in front of the idiot box, everlastingly having displayed before their eyes things for which they pressure their parents. This is wrong, and the sooner this bill is passed and we put a stop to it, the better.

In his explanatory note to the bill, the hon. member for St. John's East refers to children's programs having a captive audience. While many of these programs are excellent, he says, they usually contain commercial messages that are directed at a highly impressionable and very susceptible audience. And, I may add, a completely defenceless one. I was interested to read the other day that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) had sent out a letter supporting the annual Child Safety week. He said in this letter:

• (1730)

Children are trusting little souls. From the day they are born they are protected and guided by adults.

Adults, too often, neglect this responsibility. As the tiny ones become more independent, their seniors too frequently relax the protection they have trained the child to expect.

This is true. In our way of living, with fathers and mothers being more and more away from home for a good part of their children's day, the children are defenceless. When the children are alone, what is more natural for them than to sit and watch endless hours of television programs during which they are subjected to endless hours of pressure through advertising. I do not think we should permit our children to be bombarded in this way. We are taking defenceless children who have not yet built up any resources of judgment or discrimination and allowing them to be bombarded with this kind of advertising so that they, in turn, can bombard their parents to buy things which in many cases are quite undesirable, have poor nutritional value or have an exceedingly bad effect on the family purse.