

S. A. W.P.

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Advertising controls 'are needed'

By **URSULA YEUNG**

An advertising control committee should be set up to safeguard consumers' rights, an academic said yesterday.

Its job would be to lay down the rules to prevent bad or misleading advertising and to plug loopholes in the existing law.

The call came from Mr Leo Sin, an assistant lecturer in marketing and international business at the Chinese University. He was speaking at a city forum in Victoria Park.

He said existing legislation dealing with television and cinema advertising was loose and misleading itself.

"The committee should involve representatives of the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority, the Consumer Council, advertising agencies and advertisers, and also people from the educational field," he said.

"It would enhance communication between different parties involved in the advertising industry and help protect consumers from being misled."

He said that besides controlling television and cinema advertising, TELA's work could be extended to cover other types of advertising.

"It is impossible for consumers to judge from every advertisement they see the quality of the product concerned since so many new brands of products are intro-

duced into the market every day," Mr Sin said.

"And many advertisements fail to inform consumers correctly of the products' functions."

He said it was necessary for the Government to tighten its control on all sorts of advertising.

Mr Sin's view was echoed by Mrs Pamela Chan, chief executive of the Consumer Council, who also called for the setting up of a committee to control advertising in all media.

She said the fact that existing legislation covered products only had allowed people providing services to "manipulate" the industry and mislead customers.

Another speaker, Mr William Chiu, of the Hongkong Advertisers' Association, said exerting control over advertising was a "passive solution" to the problem of misleading advertisements.

He urged advertisers to practise self-restraint since severe restrictions would only harm the development of the industry.

Mr S.M. Lai, an advertising account director, said it was difficult for a person to decide whether "enough information" was carried in an advertisement.

But when the quality and functions of products advertised, such as medicine, could not be easily assessed, he said, then legislation had to be introduced to protect customers.