

PSA on CBC

Policy or Local Prejudice

by Allan Zdunich

The Gay Alliance for Equality has filed an intervention against the licence renewal of Halifax radio station CBH at the CRTC hearings to be held October 5.

CBC has refused to carry announcements of GAE's meetings or phone line.

The intervention is GAE's response to the alleged discrimination the organization has faced at the hands of the CBC Public Service Announcements department.

In a press release regarding the GAE intervention the secretary for the group Robin Metcalfe stated:

"The airwaves are public property and the CBC is a publicly owned system. It is supported by the taxes of Canadian citizens many of whom are gay. It has a responsibility to give community groups fair and equal access to public service announcements without discrimination based upon prejudice. CBC has not fulfilled this responsibility and must be reminded of it."

After trying to place Public Service Announcements with radio station CBH in Halifax for almost two years GAE has decided to fight back.

GAE will present information, to show a systematic attempt by CBH to refuse PSA's, when it appears before the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC). Although the intervention is against the renewal of the broadcasting licence for the station it is unlikely the station will lose its licence.

GAE was advised that rather than refuse to renew the licence of the station the CRTC commissioners would likely order CBH to fulfill its commitment to community broadcasting and air information about the organization. The CRTC could order CBH to show its good faith by producing a radio documentary on gays in Halifax or make some other affirmative action; probably CBH will be ordered to air the PSA's that GAE submits.

Since the fall of 1974 GAE has tried to place Public Service Announcements with CBH and been refused. In 1974 Bob Stout contacted John McEwen, the Director of Radio for the Maritimes, when his submission for a PSA was refused. The Public Service Department had advised Stout that the decision to refuse his submission was based on a decision at John McEwen's office.

McEwen refused to air the PSA for GAE's phonenumber until GAE satisfied CBC's policy guidelines regarding submit-

P.S.A. stands for Public Service Announcements. A PSA is a free advertisement and promotion for community groups and service organizations aired on radio and television. PSA time is available to non-profit community groups.

ting organizations wishing to place PSA's. Although GAE fits those regulations, McEwen remained adamant about denying GAE's request.

When Stout asked to see the CBC Public Service Announcements Policy McEwen told him the document was confidential.

In February 1976, GAE was still unable to air PSA's on CBH. In late February CBHT's early evening news and public affairs program "Here Today" contacted GAE and aired an interview on media discrimination. The interview did not focus on the particular problem with CBHT's sister CBH radio. At the time GAE was being denied access to other media in the city.

In early March CJCH-TV in its early evening news and public affairs program dealt with GAE's problems with CBC. CJCH mentioned radio station CBH.

Pat Napier of CBH's afternoon program "Metro Action" interviewed GAE representatives about CBC discrimination, this interview first aired on March 31 was also aired late in the week on other local CBH programs.

Brian Currie of the 4th Estate interview-

ed John McEwen about the Public Service Announcements policy of radio station CBH. In the 12 May 1976 edition of the 4th Estate in an article headlined "Group denied media access" the 4th Estate said:

John McEwen, Director of CBC Radio for the Maritimes, says it is the word "counselling" that keeps the Gay Alliance out of CBC's free public service announcements.

"There are a lot of people out there on the borderline between heterosexuality and homosexuality. We have to be careful about what kind of counselling these people receive. The counselling these

for gay groups did not conflict with any CBC policy.

PSA policy was a public document, Zdunich was told, and CBC Toronto sent him a copy by return mail. Zdunich was advised that a time constraint was the only plausible argument CBH could use.

To determine if the unwritten policy of CBH was the unwritten policy across the country, Zdunich called gay organizations in Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver.

In those three cities the local gay organizations were unable to place PSA's, although they were quite often interviewed on the news and information programs of

of a non-commercial character; make its service available in a non-discriminatory manner and therefore may not be connected with any body which exists primarily to protect or advance the interests of its own members and be in a position to assure contributors to fund-raising campaigns that their contributions will be deductible for income tax purposes.

GAE met these above requirements.

Since the PSA policy stated that all submissions must be in ten days in advance of airing Zdunich waited before again calling McEwen.

On 10 September Zdunich phoned McEwen and asked why CBH had a problem with too many PSA's did he hear the announcers complain on September 7 and 8 that they had only two PSA's to air in a three hour program. McEwen said that sometime there were lots and other times there were few. This contradicted his statements of two weeks earlier.

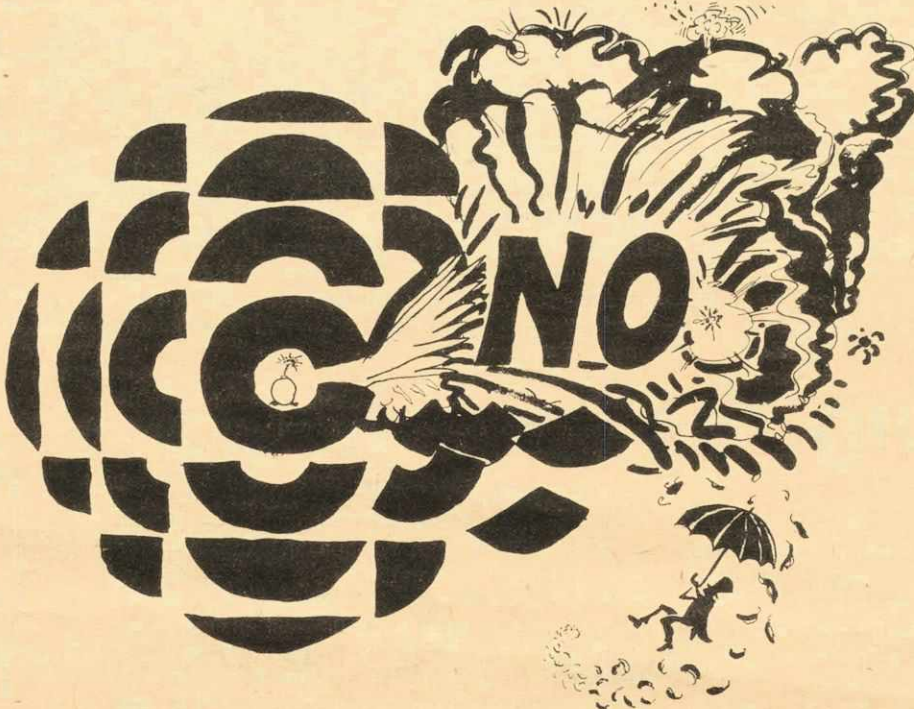
McEwen also insisted that CBC PSA policy was confidential. When Zdunich told him he had a copy of the PSA policy and would like to review it to find out what section McEwen was using in his decision, McEwen refused. After much discussion centering around the question of potential discrimination McEwen suggested that he would look at other PSA's to see if there was some sort of discrimination. McEwen said that he would not be prepared to say when he would look at other PSA's.

