

Statistics and the media - local radio

At the AGM, there was some discussion of the selective way racist crime statistics were used in a press release and subsequently regurgitated by the media. The pamphlet by Local Radio Workshop (with whom two of us made a tape about perinatal mortality statistics a couple of years ago) shows, among other things, how heavily local radio relies on such press releases, rather than doing its own reporting. Local Radio Workshop want to draw our attention to the way information is presented on local radio and provoke us to say something about it. The letter from 'Broadcasting as public service' is signed by Philip Adams, who was also involved in Local Radio Workshop's pamphlet.

The reason for all this activity is that the franchise for providing a news and information service for London is being readvertised. This is currently held by LBC, and as Local Radio Workshop's report shows, LBC has fallen far short of what it originally promised to do and made a hefty profit in the process. This is not just a London issue as the company which gets the franchise also supplies national and international news to all the other commercial local radio stations in the country. LBC does this as 'Independent Radio News' which, as Local Radio Workshop's report shows, is anything but independent.

London Radio News, a group including Peter Lewis and Patrick Hughes who are referred to in the first paragraph of Philip Adams' letter, is going to put in an alternative bid for the franchise. Local Radio Workshop think this is a waste of time and is therefore trying to stimulate as wide a range of groups as possible to campaign for conditions to be attached to the franchise to make LBC give a better service to people in London and Independent Radio News do so more widely. They explain how in their report.

On a superficial level, LBC has 'served our interests' when we have published pamphlets. We were interviewed by them when we published 'Whose priorities', 'In defence of the NHS', and 'The nuclear numbers game'. Indeed we even know that the latter two interviews were actually broadcast! However they are meant to do more than just promote things sent in to them, but as Local Radio Workshop's pamphlet shows, they don't.

Obviously a scattered group like ours with relatively few members in London isn't really in a position to do much more than write a letter to the Independent Broadcasting Authority, though Londoners might also belong to other groups who would be interested in doing more. At the same time, assuming we decide to write in, I think we ought to make some points about use of statistics, such as those which came up at the AGM in the discussion of racist crime statistics. What do other people think?

Alison Macfarlane

baps

broadcasting as public service

April 26th '82

Dear Colleagues,

Peter Lewis and Patrick Hughes might have written to you a month or so ago to invite you to a meeting to discuss challenging LBC for its contract to run London's News and Information radio service. Unfortunately, I understand that many groups didn't receive sufficient advance notice of the event, and that the meeting was therefore poorly attended. However, I'd like to take the opportunity of reminding you about the issue: I'll explain my role and concern.

BAPS is funded by the CSV in association with the Gulbenkian to provide community groups and groups of interest advice and information about how local broadcasting can be used as a communications resource, and to encourage such groups to take what opportunities exist to mould broadcasting services to their needs. Up till now, the project has concentrated its efforts outside of London, but now LBC is being assessed by the Independent Broadcasting Authority in order to ascertain whether its contract should be extended for the next ten years.

To this end the Independent Broadcasting Authority has invited groups and individuals to send them written comments about LBC's performance in the past and how the service might be improved in the future. I notice, however, that your group and the interests it represents has not been invited by the IBA to offer comments.

I wrote to the IBA saying that BAPS (which has been formally consulted) would contact interest groups so far left out of the process. The Authority has welcomed this. I ask, therefore, that you consider how adequately LBC has served your interests and to write to the Authority detailing your conclusions:

James Conway
London Area Officer
Independent Broadcasting Authority
70 Brompton Road
LONDON SW3

Don't hesitate to contact me if you want to discuss this at any time.

Sincerely Philip Adams

LOCAL RADIO IN LONDON

Local Radio Workshop has produced the first ever monitoring report on local radio in London.

It is based on an analysis of one week's output of London's three stations, Capital; LBC; BBC Radio London recorded in April/May 1981.

The report convincingly demonstrates the paucity and irrelevance of the material broadcast on all three stations.



Local Radio Workshop is campaigning for better local radio.

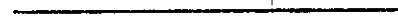
Local radio should carry the voices of all the groups and individuals that go to make up the city of London; Women's groups, Black groups, Community and special interest groups.

Local Radio Workshop will be pressing the IBA to improve the quality of local radio in London. We are calling for conditions to be attached to the new London News and Information contract which the IBA will award this autumn.

We are calling for a minimum number of hours per week of programming that seriously addresses London issues.



Help us to improve the quality of local radio in London - read LOCAL RADIO IN LONDON and ask Local Radio Workshop to come and speak to your group about the issues raised in the report....



PLEASE SEND A COPY OF Local Radio in London TO:

Name.....

Address.....

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Local Radio in London costs £2.75 which includes postage and packing. Please return this form to LOCAL RADIO WORKSHOP, 12 Praed Mews, LONDON W2 1QY tel 01-402 7651