

Broadcasting Act

stations. Tobacco commercials have been banned but advertisers have survived. Perhaps more money would be put into children's toys and games or food as a result. In any case, I think the advertisers would soon make up the revenue.

I should like to thank the hon. member for St. John's East for bringing this to our attention again and I recommend that the bill go to committee. I should like to close by quoting briefly from a report prepared by the research branch of the Library of Parliament for the House of Commons Subcommittee on the International Year of the Child. It notes the need for positive action programs, and on page 14 has this to say:

—the CRTC encourage the development of a television program composed of brief segments (one or two minutes each) to be aired several times daily, providing information on a variety of subjects such as nutrition, the harmful effects of alcohol, drugs and smoking, and on available sources of help for people with problems; and encourage increased use of television for educational discussion groups and talk shows dealing with subjects such as the developmental needs of children, parenting practices, etc.;

This is the kind of child advertising we need, not just banning what we do not need but, adding the kind of educational topics that children desperately need in order to survive in this consumer jungle in which we live.

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Mr. Jack Masters (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, my remarks will be brief as well. I welcome the chance to comment on this important area of children's television. It has been noted this afternoon that much has been done on a voluntary basis. Like the hon. member opposite, I believe that the subject matter is worthy of parliamentary review from time to time and therefore the government does not oppose the idea of submitting it to committee for scrutiny to see how far we have come and where we are going.

I should like to make a few observations on the subject. I think we all recognize that the ban would have little or no effect on the CBC, Radio-Canada or the provincial educational television systems. The CBC has never accepted commercials for pre-school programming and since 1975 it has not carried commercials on any program for which the majority of the audience was made up of viewers under the age of 12. Provincial organizations such as Radio Quebec and TV Ontario are, by the nature of their licence, noncommercial. Therefore, the effect of this legislation on Canada's public broadcasters is nil in that none of these organizations presently accept advertising in this type of programming.

What the bill suggests is the elimination of advertising in children's programming on the private television stations in Canada. These privately owned and operated stations reach over 96 per cent of all Canadians and rely entirely upon advertisers for financial support. As has been pointed out this afternoon, there would be some difficulty for them as a result.

I think it is useful at this time to step back for a moment and review what has already been achieved in the important area of children's television. In the early days of television in Canada, that is, in the 1950s and 1960s, private television stations produced and scheduled many programs for children. These were financed out of the revenue of commercials. The Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission has routinely reviewed the licences and the progress made in this important area. A review of the commission's decision does not reveal any great objections to the performance of private television. However, in the latter part of the 1960s, a number of people began to question some high pressure advertising techniques being used by a minority of television advertisers in their commercials for products and services of interest to children.

The advertising industry and the Canadian Association of Broadcasters recognized that there was merit in these concerns and in 1971 produced a voluntary code imposing standards and restrictions for advertising for children. In 1974 the CRTC required each private broadcaster to adhere to the code as a condition of its licence renewal, as well as limiting the number of commercial messages in children's programs.

I would like to point out that the voluntary system seems to have worked quite well. We believe, with hon. members opposite, however, that there is a time to review the impact of such measures on young people. We certainly have no objection to bringing the subject matter of this bill before the committee for further study and review to see if our thinking is as clear as we would like it to be.

Hon. Bud Cullen (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise that I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

That Bill C-311, an act to amend the Broadcasting Act (advertising on children's programs) be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Communications and Culture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the said motion?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Amendment (Mr. Cullen) agreed to.

Motion (Mr. McGrath) as amended, agreed to. Bill withdrawn and order discharged.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour provided for consideration of private member's business has now expired. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until Monday at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 2(1).

At 4.29 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.