

CHRY: the facts, the innuendo

The growing pains of an FM station

By JEROME RYCKBORST

Daniel Zaretsky is a small man with a surprisingly big voice. But then, he works in radio.

Zaretsky is the manager of CHRY, York's student-owned community radio station.

His friends think he's extraordinarily qualified for the job.

Others think he isn't. They bemoan his financial direction, criticize the way he fired former news director John Doyle, and find "errors" in the resume he used to get the job.

Through the legal threats, criticism in the press, and a defamation suit, Zaretsky has said little.

Zaretsky is somewhat hesitant to discuss his strengths.

"I'd like to think that I bring, and brought, the ability to facilitate people working well together, sharing, co-operating, and developing each person through that kind of process."

Firing John Doyle doesn't sound very facilitating, but according to Zaretsky, it is consistent with his policy.

"Notwithstanding the difficulty of dismissing someone, the higher goal was providing an environment for that co-operation, training, advance-

ment and development of many people through the news/current affairs department of the station, and in that sense, it was our view that Mr. Doyle stood in the way of that.

Zaretsky and former programme director Kaan Yigit visited Doyle at his home last Thanksgiving, and told

him of his dismissal. Up to that point, Doyle had volunteered and worked at CHRY for five years.

"I devoted a considerable amount of time to it," Doyle said. "I enjoyed it."

Initially Doyle worked for the programming department, but soon became involved with CHRY's administration.

"I was chair of the executive for a couple of years, and I was chair of the board in 1985 — back when CYSF still owned the station."

Doyle also seems to understand CHRY's role, and its involvement with the community, and claims he set high standards for news programming while he was its director.

Doyle said he doesn't understand why he was fired.

"It was a very tense and emotional situation. It's one of those things you never want to go through again."

Doyle claims Zaretsky and Yigit told him the station could not afford his salary, but he can't explain why he would be instantly dismissed simply because the station lacked funds.

"Why it wasn't done the legal way has always shocked me beyond belief, because Zaretsky is studying for his Bar exams." Zaretsky counters that Bar exams do not specifically include a section on the labour code. Doyle was fired on October 7 with no advance notice. He is still unemployed.

Former station manager Mel Broitman, who hired Doyle, said there were definite problems.

"Kaan and I made the decision to hire Doyle. At the time we had an opening. We had searched before, and we knew how hard it is to find people, to interview people. He was available, so we hired him."

"By June or July we realized there could potentially be problems. John could not effectively work with volunteers."

Broitman said, "The fact that today there are 20 people in the news department — a large group — supports his opinion."



SPINNING RECORDS: One of CHRY's 130 volunteers cues up some music in the station's on-air booth. CHRY can be found at 105.5 on the FM dial, and is also available at different frequencies on cable

'I don't think anyone's out to get Zaretsky'

ment and development of many people through the news/current affairs department of the station, and in that sense, it was our view that Mr. Doyle stood in the way of that.

Zaretsky and former programme director Kaan Yigit visited Doyle at his home last Thanksgiving, and told

him also said he talked to Doyle.

"Between Kaan and myself we had two discussions regarding his work. We just simply wanted him to do a little more alternative news. He wasn't very pleased. When we had discussions with him it was still in the first few months. I think things were getting a bit more serious at the time Dani took over."

Broitman added, "It was a mistake and I admit the responsibility for that mistake. Dani had to come in and clean up."

"I thought it would die out by Christmas. Obviously Doyle's on tour: it's the *Lexicon* this week, *Excalibur* and the *Obiter Dicta* the next."

Zaretsky said his main concern what to open the news department to greater numbers of volunteers — which has risen from around five to about 33, according to Zaretsky.

When asked if the role of CHRY in the community is hard to convey to those volunteers intent only on play-

ing music, Zaretsky agreed.

"There's no question that the very phenomenon you describe was one of the great challenges of this station when we went from closed circuit to FM. There's no question that, until that point, young kids or no, most people didn't really think either of reaching out to the community, or of responsibility for the medium that they're using."

