

# DISCRIMINATION LAW ASSOCIATION



## *ANNUAL REPORT 1998/99*

*Presented to the*

*ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING*

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*London*

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# Annual Report 1998/9

## 1. MEMBERSHIP

During the course of the year 1998/9 membership of D.L.A. has continued to grown quite dramatically and by the end of March 1998 stood at 357 (256 at the same time last year). Our target for growth was 300, which was exceeded. This rapid growth in membership is extremely welcome and reflects the growing recognition of DLA and the services it provides for members.

The current membership of DLA (as at 31.3.99) comprises the following:

Advice Centres/Workers	92 (73)
Solicitors	97 (67)
Barristers	61 (48)
National Organisations	30 (10)
Students/ unwaged	27 (14)
Trainers/Agencies	14 (4)
Local Authority workers	6 (2)
Publishers	5 (3)
Trade Unionists	9 (3)
Universities	2 (0)
Teachers/Academics	8 (0)
Not Known	6 (32)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>357 (31.3.98: 256)</b>

This information gives an *indication* of DLA's membership profile. See also **APPENDIX 1**

## 2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The executive committee comprises seventeen people (*see list at end of this report*). During the course of the year there were seven executive committee meetings held. All meetings were held at the NUT head office, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, 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 (April 1998 to March 1999) **four newsletters and 68 briefings** were published and distributed to members, under the editorships of **Camilla Palmer** (until March 1999) and (from March) **Gay Moon**. Several DLA members contributed in writing briefings for us, as well as some non-members. We are extremely grateful for this support, which was done without any payments being

made.

Feedback from D.L.A. members suggests that the newsletters and briefings are very 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 **Discrimination Law Reports** by CLT Professional Publishers, in addition to other discounts negotiated in previous years.

#### **5. D.L.A. TRAINING AND SEMINARS**

Over the past twelve months we assisted the **West Midlands Low Pay Unit** to undertake two training courses in Birmingham. DLA Executive Committee members Sian Hughes and Sandhya Drew have presented these courses.

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 agreed to appoint a **training organiser**, under contract to DLA, to organise at least four courses/seminars during the next 12 months.

#### **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. Earlier initiatives (during 1997) to form groups in Leeds/Yorkshire and Reading were not successful.

We were also disappointed that a group did not get established in **Northern Ireland**, following the launch of DLA there in February 1998, although DLA established a significant membership in Northern Ireland following this launch.

We are however delighted that a new of group DLA has recently been established in the **Midlands**, following a successful launch at the University of Central England in April 1999, and we are also optimistic that an initiative in the **North-West** may also prove successful later this year.

#### **7. PRACTITIONERS GROUP**

The most successful group has been the **DLA Practitioners Group**, which has met in London on six occasions during the year. Issues discussed at this group have included: **recent developments in with the Disability Discrimination Act** (Bela Gor), **EC Law** (Michael Rubenstein), **“A-typical” Workers** (Heather Williams),

**Human Rights Act** (Karon Monaghan and Razia Karim), **funding discrimination cases** (Camilla Palmer and James Lynas) and the **Seymour-Smith** case (Gay Moon and Robin Allen QC). This group is open to all DLA members who mainly or solely represent complainants.

## 8. 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 December 1998, and we have also assisted the **Maternity Alliance, TUC, LAGAR, EOC, CRE, Legal Action** and other DLA members to circulate materials, etc. This sharing of information is a very important function of DLA.

In conjunction with the Immigration Law Practitioners Association (ILPA), The 1990 Trust and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), we held a major conference - "**Making Rights Real**" - on October 8<sup>th</sup> 1998, on the implications of the **Human Rights Act for opposing racism and racial discrimination**. This was a very exciting and successful event, with international speakers from **South Africa** (Mandla Mkhathshwa, Legal Resources Centre, Johannesburg) and the **United States** (Mark Potok, Southern Poverty Law Center). Other important contributions were made by: Sir Herman Ouseley (Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality), Karon Monaghan (DLA), and Elspeth Guild (ILPA).

Since the conference, the sponsors have been working together to try and produce a **community handbook** on the Human Rights Act and its implications for fighting racism and racial discrimination. This should be available by the end of 1999. We would formally like to thank the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, The Cadbury Barrow Charitable Trust and the Allen Lane Foundation, for their financial support towards these projects.

## 9. PROMOTING D.L.A.

Being a relatively new initiative, with little or no resources until this year, 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".

We were therefore delighted that our **National Lottery** bid was successful, thus enabling us to engage in serious promotional work over the past year. Although we only have a part-time Development Officer (Paul Crofts), we also have increased resources to produce professional promotional materials – including an information leaflet and membership enquiries folder.

