

CHAPTER FOUR

TELEVISION VIOLENCE: FRAYING OUR SOCIAL FABRIC

Options and Recommendations

The remainder of this report will examine the main options which exist for treating the problem of television violence and present recommendations for dealing with the problem. The Committee believes that Canadians must seek specific solutions to combat the adverse effects of television violence, even though television violence is only a small part of a larger problem, that of violence in society.

The members of the Committee are convinced that violence on television is a complex problem to which there is no one solution. Many of the witnesses appearing before the Committee made this observation, including Sandra Campbell from Viva Associates who said, "*This is an incredibly complex problem that isn't amenable to a quick fix via one piece of legislation. It is one that has to be approached from the perspective of many options for a solution.*"¹⁰⁹

The complexity of the problem is compounded by the underlying conflict which it inevitably invites between protectionist values, asserted by those who favour regulation and censorship as solutions, and free speech values, asserted by those who oppose any censorship as a matter of principle. The Government walks a fine constitutional line in taking any actions to curb television violence. It must ensure that any measures it adopts which might impinge upon the freedom of expression guarantee in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* can be reasonably and demonstrably justified within the context of our free and democratic society.

In the Committee's view, the sheer variety and range of possible measures highlighted by witnesses for addressing violence on television underline the need for, and the wisdom of, a multifaceted approach to addressing television violence. The Committee finds it apparent, even after only a brief study of the issue, that the problem would best be addressed systematically with a variety of innovative, co-ordinated, co-operative and graduated responses, accompanied by regular progress reviews and constant, vigilant sensitivity to freedom of expression concerns.

The options set out below do not represent a comprehensive plan, since new ideas and innovative approaches are being explored even as we write this report. In addition, the options listed here cannot realistically be compartmentalized into self-contained strategies. For efforts to curb violence to be effective, overlap and interplay must occur among the various options, such as research, public education, industry self-regulation and government regulation.

With respect to the layout of this part of the report, the Committee has tried to deal with the options in an ascending order of intervention. This approach reflects the Committee's belief that legislation and government action alone will not address the problem of television violence. The solutions to television violence lie in the hands of many — parents, teachers, consumers, researchers, broadcasters, artists, producers, advertisers, regulators, and legislators.