

‘Demo-cracy’ Or ‘Media-cracy’ ? –



RTE’s New Censorship Policy

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HAVE RTÉ lost the run of themselves completely when it comes to debating gay issues?

This is the question being raised in the wake of a recent string of broadcasts, where the concepts of ‘fairness’ and ‘balance’ appear to have been thrown to the wind.

Time after time, any public questioning of the gay agenda seems to have ‘pushed the buttons’ of the Donnybrook producers, leading to a hastily arranged ‘show trial-by-media’ of the offending party.

A case in point was RTÉ’s Liveline programme on February 12, which saw journalist Herman Kelly attacked by callers and programme presenter, Evelyn O’Rourke, alike, for defending an article in which he dared to raise some serious questions over gay adoption and, in particular, the positions taken by gay activist and PD election candidate Colm O’Gorman

“The programme was a complete hijack”, claimed L.O.V.E founder Florence Horsmann Hogan. “The average was something like 1:14 caller ratio against Herman”

People listened in horror as caller after caller

was heard to make personal and even slanderous attacks on Hermann Kelly, egged on, incredibly, by the stand-in presenter Ms O’Rourke.

When would-be supporters of Mr Kelly texted or rang up to complain, they reported meeting with great frustration—in fact, none of their texts were read out and only a tiny proportion of callers were allowed to speak.

One of these, Harry Rea, of the National Men’s Council Of Ireland, was actually left waiting on the phone on 3 separate occasions.

However, a request, made to RTÉ by the Family and Media Association (FMA), seeking an official breakdown in the calls and texts received by the show that day, met with no joy.

Radio One’s Senior Press Officer, Sarah Martin, responded that it was “against RTÉ Radio policy to release details of calls and texts from members of the public to programmes”— a statement which seems strangely at odds with the actions of RTÉ presenter Pat Kenny, who, on at least two separate occasions, had indicated that the breakdown of calls concerning the Polish president’s remarks on his show, Today With Pat Kenny, was, as one would expect, “more or less 50-50”.



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And, with roughly 70% of the population (according to one of RTE’s own polls) opposed to gay adoption, which was the Liveline topic of the day, what are people to think when their views were so underrepresented?

As complaints arrive at the door of RTE and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission (BCC), RTE’s defence seems to be that the comments supporting Mr Kelly were largely ‘homophobic’ and could therefore not be aired.

But what does RTE mean by ‘homophobic’? Anything that questions the morality of homosexual activity, even extending to the campaign for legalising gay civil unions and gay adoption, it would seem.

This interpretation would appear to be borne out by other FMA inquiries concerning the content of calls/comments, that day, which revealed nothing that could be deemed defamatory of the gay community. Two of the callers who were not allowed on air indicated that, having got through to RTE, they said nothing more than that they were against gay adoption and in favour of Hermann Kelly. Compare this with one anti-Herman Kelly ‘caller’ who admitted on-air that it was RTE who had contacted him!

But the use of the catch-all ‘homophobic’ tag seems to come to the nub of the issue, say FMA. Equality Authority guidelines and the soon to be released new Code of Programme Standards direct that nothing can be broadcast which is in any way critical of sexual orientation—and for ‘orientation’ read ‘deliberate behaviour’.

In what is being described as ‘**neo censorship**’ by FMA, RTE would appear to be taking the attitude that any criticism of homosexual behaviour is

wrong *in itself* and, therefore, impartiality is not only ‘not required’ when discussing issues around homo-



sexuality but would actually constitute a breach of these new rules and guidelines. The fact that such rules—the new ‘commandments’ of liberalism—are probably themselves unconstitutional, has so far failed to be highlighted.

This new ‘policy’ was also apparent in RTE’s treatment of the Polish President’s recent remarks concerning homosexuality. While perhaps accepting that half the country were in agreement with the President, as per Pat Kenny’s two statements above, RTE presenters treat this ‘other half’ as simply being ‘wrong’, with their comments either censored or disparaged.

That same anti-democratic attitude was perhaps best expressed by Terry Prone of Carr Communications on the Today With Pat Kenny show, February 23, when she went so far as to suggest that the Government ‘take a lead’—regarding the legalizing of gay unions—*in the absence* of a democratic majority.

When homosexual acts were decriminalised, she pointed out that although this was done against the will of the majority, the people followed later—all of which would lead one to believe that demo-cracy (government by the people) has been replaced with ‘media-cracy’ (government by the media).

The BCC can be contacted at Broadcasting Complaints Commission, 2 - 5 Warrington Place, Dublin 2.

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The series producer of RTE’s Liveline, Margaret Curley, can be contacted at

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