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Finally, a Brazilian administration has perceived that it must promote reading in Brazil with part of the R$ 5.6 billion (US$ 2.8 billion) it spends annually on publicity. This is a laudable decision and it is gratifying to see these announcements during the breaks in the nighttime TV shows.

Unfortunately, the advertising will have no effect upon the 14 million illiterate adults in Brazil or upon the 35 million who, while capable of reading the title of a book, cannot capture the message.

Few of the current 55 million elementary/secondary students will dedicate themselves to reading in the future because those who do acquire this aptitude in childhood and adolescence rarely are transformed into readers. Our schools, moreover, are not creating readers.

Minister of Culture Ana Hollanda's campaign should be praised, but, at the same time, the administration should take the actions necessary to transform Brazil into a country of readers.

The first step is the revolution in elementary/secondary education, which is achieved through quality teachers with better salaries, better training, rigid selection and constant evaluation, through schools with attractive, comfortable, well-equipped buildings holding full-day sessions.

It is also achieved through methods that include reading as a substantial part of the educative process. All this demands federal responsibility for elementary/secondary education.

While the Ministry of Culture is using publicity to encourage reading, the Ministry of Education (MEC) takes care of the federal universities and the municipalities have to educate their children with their few resources.

The second step is the eradication of illiteracy, not only among teenagers and children over six years of age but also among adults. Few of these newly literate adults will become voracious readers. And to promote reading among the children it is necessary to have literate parents.

Third, it is necessary to make books less expensive by giving incentives to publishing houses and bookstores - at least equal to those given to the automobile industry - and by setting up libraries, theaters and movie houses since these cultural activities play an important role in the promotion of reading.

Finally, in the field of publicity, it would be more efficient to incorporate reading into the nighttime TV shows than to broadcast messages during the commercial breaks.

There would be an greater incentive to read if Tufão's house had a bookcase, if Nina would appear reading The Art of War to inspire her strategies against Carminha, if Agatha, besides eating, went to school and read something, and if a young hero would successfully impress young women with his reading instead of his musculature.

Scenes like this are not filmed because, for the Brazilian public, they would seem exaggeratedly fantastic: a house with books, a child reading.

When all this is done, Brazil will not need a publicity campaign to promote reading.

I want to reaffirm, nevertheless, that without the combination of actions necessary to change elementary/secondary education, the Ministry of Education's publicity messages will have no effect.

This would be like advertising meat in a country of vegetarians.

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