

DISCRIMINATION LAW ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT 1995/96

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

23rd March 1996

***Volunteer Resource Centre
Holloway Road
London***

DISCRIMINATION LAW ASSOCIATION

Annual Report 1995/96

1. MEMBERSHIP

During the course of the year 1995/96, since the inaugural A.G.M. held in 1995, membership of D.L.A. has grown quite dramatically and by the end of February 1996 stood at over 200. This figure included people who were "initial sponsors" of D.L.A. as well as people that became members during the course of the year. This rapid growth in membership is extremely welcome and probably reflects the need for an organisation like D.L.A.

At the time of writing, 18th March 1996, membership for the year 1996 is currently standing at nearly 90, which is to be expected, given that affiliation reminders have only just been despatched, with re-affiliations and new applications for membership coming in on a daily basis.

2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The executive committee elected at the inaugural meeting comprised 20 people. During the course of the year there were 7 executive committee meetings held and regular attendance at these meetings came from 11 people. Six executive committee members did not attend any meetings during the year. All meetings were held at the Queens Head Public House, Acton Street, London, and were held during the early evenings from 5.30 p.m. until approximately 7.00 p.m. The core activities of D.L.A. were carried out by approximately 8 members during the course of the year.

3. NEWSLETTER/CASELAW UPDATE

During the course of the year 3 newsletters and caselaw updates were produced and the fourth is currently under production and should be distributed within the next few days. The newsletter has been produced by Paul Crofts (Secretary) and the caselaw update has mainly been written and produced by Camilla Palmer. Camilla has been supported on several occasions by other D.L.A. executive committee members, especially Robin Allen Q.C.

The format of the caselaw update will probably change over time and may be produced in the form of regular briefings on current issues. The main issues which have dominated the caselaw update have been around implications of the European Union Directive in respect of sex discrimination, which has had significant "knock-on" effects, and other areas of employment and employment law, particularly in respect of part-time workers and rights of pregnant employees. This may give the conception that the caselaw digest has tended to centre on issues of sex discrimination. Whilst it was the intention of D.L.A. to cover all areas of discrimination law during 1995, sex discrimination issues have tended to dominate in respect of significant caselaw developments.

Feed-back from D.L.A. members suggests that the newsletter and caselaw update are welcome as a supplement to other sources of information, e.g. IRLR and other IRS publications, such as Equal Opportunities Review and the Discrimination Caselaw Digest.

4. DISCOUNTS ON PUBLICATIONS

During the first year of D.L.A. we have been able to negotiate a significant discount on the publication "International Journal of Discrimination and the Law". We are also finalising significant discounts in respect of two IRS publications: "Discrimination: a Guide to the Relevant Caselaw (produced annually) and the Discrimination Caselaw Digest (produced quarterly). Information about these new discounts will be circulated to all D.L.A. members within the next few weeks.

5. D.L.A. TRAINING AND SEMINARS

During our first year in existence we have been somewhat "slow off the ground" in developing initiatives around training and seminars. However, in recent weeks, a training seminar was organised on "Remedies in Racial Discrimination Cases" and also a three-day training session has been organised in the East Midlands for the Commission for Racial Equality. We would formally like to record our thanks to Manjit Gill and Karon Monaghan for running the remedies seminar, and Paul Crofts, Farhad Shakrokni and Sandhya Drew for undertaking the training on behalf of the C.R.E.

In order to assist D.L.A. in organising seminars and conferences, we appointed two part-time conference organisers, Vange Bute and Helen Brown, towards the end of 1995. Vange and Helen were instrumental in helping us to organise the remedies seminar and I am sure that without their support and help it would not have been as successful as it was. We would formally like to record our thanks to them for this work and we hope (if they have not been put off) that they may be able to help us organise future conferences.

Over the next 12 months we hope to organise further conferences and training events. Some preliminary areas which we would like to look at include issues relating to indirect discrimination, remedies in sex discrimination and equal pay cases, and discussions about extending the law on religious discrimination in the U.K. Other training events which we may consider organising on a regular basis include introduction to discrimination law, undertaking discrimination case work and representation work at industrial tribunals.

6. REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Although D.L.A. is a national organisation we are acutely aware that the current centre for its meetings and activities is London. We are therefore keen (as the Constitution allows) to develop regional D.L.A. groups which undertake their own activities with the support of the D.L.A. national executive committee. We are pleased that such initiatives have been started in **Leeds**, with the help of Claire Newberry, a solicitor with Pinsent Curtis, and in **Reading** with the help of Kevin Durham, who works for

MacEwan, who would be interested in acting as a focus for activities in Scotland. Martin is based at the Ethnic Minority Research Unit, which is part of Herriott Watt University.

7. SUPPORTING OTHER INITIATIVES

D.L.A. has been pleased to assist other organisations who are undertaking initiatives in the area of discrimination law. In particular we helped circulate information about a Law Society/Equal Opportunities Commission conference held in September 1995 and a TUC/IRS conference held in December. It was pleasing to note that at the Law Society conference, many participants were D.L.A. members.

8. PROMOTING D.L.A.

Being a new initiative with little or no resources, it has been a difficult task to promote the existence of D.L.A. on a national basis. We are extremely pleased that D.L.A. members have been "spreading the word". In addition, a promotional leaflet was produced during the year which was widely distributed at a number of conferences and events organised by other people (see above). If any D.L.A. members would like to help us in promoting our work and activities, or have ideas, we would be pleased to hear from them.

9. D.L.A. RESOURCES

As has been mentioned above, D.L.A. has been operating with few resources, other than the voluntary effort put in by executive committee members and other members. We are hoping that over the next 12 months it will be possible for us to appoint "at least" a part-time co-ordinator/secretary. With this in mind, we held a meeting with Herman Ouseley at the C.R.E. and will shortly be holding a meeting with Kamlesh Bahl at the Equal Opportunities Commission to discuss how the D.L.A. can work with these organisations to promote an interest in discrimination issues. Part of these discussions also includes requests to these national organisations for financial support to D.L.A.

10. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Besides continuing to develop D.L.A.'s work in the areas of training and organising seminars and conferences (as reported above) and also continuing to produce the newsletter and caselaw update, we also hope to produce, during the next year, a directory of D.L.A. members based on returns to the questionnaire which was distributed. We also hope to form a small practitioners' group, which will look at strategic issues in respect of discrimination law developments.

We are also mindful that the availability of services to complainants of discrimination is still a major problem. Indeed, D.L.A. has been telephoned by individuals seeking advice and assistance on discrimination cases, which we were not able to help with. One possible development which may be explored is a "pro bono" network of barristers and solicitors who may be able to assist individual complainants. We would welcome comments from D.L.A. members on such a proposal.

11. CONCLUSION

Overall D.L.A. has made tremendous strides over the last 12 months. There is still much to do, with limited resources and drawing upon the time and commitment of individuals who are already overworked and "underpaid". Finally, I would like to thank Wellingborough District Racial Equality Council (in particular Margaret Plowman and Nan Tobin), without whom it would not have been possible for D.L.A. to have survived during the year, especially when it comes to the production of the newsletter and discrimination caselaw updates.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1995/96

Chair: Geoffrey Bindman
Secretary: Paul Crofts
Treasurer: Manjit Gill

Robin Allen
Colin Bourn
Andrew Dorn
Kurshid Drabu *
Sandhya Drew
Sally Grubb
Murray Hunt *
Makbool Javaid *
Satvinder Juss
Inayat Khan *
Mahmood Shafi Khan
Richard Lewis *
Alison Lovejoy
Karon Monaghan
Camilla Palmer
Farhad Shahrokni
Gladys Simeon *