
'Anti-advertising' campaign started by Quebec feminists

The Quebec Council on the Status of Women has made advertising, which it calls the most sexist-laden medium, the target of a \$500,000 anti-sexist campaign.

"Advertising flaunts sexism in all its splendour," says council president Claire Bonenfant. "Women have to be made aware of that discrimination."

The "anti-advertising" blitz puts Quebec a step ahead of any similar campaign on the federal level.

Former Federal Communications Minister David MacDonald, noting that sex stereotyping in the media was a serious and complex issue, abolished a committee established by the previous Liberal government to study the matter because he said action, not more studies, was needed.

This left the national responsibility to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, which has established a "study group" aimed at developing guidelines to eliminate sexual stereotyping.

Mr. MacDonald said this group would have representatives from the advertising and broadcasting industries, women's associations and the federal Council on the Status of Women.

Quebec's government-appointed Council on the Status of Women, meanwhile, has commissioned a series of four television commercials to create that other "point of view for women", as its key antidote against sexual stereotyping.

The first, currently being aired on all Quebec French-language stations, stars several nursery school children playing with traditional toys — boys with trucks, girls with dolls.

The girls and boys swap toys and viewers are told: "Children aren't responsible for sexual discrimination — we are".

"We're hoping to pressure advertisers, by embarrassing them if we have to, into creating non-sexist commercials," says Micheline Paradis, the council's information director. "We've had a great response to this first series from the public so far."

The choice of television as the medium for the council's message was a deliberate one.

An extensive study sponsored by the council, "L'image des femmes dans la publicité" (Images of Women in Advertising), researched by feminist columnist Catherine Lord, clearly outlines the rift

between the advertising world of women — who reign benevolently over soaps, suds and toilet paper — and the advertising world of a man — who claims unchallenged dominion over cars, alcohol and swooning women.

The study, based on ads aired on Radio-Canada over a one-week period in 1978, points out that Quebecers, and women in particular, watch more television than anyone else in Canada — averaging 24.2 hours before the set each week.

"And during that week," the report states, "an average viewer watches between five to seven hours of advertising.... By the age of 17, a teen-ager will have seen some 350,000 commercials".

Man's image as well as woman's is abused in advertising, the study adds. "But although men's images are also very caricatural, they are more positive than those of women."

The remaining three TV spots will tackle sexism and self-esteem, sexism in advertising and sexism at work. The campaign will last until mid-June.

Other battle tactics include anti-sexist pamphlets and posters, a slide show entitled *Le sexe a pile*, (a play on sex appeal) and a special committee that will investigate Quebec women's complaints about sexism.

No-smoking bonus

The president of a company that manufactures hockey sticks hates cigarette smoke so much that he offers his employees a \$500 bonus to quit the habit.

To help them get started, he's forbidden smoking of any kind at the company's plant in Drummondville near Montreal.

"I've always had a phobia about cigarettes" Marc Ruel said. "I tried tolerating them, but four years ago I decided to take action."

Mr. Ruel said he had to fight with the provincial ministry of revenue to put the non-smoking bonus in his company's operating expenses, but it was worth it.

"I consider this bonus as a good investment because it reduced our absenteeism rate considerably," he said. "No more flu from the first microbe that floats in the air, no more coughs."

The company also offers to pay the \$182 registration fee at the local gymnasium for any of the 100 employees

who want to join — as long as they work out at least three times every 15 days.

Mr. Ruel rarely hires smokers: "You can call it discrimination if you like, but it's an unwritten rule at my place," he said. "We single out the smokers and send them to the end of the line."

Mr. Ruel added that his anti-smoking campaign has had considerable success since it began and estimated some 30 per cent of his management personnel have given up the habit.

Model airplanes research North

Model aircraft, once merely a source of hobbyist enthusiasm, are helping Canadian scientists in their Arctic research.

Government researchers are analyzing data on sea ice and the Arctic Ocean collected by a specially-designed model airplane during successful field trips last spring near Dundas Island, about 650 miles from the North Pole.

Before the model aircraft was used, the scientists were unable to obtain accurate information on the polynya phenomenon — an area of open water within growing ice.

Dave Topham, a Fisheries and Oceans' Department scientist, who has a background in aeronautical engineering, had been aware of the use of models in other projects, including the whale surveys conducted by scientists at Fisheries and Oceans' Arctic Biological Station at Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Quebec. He saw the possibility of outfitting a model to fly over a polynya and transmit necessary temperature, barometric pressure and light reflection data back to the earth-bound scientists.

Mr. Topham and his group had discovered a technique which was more accurate and could be conducted for less than half the expense of a conventional aircraft survey which costs about \$10,000 a field trip.

The model was designed specifically for Arctic conditions. Weighing 20 pounds and capable of carrying 10 pounds of instruments, batteries and fuel, the craft's 10-foot wing is made of styrofoam and plastic film. The fuselage is constructed of styrofoam and light arborite, materials that are unaffected by temperature and humidity extremes, are easily repaired, and will float if the model hits the water.