

## Broadcasting Act

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

## BROADCASTING ACT

## AMENDMENT CONCERNING ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East) moved that Bill C-211, to amend the Broadcasting Act (advertising on children's programs), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I hope that by the conclusion of this hour there will be agreement of the House to refer the subject matter of this bill to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts, and I now intend to relate my remarks in support of that proposition.

This is the fourth time in the last three years this bill has been introduced in the House, and that fact in a way exemplifies that it is of urgent and contemporary concern to many Canadians. I intend to show that the majority of the people in this country would favour the consideration I hope the House will give this bill today.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to review briefly the history of the bill since it was first introduced on April 7, 1971. Since that time there has been a literal ground swell of non-partisan and universal support from across the country. Because of the nature of the bill and what it attempts to do, it is long overdue reform.

The bill was first introduced on April 7, 1971, and again on January 15, 1973. In March of that year the House agreed to refer the subject matter of the bill to the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, Films and Assistance to the Arts. That committee considered the subject matter of the bill and, in pursuit of that responsibility, it heard many witnesses. As a result of the evidence heard, the committee produced a report to the House that contained five recommendations, and that report was presented on July 16, 1973.

The recommendations of the committee are a matter of record and I will not read all five. The first recommendation is an important one and I think it should be repeated here. The committee recommended:

(1) That the CRTC pass regulations which would provide that advertising must not be directed exclusively to children;

It is interesting and should be noted that the House concurred in the recommendations of the committee on July 24, 1973. I might add that there was unanimous concurrence. One would expect that, following concurrence by the House, there would be action taken by the appropriate authority, in this case the CRTC which receives its authority, under the Broadcasting Act, from parliament. One would expect that body to take the appropriate steps to implement the recommendations of the House. That was not the case, and that is why the bill is again before the House today.

The Chairman of the CRTC in a press release announced that he could not enforce the recommendations of the House as he felt such a fundamental change in broadcasting regulations required an amendment to the

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

act. Section 16 of the Broadcasting Act does in fact give the CRTC all the authority it needs.

A nation-wide Gallup poll was conducted and released in March of this year, which showed that 57 per cent of those interviewed favoured a total ban on children's advertising. The breakdown of that nationally conducted poll is interesting in that it reveals that in the Atlantic region 65 per cent supported the ban, in the province of Quebec 55 per cent supported it, in Ontario 59 per cent were in support, on the prairies 49 per cent were in support, and in British Columbia 64 per cent supported the ban.

It would also be of interest to put on record that in November of this year the Liberal party of Quebec at its annual meeting passed the following resolution:

Whereas the methods employed by advertisers in their advertising directed at children are extremely powerful

Whereas advertising arouses desires in children which cannot be fulfilled by parents

● (1710)

Whereas children lack sufficient reason to exercise their right of choice

It is proposed that commercial advertising directed at children of 13 years or under be banned in all media.

That was a resolution adopted by the annual meeting of the Liberal Party of Quebec City in November, 1974.

The response of the CRTC and the CBC has been disappointing. First of all, the CRTC in a statement released in the fall of this year, which statement I might say came about as a result of the third debate on this bill in March of 1974, implemented the following in the form of a public press release:

1. That adherence to the provisions of the Broadcast Code on Children's Advertising will be made a specific condition of each broadcasting licence.

2. That a representative of the CRTC will formally represent the Commission at all deliberations of the Children's Advertising Sections of the Advertising Standards Council which have the responsibility for pre-clearing all children's commercials.

That was as a result of a compromise agreement reached when the bill was given second reading early this year. It should be stated that the broadcasting committee in its report specifically pointed out that it had no faith in any industry code specifically to discipline itself and carry out the kind of regime the committee envisaged. That is the reason why the committee went all the way in recommending that there be a ban on all advertising directed exclusively to children.

It is also worth mentioning at this time that the code on which the CRTC bases its case is, first of all, an industry code. Second, while it has the force of a CRTC regulation it is the only regulation in respect of which there have been no public hearings. There has been no public input whatsoever in respect of the code. It still remains basically and essentially an industry code. That is a very important argument which I submit for the consideration of the House.

Also it should be stated that the enforcement of the code has inherent difficulties in respect of distinguishing what is a family program or a children's program. The code now contains a new section which uses the definition "family".