

Radio City - sound of promises

WHEN Gillian Reynolds, Radio City's first Programme Controller, left her job recently she had to agree not to write about the station for the next three years.

It's not surprising. Gillian Reynolds is a respected journalist and radio critic.

But during her year with Radio City she witnessed the destruction of virtually every idea for making City a genuine local radio station.

And, believe it or not, that was the idea.

Before the Independent Broadcasting Authority awarded the franchise, Radio City (Sound of Merseyside) Ltd had to submit detailed proposals for the station.

City's plans were set out in their application for the franchise in October 1973.

Compared to the Radio City of the air-waves, the document reads like a DJ's joke. Not very funny.

There in black and white - The 194 that never reached your door, with promise you'll hear no more of!

But be warned, as the IBA were, that this humble document couldn't possibly do justice to "ideas which

cannot be expressed in a few sentences, any more than a piece of music, a painting or a plate of scouse could be adequately described in words."

That didn't stop the Radio City promoters trying it on.

The station would be "news, information, music, as well as a constant attempt through documentary, drama and features to represent something of the vigour and colour of life on Merseyside."

NEWS: "...the greatest and most vital part of our output will be news, information and current affairs."

"...we shall install permanent lines between the studio and (news) agency offices in Wigan, Warrington, St Helens, Birkenhead and Chester."

"These will be used several times a day for live reports into news and magazine programmes."

ENTERTAINMENT: "Local music, plays, humour and quizzes will all contribute heavily to the overall entertainment content..."

"...we are fortunate in being able to draw on the enormous pool of talent and community involvement



which has always characterised the region."

SPORT: "...two programmes devoted entirely to school sports and special programmes on sports like swimming, cycling, tennis, boxing etc."

THE ARTS: "Our aim will be manifold; to produce new drama for radio and, in particular, to foster local actors and authors; to broadcast new short stories and poems; to spotlight the work of local painters, sculptors, potters, graphic designers and crafts-

men; to let our audience know what is going on in their theatres, cinemas art galleries and museums."

"...we propose to broadcast one radio play each week."

RELIGION: "There will be an outside broadcast each Sunday of the full service from a local church... there will be a News of the Churches spot."

EDUCATION: "We feel radio could make a valuable contribution by offering short courses... we have scheduled a band of programmes"

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: "...a weekly programme, Spotlight, will be produced in conjunction with the Liverpool Community Relations Council and the various individual (national and racial) groups."

They even had the nerve to list "typical programmes". Radio City could run a search-out-schedules competition for most of them - and never give away any prizes.

Regular listeners will be mystified to hear of: Merry-Go-Round

• Merry-Go-Round. Three hour-long editions a day with news, reviews, interviews, outside broadcasts, shopping prices, job vacancies and

other useful information.

• Good Afternoon. Especially for young listeners just home from school.

• 44 Stanley Road. A series based on day-to-day family life in Liverpool.

• Hot Line. Not just a phone-in. A round-the-clock advice service.

• Mersey Midnight. An hour of national, international and local news.

• Pub Call. Visit to a pub with music, jokes and a quiz.

• Whitehall. The week in parliament. With local MPs.

And finally:

• Reporting '74. An hour-long documentary programme at noon each Sunday. "Well researched, financed and staffed... actively seeking exclusives... deliberately placed at the week's peak listening time..." "If radio stations had flagships this would be ours."

-That is, if it existed. Obviously commercial radio stations don't need flagships.

Within weeks of its launching, this one sank without trace. Along with all those other promises.

Car firm's nerve-racking game

THE CAR was advertised as a 1973 model. It was 1972.

The firm said there were two previous owners. There were three.

But Mr S. Williams decided to go ahead and buy the 'immaculate' Ford Consul for £895 from Auto Supermarket, 477 West Derby Road, Liverpool.

After all the advert said: "If you deal with ASM, you can't go wrong."

And it promised: "We give you an 18-month warranty, labour and parts... in conjunction with the Revolution Oil Co."

Before he picked up the car on July 1, Mr Williams asked ASM to change a dud oil filter and to a complete service. They agreed.

But they did neither. Mr Williams found the filter had merely been sprayed with blue paint... to make it look new.

Still at least he had his 18 month warranty for serious repairs. Or so he thought.

Wrong again. Just before the car had done 3,000 miles he noticed the car lurched when started. So back to ASM who said they would examine it in five days' time.

When he returned, Mr Williams had

driven 3,500 miles.

"Ah," said ASM, "our warranty is only for 3,000 miles. The next 15,000 miles were the responsibility of this strange-sounding Revolution Oil International."

This revolutionary company, who have their offices in 21a High Street, Wealdstone, said the car wasn't their responsibility.

