The Children's Food Bill

Christopher Clouder

Restrictions on TV advertising aimed at children in countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Greece, and Norway are tougher than those upheld by the Advertising Standard Authority in the U.K. In Sweden, advertising for children younger than twelve is banned. Two years ago former Labor MP Debra Shipley introduced an unsuccessful bill that would have banned advertising food and drink during children's programs. In the last election the government promised to take action and is currently trying to tighten existing rules without new legislation.

With increased concern about children's health and obesity, however, there is growing public support for measures that restrict advertising and that discourage consumption of junk food. To this end a new bill, *The Children's Food Bill*,[1] will have its second reading in Parliament on October 28, 2005.

The Children's Food Bill seeks to protect children from unhealthy food marketing, to create a definition of good food that takes into account the presence of additives and sustainable food production, to set compulsory minimum standards for manufacturers, to improve the quality of food in schools, to ensure that all children have essential knowledge about food, and to promote healthy food to children. The bill is primarily promoted by Sustain,[2] an alliance for better food and farming that consists of more than 100 Non Govermental Organizations (NGOs). The Alliance for Childhood[3] is one of the 145 additional organizations that support *The Children's Food Bill.*

MP Mary Creagh will introduce *The Children's Food Bill* following her success with the Ballot for Private Members Bill, which requires 100 MPs to be present to achieve a "closure" vote. She has also tabled a House of Commons Children's Food Early Day Motion, EDM 378, which MPs are asked to sign to demonstrate continued cross-party support. An earlier EDM, 1256 on this matter, tabled in May, attracted 248 MP signatures. Activism and grassroots pressure in the U.K. may also help to ensure success of *The Children's Food Bill.*[3]

References

1. www.childrensfoodbill.org.uk
2. www.sustainweb.org
3. www.allianceforchildhood.org.uk