In October we held a successful "launch" of DLA the **Trades Union Congress** (TUC). Irwin Mitchell (Solicitors) sponsored this event, and we would formally like to thank them for this invaluable support. The guest speaker was John Monks, the TUC General Secretary, who supported the work of DLA and spoke about the work of

trades unions in supporting their members with discrimination cases.

This launch was followed up with further meetings with the TUC's Equal Rights department, who have provided a great deal of support and encouragement to DLA's work. As a result of these initiatives, several national trades unions have either formally joined DLA or are subscribing to our publications.

## 10. D.L.A. RESOURCES

As has been mentioned above, D.L.A. has, until 1998, been operating with few resources, other than the voluntary effort put in by executive committee and other members. This has now been improved quite dramatically by the "vote of confidence" from the **National Lottery Charities Board**.

In the light of National Lottery grant 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 DLA office is now open approximately two and half days each week since January 1998 (excluding holidays etc.,).

The detailed finances/accounts of DLA, for the year 1998/9, are **attached** to this report. The healthy balances that DLA currently holds will be "run-down" over the next two 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.

However, it must be said that, as DLA has grown, new demands are being placed on our limited resources. We are increasingly being contacted by complainants who are seeking support to pursue their discrimination case(es). There is growing recognition that some form of national "sign-posting" service is needed and we are currently exploring ways in which additional resources can be found to support this development.

## 11. CAMPAIGNING

This has been a growing area of DLA's activities as we become better known at a national level and our views are sought on a variety of discrimination law issues or initiatives. In April we held a meeting with **Mike O'Brien MP.**, the Home Office Minister responsible for race relations and immigration matters and this has resulted in him being our key-note speaker at our AGM in June 1999.

We have also made formal submissions to Government on the **reform of the Race Relations Act**, the **DDA Code of Practice**, the **Human Rights Bill** (as it went through Parliament) and to the Cabinet Office **review of discrimination law** in the context of de-regulation.

## 12. OTHER 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 (available on request).

The implementation of some of these plans are already well underway. A **DLA Web-Site** was launched early in 1998 and has recently (March 1999) been updated to include an "Advice" section, as well as including details of all DLA publications and activities. DLA's **Directory of Members** and **Training Directory** have also been produced and updated during the year.

Recently we also introduced a new **e-mail information service**, to members who are "on-line". This has included up-to-date information on cases, training opportunities, conference and events etc. Such e-mail bulletins have been sent approximately weekly, and to date over 13 have been dispatched. Unfortunately, due to the resources that would be involved, this service cannot be extended to those who are unable to receive e-mail.

## 13. 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". We would formally like to thank all those DLA members who have contributed to the organisation in so many different ways during the year.

At this years AGM there are two proposals for members to consider: for DLA to become a **Company Limited by Guarantee** and also for the Executive Committee to investigate whether or not DLA should become **a registered charity**. We are grateful for the advice and support given by NCVO on these matters. This new constitutional and legal framework (if approved) should firmly establish DLA as it moves into the new millennium.

## **DLA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 1998/9**

**Chair:** Geoffrey Bindman  
**Secretary (ex-officio):** Paul Crofts  
**Treasurer:** Farhad Shahrokni

Robin Allen QC  
Sandhya Drew  
Bela Gor (Co-opted)  
Phil Greasley (co-opted)  
Sian Hughes  
Lee Jasper  
Angela Mason (Co-opted)  
Karon Monaghan  
Gay Moon (co-opted March 1999)  
Camilla Palmer  
Salford Law Centre (job share)  
Mohammed Sharief  
Meriel Schindler  
Harminder Singh

## APPENDIX 1: DLA Membership Profile as at 31.3.99

<b>a.</b>	<b>GENDER:</b>	Men:	74	(47%)
		Women:	82	(53%)
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>156</b>	

**b. ETHNICITY**

White (British):	106	)	(69%)
White (non-British)	7	)	
Irish	9	)	
Black (Caribbean)	3	)	
Black (African)	5	)	
Black (other)	1	)	(31%)
Indian	11	)	
Pakistani	3	)	
Chinese	1	)	
Other	8 (including 3 "mixed parentage", 3 Jewish, 1 Scottish, 1 Iranian)		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>153</b>		

**c. DISABILITY**

Disabled:	11	(7%)
Not Disabled:	139	(93%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>150</b>	

**d. RELIGION**

Christian (Protestant)	36	(24%)
Christian (Catholic)	20	(14%)
Muslim	5	(3%)
Jewish	8	(5%)
Hindu	2	(1%)
Sikh	5	(3%)
Buddhist	1	(0.5%)
Quaker	1	(0.5%)
Not religious	69	(47%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	

**\*NOTE:** The information above has been supplied by DLA individual members only (self-categorisation). Not all members have supplied all the information requested. This therefore this does not represent a complete profile of the whole DLA membership.