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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



### Child performers deserve union protection

July 9, 2002 – Child performers deserve the benefits of working under a collective agreement that guarantees proper payment, limits the hours of work, and ensures their safety on set.

Unfortunately, some major international advertisers producing commercials using and targeting kids are doing their ads non- ACTRA. This means child performers are getting paid less, they are being worked more hours than children should have to work, and there is no-one looking out for their safety on set.

ACTRA is determined to fight this exploitation of children.

ACTRA takes very seriously the need to protect performers, especially children, from exploitation in the television, film and commercial industry. Many of the gains we made in the recently renegotiated National Commercial Agreement (NCA) are clauses focusing on child performers (minors).

Children are especially vulnerable in this industry to production pressures that may influence parents to be irresponsible. Doing commercials non-ACTRA means that the production can bypass the contractual protections ACTRA can provide for child performers – protections such as limiting the number of hours a 6 year-old child can work.

ACTRA has lately publicized the fact that Mattel (the makers of Barbie) and Crayola Crayon, both companies who target children with their advertising, have gone ahead and shot commercials without providing the child performers with the terms and conditions of an ACTRA union shoot.

These are profitable companies that can afford to pay their performers ACTRA rates. They assert that they are abiding by all safety rules and labour standards. If so, then why not produce these commercials under the ACTRA National Commercial Agreement?

It's disgraceful that companies that target children with their products and make millions off them want to pay rates that are often less than half of what these child performers should receive in session fees and residuals. It's also deplorable that these companies will on the one hand assert that they are observing safety and labour standards, but on the other hand, will not sign on to the ACTRA agreement that stipulates these standards, and makes them enforceable.

ACTRA will continue to monitor non-ACTRA commercial production, particularly those shoots involving child performers. We will be vigilant in protecting these performers, informing the children's parents of the risks they take when their children are not protected by ACTRA agreements, and we will continue to encourage companies and their advertising agencies to bring their projects under the ACTRA umbrella.

ACTRA appreciates any confidential tips on non-union commercial activity. Contact your local ACTRA branch with any information.

**Thor Bishopric**