

DISCRIMINATION LAW ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL REPORT 1997/98

Presented to the

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

April 25th 1998

London

***Discrimination Law Association
PO Box 5026, Wellingborough NN8 3ZX***

Tel: (019330 225552

Fax: (01933) 227772

E-mail: DiscLawA@aol.com

Web-site: <http://www.parish.oaktree.co.uk/dla/dla1.htm>

DISCRIMINATION LAW ASSOCIATION

Annual Report 1997/98

1. MEMBERSHIP

During the course of the year 1997/8 membership of D.L.A. has grown quite dramatically and by the end of March 1998 stood at 256. This rapid growth in membership is extremely welcome and probably reflects the growing recognition of DLA and the services it provides for members. Over recent weeks we have welcomed a number of new members from Northern Ireland, following the very successful launch of DLA at Queen's University, Belfast, in February. It is our aim to achieve a membership of over 300 by January 1999. This is increasingly becoming a very realisable target.

The current membership of DLA comprises the following*:

Advice Centres/Workers	73
Solicitors	67
Barristers	48
National Organisations	10
Students/unwaged	14
Trainers/Agencies	4
Local Authority workers	2
Publishers	3
Trade Unionists	3
Not Known	23

* This information may not be 100% accurate, but it gives an indication of DLA's membership profile at this time

2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The executive committee comprises fourteen people (*see list at end of this report*). During the course of the year there were seven executive committee meetings held. Most executive committee members attended at least one meeting, with consistent attendance from four members. All meetings were held at the offices of Bindman & Partners, 275 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1, and were held during the early evenings, from 5.30 p.m. until approximately 7.00 p.m.

3. NEWSLETTERS and BRIEFINGS

During the course of the year four newsletters and forty briefings were produced. Paul Crofts (Secretary) produced the newsletters and the briefings have been the responsibility of Camilla Palmer, as the Editor. Several DLA members have contributed in writing briefings for us.

Feedback from D.L.A. members suggests that the newsletters and briefings are

welcome as a vital supplement to other sources of information. **They are, however, considerable cheaper than these other – thus enabling discrimination law developments to be more widely accessible to those with limited resources.**

4. DISCOUNTS ON PUBLICATIONS

During the year we were able to negotiate a significant discount on the new Sweet & Maxwell publication by Jon Whitmore & Colin Bourn: “Anti Discrimination Law”.

5. D.L.A. TRAINING AND SEMINARS

Over the past twelve months we were commissioned to undertake two training courses. The first, held in Birmingham in early March, was organised in conjunction with the **West Midlands Low pay Unit**. The second, was a two day series of training event in Belfast for the **Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities** (NICEM). This followed the recent extension of the Race Relation Act 1976 to Northern Ireland, via the Northern Order 1997.

Over then next period we hope to develop training and seminars on a much more consistent basis than was possible to-date. The executive committee recently approves a Training Strategy, written by colleagues at Salford Law Centre, which will help to guide this work.

6. REGIONAL/ NATIONAL 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. Earlier initiatives to form groups in Leeds and Reading have, over the last twelve months, “floundered”.

We are, however, optimistic that a group may shortly be established in **Northern Ireland**, following the launch of DLA in February.

We are also delighted that a new, independent, DLA has recently been established in Scotland, with its own constitution, Executive committee and membership structure. We look forward to working in partnership with the new **Scottish DLA** in the future.

Over the next twelve months, now DLA has a part-time worker, we hope to organise further regional initiatives, possibly in the North-West and Midlands.

7. SUPPORTING OTHER INITIATIVES

D.L.A. has been pleased to assist other organisations that are undertaking

initiatives in the area of discrimination law. In particular, we supported the TUC/EOR conference, held in January, and we have also assisted the **Maternity Alliance**, **LAGAR**, and other DLA members to circulate materials and questionnaires etc. This sharing of information is a very important function of DLA, which we hope to develop further.

In conjunction with the Immigration Law Practitioners Association (ILPA), the 1990 Trust and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), planning has recently started on a major conference for October 8th 1998 on the implications of the **Human Rights Act** for opposing racism and racial discrimination. This promises to be a very exciting event, with international speakers from South Africa and the United States

8. PROMOTING D.L.A.

Being a relatively new initiative, with little or no resources, it has been a difficult task over the past 2/3 years to promote the existence of D.L.A. on a national basis. We are extremely pleased that D.L.A. members have continued to "spreading the word" as best they could.

We were therefore delighted that our **National Lottery** bid was successful, thus enabling us to engage in serious promotional work over the next three years. Although we only have a part-time Development Officer (Paul Crofts), we also have increased resources to produce professional promotional materials. These should be available in the near future.

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. This has now been improved quite dramatically by the "vote of Confidence" from the **National Lottery Charities Board**. In addition, we received a welcome contribution from the **Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement** of £10,000, which, along with our National Lottery grant, is enabling us to do much more. We would particularly like to record our thanks to Richard Hick, who ably "steered" us through the National Lottery application process.

In the light of National Lottery application and the grant from the Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement, advertisements were placed, shortlisting and interviews held, and we appointed a part-time DLA Development Officer (Paul Crofts). Paul formally took up the appointment, on secondment for two years from Wellingborough REC, in January 1998. By the end of January a DLA office-base had been established and was up-and-running.

The detailed finances/accounts of DLA, for the year 1997/8, are **attached** to the end of this report. It should be noted that up until January there was little expenditure. This situation has now changed quite dramatically, following the establishment of the office and the increasing level of activity. The very healthy balances that DLA holds will be "run-down" over the next three years, as part of our development plan, with the hope that (with further increased membership and income generating activities) DLA will be financial self-sufficient by 2002.

10. CAMPAIGNING

This has been a neglected area of DLA's activities that we hope to correct. During the year we tried to arrange meetings with new Government Ministers, responsible for equalities issues, following the change of Government in May. Unfortunately we were not successful, except that a meeting is now planned for April with **Mike O'Brien MP., the Home Office Minister responsible for race relations and immigration matters.**

In addition, we prepared a discussion paper for the Institute of Public Policy research (IPPR) on the implications of incorporation of the European Convention on Human rights into UK law and also wrote to the Government Minister responsible for the legislation. We are delighted that incorporation is now happening and, as is reported above (re: conference in October 1998), we will be continuing to take a keen interest in this issue over the next twelve months or so.

11. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

As part of the National lottery application process we were required to outline our future work in a much more systematic and professional way. This resulted in the Executive Committee producing a **Development Plan** until the year 2002. This plan is **attached** to this Annual Report. If any DLA member has further comments or ideas in respect of this, we would be pleased to hear from you.

The implementation of some of these plans is already well underway, including the establishment of a **DLA Web-Site**, a **DLA Directory of Members** and a **Training Directory**.

11. CONCLUSION

Overall D.L.A. has made tremendous strides over the last 12 months. There is still much to do, with limited (albeit increased) resources and drawing upon the time and commitment of individuals who are already overworked and "underpaid". Finally, we 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 briefings. Now we have established a DLA office, with a part-time employee seconded from Wellingborough REC, the dependence of DLA on Wellingborough REC will hopefully significantly diminish in the future.

Chair: Geoffrey Bindman
Secretary: Paul Crofts
Treasurer: Farhad Shahrokni

Robin Allen QC
Sandhya Drew
Manjit Gill
Sally Grubb
Richard Hick
Sian Hughes
Nadeem Malik
Karon Monaghan
Phillip Mutio
Camilla Palmer
Salford Law Centre (job share)