

4A's suspends ad agency/ over 'Milk Wars' issue 5-1

By Gerry Marron

THE agency whose controversial ad campaign sparked 'Milk Wars' was yesterday suspended from the trade's main business organisation.

Members of the Association of Accredited Advertising Agencies took the hard line: after Foote Cone and Belding refused to obey an order to take an offending commercial off TV.

No one from the FCB agency was present at yesterday's meeting to protest against its suspension.

The unanimous decision could lead to the eventual expulsion of the agency from the 4A's organisation.

The offending ad — made for the Fresh Milk Marketing Association —

promotes pasteurised milk and questions whether the sterilised product can be considered fresh.

The 4A's chairman, Tony Blair, said the agency would remain suspended until the offending commercial was taken off the TV screens.

The position will then be reviewed.

"We want to make it clear to our members that there is a standard of behaviour that we expect from them," he said.

The 4A's will be meeting representatives of the Television Advisory Board next month in an effort to get them to withdraw approval of the milk ad.

Yesterday's decision was the latest outcome of a long-running war between the fresh milk and sterilised milk companies.

The offending ad had already been pulled off the screens once, after a complaint by sterilised producer Dutch Lady to the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority.

David Beecroft, regional director of the Ted Bates Ad Agency which represents Dutch Lady, said after the 4A's meeting he was unhappy that the issue had led to the suspension.

"But the issue was whether the commercial was disparaging or not disparaging," he said.

"For the life of me, I cannot see how anyone can say that it was not disparaging," he said. "It sets out to portray a rival product as being of poor quality."

The managing director of Foote Cone and Belding, Brian Tucker, is on holiday and no one was available to comment for the agency last night.