

MISC II - NRA

CBS Hunting Show Loses Ads After Gun-Club Calls

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By LES BROWN

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More than half a dozen advertisers withdrew their commercials from last night's CBS telecast of a news documentary on hunting after receiving calls from the National Rifle Association and a variety of gun and hunting groups around the country, according to a CBS official.

A network sales executive who reported the withdrawals said the calls were "clearly a campaign to intimidate the advertiser."

The 90-minute documentary, "The Guns of Autumn," produced and written by Irv Drasnin, concerned hunting as

a recreational activity and contained graphic scenes of the killing of animals.

CBS News has been receiving acrimonious mail from gun advocates around the country since July, with the first announcement that the program was in production. Most of the writers seemed certain that the program would arouse sentiment against their right to own handguns.

The CBS sales executive, who requested anonymity said yes-

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ADS ARE DROPPED FROM A CBS SHOW

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terday that advertisers began leaving the program early this week and that other prospective sponsors had lost interest "in a wave" the last few days.

As a result, as broadcast time approached, only one advertiser, Block Drugs—using two 30-second spots—remained in the program. The 16 other commercial half-minutes were used by the network for promotional and public service spots.

Advertising agencies, on canceling their purchases, told the network that top officers of the sponsoring companies had been spoken to by gun and hunting groups from Atlanta, Denver, Cincinnati and other cities.

Thomas Hodges, director of public relations for the National Rifle Association, said in a telephone interview that he had spoken to a number of advertisers when he learned Tuesday that they had scheduled spots in the telecast.

Mr. Hodges said CBS News had denied his request for a preview showing of the program, under its long-standing policy for news documentaries. But he was able to attend a closed-circuit screening for affiliates on Tuesday, and there he drew up a list of the scheduled advertisers.

"I don't think a simple phone call from me would really have been the determining factor in their withdrawal from the program," Mr. Hodges said. He surmised that they probably had "various reasons of their own" for dropping out.

To protect his clients, the CBS sales executive declined to identify any of them or to estimate how much advertising revenue had been lost. Other sources estimated that the canceled advertising came to more than \$100,000.

"It is curious that these people think they can keep us off the air, or from doing journalistic programs, by putting heat on the advertisers and forcing them to withdraw," said Bill Leonard, senior vice president of CBS News.

"They don't understand how this thing works. The programs will be televised with or without advertising. The advertiser has nothing to do with it in the first place."

Mr. Leonard said that a number of letters received by CBS this summer had threatened a campaign to influence advertisers.

Those letters, in fact, prompted CBS News last week to schedule a follow-up program to the documentary. To be broadcast on Sept. 28, it will deal with the controversy raised by last night's program and will be called "Echoes of the Guns of Autumn."

A CBS-TV official said there was no indication that stations affiliated with the network had received pressure from the gun enthusiasts similar to that brought upon the advertisers.

"So far as we know, every one of our stations carried the program," he said.