

Broadcasting Act

their original form but in fact were reduced to flour or mush and later reconstituted, the end product being mostly air.

• (4:50 p.m.)

We make cigarette manufacturers put a notice on packages of cigarettes stating that the product can be dangerous to health. I do not think we can expect cereal manufacturers to advertise their product over the air and say they are no good, but I do say that cereal foods require a great deal more honest promotion. For this reason I support the purposes of the bill and hope it can be adopted in principle so that further study can be given to it and the many aspects of advertising that it covers, including the one with which I am particularly concerned.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-237, sponsored by the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), refers to the effects of television advertising on young children. The hon. member has done a commendable job of reviewing the history of this problem in our society. He outlined some of the steps taken in the United States of America with respect to it and he mentioned the hearings that have been held in that country. I was impressed by the figures the hon. member quoted which indicate that a pre-school child spends 54 hours per week watching television. I know that he has several children, as I have, and that they probably had this number of hours of televiewing during their pre-school days.

I think it is important that we have an opportunity to discuss the bill this afternoon. I am sure the hon. member would want to see it thoroughly discussed. But I believe we should attempt to clarify in our minds what we are trying to achieve and the best way of achieving it. With respect to the bill which is before us, its operative proposal is that no advertising should be permitted during the broadcasting of a program devoted to children. I know that the sponsor of the bill is not a man of extreme views, but I wonder whether he has thought through the full implications of his proposals.

A number of children's programs are presently put out over radio and television. Some of them are good and some of them are bad. In saying this I, of course, tend to put in some subjective judgments. I believe that some of the programs are carried by the CBC without sponsorship, but I think I am correct in saying that the great majority of children's programs, both good and bad, are sponsored—that is to say, paid for by advertisers.

The adoption of the bill could well mean that a large number of even good children's programs would disappear from the airways because of lack of sponsorship, unless the CBC or CTV were willing to accept the full cost of putting on those programs. This would require a pretty drastic re-examination of the budgets of both the public and private networks. I think it would be wrong for us to approve this bill, however much we may sympathize with its purposes, without knowing what the implications would be for those budgets.

It may be that the sponsor of the bill only intended that advertisements should not interrupt children's programs but should be grouped together at the beginning or at the end of a program, and did not mean that children's programs should not have advertising sponsorship. If this is the case, then I suggest that the proposal is one that might well be discussed by the CRTC with the sponsors of the programs in question, to see what effect this arrangement would have on their willingness to sponsor those programs. Until we know more about what the results would be, I think we should hesitate in granting approval to the bill.

In sounding this cautionary note I should like to refer to the remarks of the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis), who so thoughtfully put forward the case for having rather special rules to govern the kind of advertising which should and should not be addressed to the impressionable minds of young children. He mentioned the broadcast code for advertising to children which was developed under the aegis of the Canadian Advertising Advisory Board and which has been agreed to by the Association of Canadian Advertisers, Incorporated, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters, the Canadian Toy Manufacturing Association, the CTV network, the Institute of Canadian Advertising, the Radio Sales Bureau and the Television Bureau of Canada. That code has also been endorsed in principle by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The code is very thoughtful and comprehensive and I should like to quote a few sections of it which, if strictly adhered to, should do away with a number of the practices which many of us have found objectionable with respect to advertising directed at young children.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour set aside for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. It being five o'clock, this House stands adjourned until two o'clock Monday afternoon.

At five o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.