McEwen then said that he would allow the airing of PSA's for GAE meetings and suggested that his policy had always been that. GAE had told Zdunich that they had submitted PSA's for meetings, but that McEwen had turned them down.

McEwen insisted that under no circumstances would he allow PSA's for the Gayline.

In the 10 September conversation McEwen no longer talked of airing gay PSA's as promoting a cause, he suggested he was being open minded about the issue but to date had not directed his staff to take Public Service Announcements from the Gay Alliance for Equality.

The decision by the Dalhousie Gazette to boycott CBC radio advertising still stands.



people get will have a great effect on their lives and family."

If the CBC could be sure there were psychiatrists on duty when potential homosexuals phoned in, says McEwen, the public service announcements would be carried.

"We don't feel we should lend any weight to their counselling services, without knowing just how good that counselling is," says McEwen. In any event, he says, CBC policies are decided at head office, not in Halifax. As far as he knows, the policy in this case is the same across the country.

The 4th Estate dealt with the problem of Halifax-Dartmouth media using their free announcement space only for those organizations that meet with their approval.

At the time, of the electronic media only radio station CJCH would air announcements of GAE meetings and the Gayline.

GAE wrote a letter to A.W. Johnson the President of the CBC complaining of discrimination by one of his stations. Johnson himself did not reply, but on his behalf CBC corporate executives offered a series of ambiguous reasons none of which directly replied to the GAE's charge.

When GAE attempted to place a PSA in June they were again refused. To this date PSA's have been refused by John McEwen.

On August 26 Dalhousie Gazette Editor Allan Zdunich contacted the Public Service Announcement's department of CBH radio. Zdunich was told that CBH would not carry PSA's for gay organizations and that if he wished to question the policy to speak with John McEwen the Director of Radio for the Maritimes.

McEwen told Zdunich that because of time constraints CBH did not have room in its format for one more PSA. McEwen also told Zdunich that "We can't promote just anything. We can't promote that sort of group." Pressed for details McEwen said that some people might be offended by the PSA's.

McEwen said that the CBC Public Service Announcement Policy was confidential and he could not show it to Zdunich.

Zdunich telephoned the CBC head office in Toronto and learned that PSA's

the same stations. Also, in those cities the gay organizations were able to get sufficient coverage from the rest of the media in the city. This is not the case in Halifax-Dartmouth.

PSA policy reads:

To qualify for public service promotion, an organization must have a permanent business office in Canada; demonstrably make a positive contribution to the social, artistic, spiritual or intellectual life of the community; be primarily

National Gay Conference

by Joan Shields
Canadian University Press

Toronto (CUP) -- Abolishing age of consent laws, establishing an autonomous lesbian movement and the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Bill of Rights were all topics of discussion at the Fourth Annual Gay conference held this September in Toronto.

Particular attention focused around the National Gay Rights Coalition (NGRC). NGRC was formed last year and represents 30 gay organizations across the country. It seeks to mobilize support on specific issues through a strategy of cross-country campaigns. In a broad statement of principles, NGRC is working to remove discriminatory federal legislation and lobby for the implementation of civil rights for gay people.

NGRC had no women delegates voting at this year's conference. Last year the lesbian caucus split from NGRC because the women felt that lesbian priorities wouldn't get adequate attention from the male-dominated NGRC. At this year's conference, NGRC requested that a delegate from the women's caucus attend its meetings to keep gay men informed of the decisions the lesbian caucus was taking.

Some women in the caucus argued against token representation and no women volunteered for the job.

Some of the demands put forward by

NGRC last year were the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Bill of Rights, and end to job discrimination against homosexuals in the federal government, removal of all references to homosexuality from the Immigration Act and the Divorce Act, and the abolition of age of consent laws and equal custody rights for homosexual parents.

David Garmaise, NGRC Coordinator said that some headway was made in demanding the removal of all references to homosexuals in the Immigration Act. He said NGRC is pressuring Robert Andras, Minister of Immigration, into introducing new legislation. Under the present act, gays can be refused entry into the country.

Garmaise said, "Although some parts of the legislation will be controversial, we have no reason to believe that the removal of references to homosexuals will cause more than a passing comment - probably from a Creditiste member or two - during debate in the House of Commons."

NGRC also demanded the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Bill of Rights. Garmaise said that a major brief - the Homosexual Minority and the Canadian Human Rights Act - was drafted by NGRC and sent to all members of Parliament. This fall the Coalition hopes to persuade the Government to include sexual orientation when it brings the Bill before the House of Commons.

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