

H. FOREIGN CODES, STANDARDS AND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

The Montreal International Colloquium on Television Violence took place in late April 1993 as the Sub-Committee on Television Violence was finalizing its report. At the Colloquium, the Minister of Communications released a comparative summary analysis of the public measures adopted by other countries to address television violence. This reference document, prepared by the Department of Communications, is an important and necessary companion to our brief analysis. It is appended to our report in order to make our report as complete as possible.¹⁰⁵

1. The United States

On 11 December 1992, the three major American networks, ABC, CBS and NBC announced that they had agreed to joint Standards for the Depiction of Violence in Television Programs. The joint Standards were made possible under the Antitrust exemption granted by the *Television Violence Act* of 1990 which was introduced by U.S. Senator Paul Simon. When the Act was passed in 1990, representatives from the three major networks said that "*the legislation was not necessary and suggested it would not change their programming approach.*"¹⁰⁶ The development of the joint Standards in the interim suggests that the American networks have since reconsidered their position.

The Standards are intended to proscribe gratuitous or excessive portrayals of violence, according to the text released by the networks. They "*will provide the framework within which the acceptability of content will be determined by each network in the exercise of its own judgment.*"¹⁰⁷

Senator Simon stated at the time that changes will be evident in the networks' Fall 1993 programming. He also announced that the three networks will convene an industry-wide conference on television violence in the Spring of 1993 to discuss further steps.

2. Great Britain (BBC)

The models cited most often by the experts and witnesses were those adopted by the BBC in Great Britain and by Australia. The BBC has established its own code, *Violence on Television; Guidelines for Production Staff - 1987*. Every five years, the BBC holds public hearings to reassess its guidelines on violence and programming in general. A review is currently underway to consider what changes may have occurred in public tastes, styles and expectations since 1987 and whether or not the current practice and guidelines reflect them adequately. In their conclusion, the authors of the CRTC report *Summary and Analysis of Various Studies on Violence and Television* endorsed the public hearings process used by the BBC as an enabling way "*to keep abreast of public opinion and also serve to reassure the public that the organization is performing in a responsible manner.*"¹⁰⁸

3. Australia

Based on the *Broadcasting Act* of Australia, the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal has established Television Program Standards which include the criteria to be addressed when commercial television stations are classifying programs. The criteria include the type of audience, the times of day when certain classification categories may be shown and indicators of the level of violence appropriate or not appropriate for the various classification categories. The Tribunal's Television Program Standards formed the basis for the private broadcasters' code developed by the industry.