So this time ASM said there was nothing wrong with the car.

Mr Williams knew there was. Blakes, the Ford dealers, examined it and said several parts had to be replaced. Their bill was £33.80. ASM refused to pay it.

So what sort of men are there at ASM? And is their 'revolutionary' warranty a gimmick?

A Mr Cockson from ASM agreed there was "no doubt this warranty helps to sell cars... You must remember this is a very nerve-racking game. It's all so competitive in the motor trade."

And he said you have to make the customers "feel secure". "That's the name of the game."

Some game. And other customers besides Mr Williams could end up as losers in this game played by ASM.

Legal action

JOHN LANNON, the Kirkby man who over a dozen witnesses saw kicked and punched by police (see last issue), is taking legal action against a number of officers for assault.

The police have also investigated themselves following a formal complaint from Mr Lannon. (On previous form, a statement clearing all the officers involved can be expected very shortly.)

John Lannon will himself appear in court this month in connection with a number of offences he is alleged to have committed at the Woodpecker pub in Northwood in the early hours of August 11.

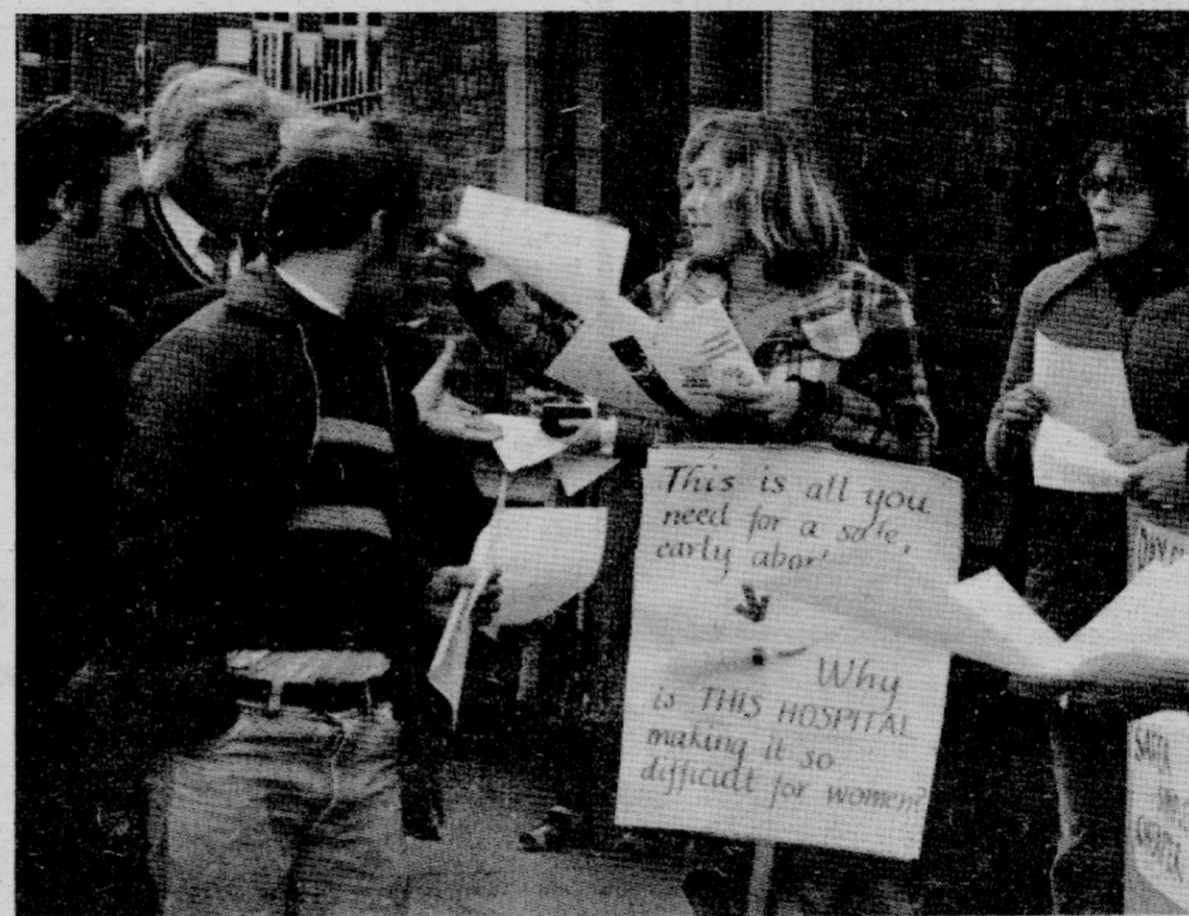
Safe at work?

