

Burn that Witch!

, or Anna Livia Gets a Clitoridectomy

Donna Hoffman

1994

'Not Your Girl', a women's radio programme was taken off the air at Anna Livia FM by an all-male Board of Directors just before Christmas. Listeners phoned to complain about a programme on "Female Sexuality" after 'Not Your Girl gave away a book (Sue Lee's Sugar and Spice: Sexuality and Adolescent Girls) to the first caller with the correct spelling of "clitoris". The Directors wanted the team to apologize and concede that the quiz question was in "bad taste". The team would not agree upon this wording and the programme was suspended.

The Directors of Anna Livia decided the programme could recommence but that the producer was banned from further participation. Without discussion, they refused the team's request for representation at the meeting in which they decided this. Ultimately, the women on the 'Not Your Girl' team voted not to continue unless the Board took the group as a whole.

The Programming Head gave a reason for banning the producer. It was the "whole slant" of the series. He mentioned "Amnesty International announcements", specifically, something about "Chile". The week of the banning, 'Not Your Girl' did read an Amnesty call for support for an El Salvadoran woman journalist who has been disappeared by the death squads operating in that country. 'Not Your Girl' also regularly included the Women's Information Network phone number for non-directive pregnancy counselling [679-4700].

This was not the first time the Anna Livia Board of Directors cancelled 'Not Your Girl'. The first censoring followed commentary and debate about abortion during Spring of '93. With support from women's groups and colleagues within the station including a woman previously serving on the Board, 'Not Your Girl' won back its broadcast time. This Winter, the Board of Directors would locate the problem in one individual, when it really comes down to intolerance for political difference and an absence of democratic structures or practices at what's supposed to be Dublin's model community radio.

In the row when the programme was suspended, the Programming Head commented that they could not have everyone saying whatever they wanted all the time; that would be anarchism! Hmmmm. Sounds better than a clitoridectomy. Anyday.

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