

Broadcasting Act

What did the CRTC do? They went part way toward that. They wanted the industry to go ahead and do what parliament said it should do, but they did not want to act themselves, or to obey parliament. They wanted to circumvent what they were being asked to do by the House. That is the danger of what is happening in the country today. We have the bureaucracy, whether it be in the civil service or in Crown corporations. The bureaucracy want the power, they want to add to it, and they want to disobey the will of parliament. They say: you fellows are only there overnight; we are here forever and we are the real power in this country. Is that the way we want it? What are we going to do about it? This happens in so many other cases.

You would not believe I spent today going through this bureaucracy of ours in Ottawa. It was a nightmare. I had a small matter which had to be determined regarding the sale of a piece of CNR property involving only a few dollars. However, the bureaucracy had to be gone through, all over the city of Ottawa, in three different departments. This should have been done weeks ago but it was not. It was tossed around, the way they pass the buck from one to another.

The president of the company buying the land was involved. The bureaucracy was holding up a \$9 million deal. Do they care about that in the bureaucracy? They have never needed to meet a payroll at the end of the week so they do not give a damn if they leave a matter for a while on their desk or put it aside. This is happening daily and continually.

I spent my whole day today with an important man trying to get the bureaucracy to process this, and I am still not positive that it will go through because another signature is required, and we may not be able to get it until ten o'clock tonight. Then this man must take the papers and go on a plane to Toronto, and fly back because he has other commitments tomorrow. This is the kind of thing that we are faced with simply because we have to go through all kinds of bureaucratic nonsense. We can never get the answers because the bureaucrats are always so secretive. They keep everything to themselves because they are afraid that an elected representative may know more than they want him to know.

So here we have this simple matter of advertising directed to children. The CRTC agree that it should be curbed. They themselves want the broadcasting industry to curb it. They want it to be in the code. We said in the committee specifically that we do not believe the code is sufficient. We want a regulation. They say, "It is almost the same as a regulation because it is just as strong". They said: "We are not going to put it in a regulation". How did they get away with this? In my view this bill should go to the committee for the sole purpose of bringing the CRTC back here and asking them why they disobeyed the will of parliament.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart (Cochrane): I commend the hon. member for having such tenacity. Most other people would have given up a long time ago. They say you cannot fight city hall. Well, if we cannot do it, how can we expect our poor constituents, who do not know their way around this

[Mr. Stewart (Cochrane).]

bureaucracy, this jungle, ever to be able to deal with the government? They just throw up their hands.

Are we running a bureaucracy down here for the good of the people who are in it, or are we running it for the good of the people of Canada? That is the basic question and it is time that this parliament made up its mind that the power lies here, not in the hands of the bureaucrats. So I ask the House not to consider the pros and cons of this—we have already done that in the last parliament—but let us refer this bill back to committee—whether it be a bill or the subject matter of it—to permit the committee to call that body back before us and ask them why they are not obeying the will of parliament. That is what we have to do, and I urge the House to take that action today.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) for his persistence and tenacity in trying to get this issue of television advertising directed to children resolved, and also the hon. member for Cochrane (Mr. Stewart) who pointed out quite correctly the problem that this House is facing on more and more occasions when some group in the bureaucracy, or some regulatory agency think that they know best.

It seems to the CRTC that it does not matter, that after nine sittings and calling 32 witnesses, after producing a committee report after much labour and thoughtful consideration, and after having it brought before the House and approved unanimously, the commission know best. They think that by putting advertising directed to children in the broadcast code the problem is dealt with sufficiently, a problem which faces not only young people below the age of 13 but also their parents.

I would like to remind the CRTC that the issue to which they have failed to address themselves by their inaction, and by their ignoring of parliament's recommendation, is whether children under 13 should be protected from being isolated as a special television audience to be subjected to special advertising designed to exploit their immaturity. The broadcasting committee agreed that these children should be protected. I would go so far as to say that in this case the public interest takes precedence over the broadcasters' and toy and food manufacturers' private economic interests. Therefore, I support the suggestion of the hon. member for St. John's East to refer this bill to committee so that we can call the CRTC before us and ask for an explanation. I also commend the hon. member for the content of the bill; basically, that no advertising shall be permitted during the broadcast of a program devoted to children under 13 years of age.

● (1730)

Perhaps the CRTC should be reminded of the reason the committee felt that children need such protection. Children, especially those aged four to eight, are immature and susceptible to high-pressure salesmanship. Moreover, parents need some protection from children who are manipulated by advertisers in trying to get parents to buy their products. I think it would be worth while to put on the record some of the important observations made by the committee in the last parliament, and certain conclusions