A SPECIAL school on 'Safety and Health at Work' will be held on Saturday November 29 in the AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, from 11 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Guest speaker will be Pat Kinnersley, author of the popular book, The Hazards of Work.

It will be an in-depth look at the dangers from noise, dust, shift work, and chemicals. It will introduce methods of identifying dangerous substances, how to take samples, measure noise etc.

It's open to all trade unionists, but priority will be given to delegates from branches and stewards' committees. Cost 50p. Apply: Bro. T. Healey, Speke Area TU Committee, 14 Ranfurly Road, Liverpool 19. Organised by Speke TU Committee and the National Rank and File Organising Committee.



A recent protest at the difficulties women face in having an abortion at Liverpool Royal Infirmary.

B.B.C. blackout on Abortion

BBC Radio Merseyside and Liverpool's Highways and Environment Committee have both tried to censor women trying to give out facts on abortion.

By one vote the committee refused to allow the Merseyside Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign to have a stall in the city centre to give out leaflets.

And Radio Merseyside have recently twice prevented members of this campaign from airing their views.

On the first occasion, Jane Leighton, a member of the campaign, told a Radio Merseyside reporter she was worried about how badly informed MPs were over the abortion issue.

And she said MWACC were writing to MPs giving information.

The reporter, Jonathon Coe, agreed this would make an item for the morning current affairs programme. But he didn't have a say in the decision.

Pinned on the public notice board in the studios was a memo to all reporters.

This said: "During the week we were subjected to a great deal of organised pressure mainly from the anti-abortionists... we have recently covered the matter in considerable depth both nationally and locally."

And it added that no-one was to talk on the subject without contacting the news editor, the programme manager or the station manager.

The news editor blocked the discussion idea. He said the activities of the abortion and contraception campaign could be covered in news bulletins but not in current affairs programmes.

And yet the previous week Radio Merseyside carried in their "Light and Local" show a straight advertisement for the anti-abortion rally in London.

In a long interview with a member of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) details of times and places of coaches leaving Liverpool for the rally were given. And the presenter twice gave the telephone number where SPUC could be contacted.

Then the Highways Committee banned the abortion and contraception campaign from having a stall in Church Street.

The campaign wanted to give out

pamphlets and leaflets.

A BBC reporter was present at this meeting. He did not consider it important, and didn't file a story.

But when Jonathon Coe heard of the issue he thought the matter "highlighted a straightforward matter of civil rights" (he wrote this in a letter to Jane Leighton.)

So he set up a studio discussion between a councillor who voted for this ban and Jane Leighton.

But this discussion on censorship and civil rights was itself censored. The news editor again vetoed this idea.

Not content with this, Radio Merseyside broadcast the next day a news item about the committee's decision. The only person interviewed was Councillor Doreen Jones, the Liberal chairman of the committee, who was strongly against the leaflets being given out.

In July Doreen Jones had personally used her delegated powers to turn down a request for a stall from the Merseyside Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign.

She said she didn't want "this type of propaganda" disseminated to children. (The literature was so dull, and detailed, it would have been an achievement for any child to have read it anyway.)

So clearly "the organised pressure mostly from anti-abortionists" is having an effect on Radio Merseyside and the Highways Committee.

Just a quiet trip to Spain...

HOW MANY General and Municipal Workers' Union officials are taking a short holiday in fascist Spain this month? - Can't tell you.

Which officials are going, for how long, and exactly when? - Sorry, we don't know that either.

We did ask. But when you're told several times a day for five days that no officials are available, you begin to wonder whether they're all on permanent holiday.

We eventually got officials in the GMWU's offices in Edge Lane to the phone by pretending to be somebody else.

But it was no good. Men who usually know a lot... knew nothing. And men who usually have a lot to say... said nothing.

Regional Secretary Walter Aldritt (who was on holiday) didn't know which of his officials were going to Spain. "What they do with their private lives is their business. It's a matter for their conscience. I wouldn't go."

Keith Hogarth, Finance Officer: "I'm not going. I don't know who's going."

John Whelan, district official: "I don't wish to discuss it."

Eric Codey, an official in the Birkenhead office: "This has been an annual thing in the Regional Office for a number of years. I'm not going."

And, finally, Harry Johnson, deputy Regional Secretary: "This is being discussed. There may be a change of circumstances."

What the "change of circumstances" will be is anybody's guess.

But obviously there can be no truth in our original information: that Walter Aldritt was going, but dropped out; that Keith Hogarth took his place; that John Whelan is going; and that Harry Johnson organised the whole thing.

There are arguments for and against visiting fascist countries like Spain. But if the GMWU officials are being evasive because they can't justify their trip, then they shouldn't be going.

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Printed and published by Liverpool Free Press Group, 48 Manchester St., Liverpool 1. Tel: 051-227 2514.

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