"But I think that in terms of community, people are fairly sensitized to that — we rarely even have to educate people in that area."

Feedback from the community is on the increase, with the numbers of phone calls increasing steadily. Probably the best time for feedback was during CHRY's first fund-raising campaign last fall.

Support for CHRY was enormous. Listeners pledged \$20,000, though only about \$10,500 has been collected to date. The campaign only cost between \$400 and \$500, said

Zaretsky, mainly because the station received hundreds of records, a York Microstore computer on loan, and three extra telephones — all free.

"If we do ultimately collect \$12,000 or \$13,000, that could be a Canadian record for a first fund-raising campaign."

By comparison, U of T's CIUT has collected \$26,000 of the \$48,000 pledged during 1988's fundraising drive, but expected to collect only \$25,000.

CIUT is a 15,000-watt station; CHRY has only 50 watts.

Apparently, CHRY lost one of its fund-raising pledges because of bad press when Doyle was fired, but Zaretsky said the station didn't know about the pledge, and it wasn't included in the pledge total. But he is concerned about the publicity surrounding Doyle's dismissal.

"I could say smugly that any publicity is good publicity, but no — I don't like that."

One group that Zaretsky feels a particular obligation to is his volunteer staff, but at this point, even they don't know all the facts.

"I totally accept that we're a very public corporation," said Zaretsky. "But that doesn't give 20,000 the right to something personal. No business has to operate that publicly."

"There are certain aspects which are privileged simply to protect the legal interests of the station, for as long as there is the possibility of a legal action."

Zaretsky adds, "The question of volunteers is a very important one. It cuts to the essence of this whole dispute arising from the dismissal. In my position I am directly responsible to the 130 or so volunteers. You can be darn sure about two things: first of all, I have to worry about how they feel."

"But secondly, in something like this, if it had created drastic animosity towards me, or great disappointment, you would have heard about it."

The mandate of community radio

By JEROME RYCKBORST

What is CHRY?

Read the text of a CHRY volunteer-recruitment poster: "We are looking for a volunteer theorist to explain the role of CHRY in this post-modernist, post-structuralist, post-industrial, post-existential, pseudo-semiotic f#@%!S# world of hermeneutic, voodoo-economic transcendentalism. No radio experience necessary."

After 16 months of FM broadcasting, the question is overdue. CHRY is . . . Well, grab the headphones and tune in. The music is different, the news is different, the deejays are different. This is not commercial radio. CHRY is community radio.

It doesn't serve a massive audience. It serves a group of small communities centred around North York and the University.

By definition CHRY is independent of the mainstream. The station's independence is a voluntary separation from the opinions of the democratic majority: a separation in its programs, its news, its music.

Defining itself as an outsider has certain advantages to a community station.

While the commercial mainstream aims at the consumer group with the most money to spend, they are also influenced by that group. Politically, that group happens to be the majority, and in our democracy the majority defines the social boundaries within which mainstream programming competes.

But the alternative programming of community media is insulated from the majority's voice and insulated from the social pressure to conform.

As such, the programming can inquire more objectively into society's inexplicable regulations and beliefs and myths.

This is what community radio can do: criticize from the outside.

By offering a voice to minority points of view, alternative programming contributes to the public discussion, in part by offering information, but also by setting the agenda.

It is very appropriate for a University to be involved in community broadcasting, since it provides a link between new academic thought and society as a whole.

The mainstream media may not have an interest in presenting its audience with disturbing or controversial information. Most large radio stations provide only one hour each week for community programming.

York is very lucky to have a vehicle like CHRY which can represent the many points of view around the university, North York and Metro Toronto, should its directors so choose.

But CHRY is more than a soapbox. For some, it is a place to hear or play out-of-the-mainstream music, to express themselves.

CHRY is a hobby for many of its 130-odd volunteers. For others it is a training ground, hopefully leading to mainstream media jobs.

cont'd on p. 8