

Maybe She's an Insecure Closeted Dyke

Whatever the reason "Dr." Laura Schlessinger calls gays "deviant" and "biological errors" on public airwaves

BY "KATY" DAVIDSON

GLAAD began its retaliation against Schlessinger nearly two years ago. More recently, an ad hoc group of activists began a "coalition against hate campaign" based on a Internet site called StopDrLaura.com.

This group put up its site late last year and has already received more than 30 million hits. Now, more than 10 major U.S. cities have started StopDrLaura.com groups that protest against stations slated to air her new television show this fall.

A few months ago, Procter & Gamble Co., one of the country's largest consumer products manufacturers, found itself sandwiched between Paramount Television and GLAAD because of its plans to be a major corporate sponsor of Schlessinger's show.

Both GLAAD and StopDrLaura.com heavily campaigned for P&G to pull its sponsorship, and, after only one week of protesting, the company caved under the anti-Schlessinger activists' pressure.

"We have decided not to sponsor the Dr. Laura show," a P&G spokesperson said in May. "There has been controversy surrounding Dr. Laura on a number of topics. We've chosen not to be involved with a show that will require time and resources to deal with this kind of controversy.... There are lots of programming options, and we've decided there are better ones for us."

The move by P&G came soon after a Canadian broadcast industry standards group issued a scathing condemnation of Schlessinger's radio commentary, calling her remarks about gay men and lesbians "abusively discriminatory."



In June, the corporate giant wavered about its decision to stop its advertising after it met with representatives of several right-wing groups, then redecided again and stuck to its guns. P&G will not only pull its sponsorship of Schlessinger's upcoming television show, it plans to pull its radio advertisements as well.

"GLAAD salutes Procter & Gamble's corporate responsibility and good conscience in its decision to discontinue advertising Laura Schlessinger's programming," said GLAAD Executive Director Joan M. Garry. "By doing so, the company has demonstrated the kind of respect for fair-minded people everywhere that we would like to see from Paramount, which plans to produce and distribute Schlessinger's TV program this fall."

(Unfortunately for animal rights activists, P&G has yet to reverse its policy of testing chemicals on animals to make sure products are safe for humans. Of related interest, Schlessinger admitted she "hates cats" on her radio show May 29.)

Following P&G's lead, Xerox, AT&T, United Airlines, Toys 'R' Us and American Express have distanced themselves from Schlessinger's program as well. These companies' decisions may have been influenced by a recent Harris Interactive/Witeck-Combs Internet survey which found that three out of four gay men and lesbians and two out of five heterosexuals are less likely to buy products advertised on shows that negatively portray gay men and lesbians.

■ THE DR. LAURA PROGRAM airs in the Portland area between 1 and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday on KEX 1190-AM.

KATY DAVIDSON is a Just Out staff reporter and cat lover.

For many people across the United States, she is the voice of reason. She's the daytime alternative to soap operas, dishing out advice with an attitude to millions of eager, problem-plagued listeners. She's got a sharp tongue and she rarely stutters. She seems to tell it like it is, with one major exception: She's got some sort of problem with gays.

For this reason, radio talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger has recently been high on the hit list of prominent national community organizations such as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

Schlessinger's show is a call-in program. Listeners are instructed to present a "moral dilemma question." On her own Internet site, www.dr.laura.com, Schlessinger says the purpose of her radio show is to dispense morals, values, principles and ethics.

According to GLAAD, however, Schlessinger has used her program (which is broadcast in Portland on KEX 1190-AM) to rail against gay men and lesbians, calling them "deviant," and "biological errors," and has suggested that a "huge portion" of gay men are involved in pedophilia. She also has said that gay men and lesbians should undertake "reparative therapies" to become heterosexual. (Transcripts from her show may be found on the GLAAD Internet site, www.glaad.org.)

Schlessinger's supporters often remind opponents of her right to free speech under the First Amendment, while anti-Schlessinger activists complain that listeners are being tricked by her title. Because of the "Dr." in front of her name, they argue, her views are perceived to have clinical value. (Schlessinger uses the title because she holds a doctorate in physiology.)

Dr. Laura to set Portland straight on KGW-TV

Continued from the cover

Buratti says she's received several e-mails protesting the show and a few threats (of demonstrations). So far none of the threats have come to fruition, she says.

Rather than respond to threats, protests and demonstrations, Buratti says, she would prefer to speak directly and have "a meaningful dialogue" with people who have concerns about the show.

Paramount has been very cooperative, Buratti says, and is working with Schlessinger to assure the content of the show is acceptable.

If such negotiations are in fact taking place, Schlessinger glossed over them in an exclusive interview in the July 3 issue of Time. She told the magazine that Paramount hasn't asked her to tone down her show.

"What's unique about this show," Schlessinger said, "is that the host will have a point of view."

In response to the public's concern, and for her own peace of mind, Buratti says, she plans to view every episode before the show's airtime (now scheduled for 11 a.m. Monday through Friday).

While the program director admits it is

unusual to preview syndicated shows, it isn't unheard of. Periodically Buratti would see an advanced listing (a sort of synopsis) of The

Roseanne Show that would concern her enough that she previewed the tape before airtime.

Buratti says she pulled the comedian's show five or six times and replaced it with a backup

episode (reserved for days when satellites are malfunctioning). Since then KGW has dropped the comedy from its schedule due to content. Buratti says the same tactics would likely be used if an episode of Schlessinger's show were deemed inappropriate before airtime.

Schlessinger asserts that she has many gay listeners who support her. She believes that only gay activists are involved with the protest

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