Come to Berlin with us

Haldane's International Sub-Committee has come back to life. It has a group email list at internationalcommittee@haldane.org. All are welcome to join this group to receive news of the international solidarity activities of Haldane, European Lawyers for Democracy and Human Rights (ELDH) and the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL).

The Executive Committee of the ELDH met in Brussels on 12th January 2013 at the office of Jan Feron of the Progress Lawyers Network. Despite apologies from our Greek and Turkish comrades for understandable reasons the meeting was well attended and very lively. There was a new application for membership from Spain from the Left Lawyers Forum – Democratic Lawyers Network/Foro de Abogados de Izquierda – Red de Abogados Demócratas (FAI-RADE). Their application will be considered at the ELDH Annual Assembly in May 2013.

The meeting started with a political report and discussion, surveyed a full year of activity, starting with ELDH participation and support for Haldane’s Defending Human Rights Defenders conference. On 13th January 2013, the day after the Executive meeting, the European Network ‘European Lawyers for Workers’ (ELW) was founded.

Recent ELDH activities included protests across Europe on 24th January 2013 for the ‘Day of the Endangered Lawyer’. This was coordinated with European Democratic Lawyers and the European Lawyers Human Rights Institute (IDHAE).

The Progress Lawyers Network will hold a colloquy on the prison system in Brussels with ELDH support on 15th March 2013. ELDH will take part in the World Social Forum in Tunis on 26th–30th March 2013 and at the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Armaments conference in Bremen, Germany on 26th-28th April 2013.

The high point of the year for ELDH will be the General Assembly on 5th May 2013 in Berlin at the headquarters of the major German trade union ver.di. On the previous day there will be a conference on ‘Migrants: Outlaws Everywhere’. If you are interested please do come to Berlin from 4th-5th May 2013.

The latest Skype meeting of the IADL Bureau took place on 9th February 2013 with all continents represented. An IADL conference and bureau meeting will be held in Paris on 24th-27th May 2013. The IADL world congress takes place every four years. Haldane participated in the last congress in Hanoi. The next congress will be in Brussels on 15th-19th April 2014, with the headline ‘Lawyering for people, until human and peoples’ rights are more important than property rights’.

Haldane, IADL and ELDH will actively engage in solidarity with the lawyers of our Turkish sister association, who have been arrested and charged with terrorist offences. Trial observations and solidarity delegations are planned.

Bill Bowling

Support housing workers’ fights

Pay cuts of up to £8,000 per year for supported housing workers for a big London housing association, One Housing Group, mean that homelessness prevention workers are seriously frightened of becoming homeless themselves. Unite the union has proposed arbitration but management have refused, raising the prospect of industrial action.

As support providers increasingly compete for contracts on price they are undermining staff conditions and service quality. A recent report by Homeless Link, Who is Supporting People Now?, has highlighted the risk to services. Unite argue that employers and commissioners should agree standards to protect pay and services and to guarantee conditions for staff transferred between employers. A pernicious aspect of the current picture is that employers win contracts knowing that they will only be able to deliver them on the basis of pay or staffing cuts. This leads to complex TUPE disputes. A national agreement would avert this.

However senior executives, with pay packets that heavily incentivise growth seem uninterested in protecting the future of these services or their workers. According to the group’s accounts the chief executive got an extra £31,000 last year; more than the annual salary of the workers affected. It is true that massive Government cuts form the backdrop and perhaps housing bosses could devote themselves to highlighting the damage they will


Young Legal Aid Lawyers

This regular column is written by YLAL members. If you are interested in joining or supporting their work, please visit their website www.younglegalaidlawyers.org

It doesn’t add up

do to vulnerable service users? But look at the financial position of One Housing C. Housing surplus £12 million. Care and Support Department surplus £1.2 million. Savings from pay cuts £490,000.

It is an organisation in desperate straits with no alternative course of action. The cuts are designed to fund their aggressive expansion strategy; they want to undercut other providers to win contracts. Their own publicity material boasts that they can undercut NHS directly provided services by as much as 80 per cent. You don’t have to be a management genius to see how they achieve that.

Sign the petition in support at: http://is.gd/A3QOsA

Paul Kershaw Chair – Unite, Housing Workers Branch 1/1111

15: Any disabled person capable of walking 20 metres is set to lose their mobility support when the Government scrap the disability living allowance (DLA) on 1st April.

Socialist Lawyer February 2013 11