Search for justice will go on

The 12th September 2012 was a momentous day as the Independent Panel on Hillsborough published their report in Liverpool. There were parallels with the outcome of the Bloody Sunday inquiry, observes Haldane President Michael Mansfield QC, who has been closely involved with this most recent Hillsborough inquiry. He writes in this issue about the search for justice by the tenacious relatives of the victims of Hillsborough and the staggering collusion between the State and the media in covering up the truth about what happened on that tragic day in 1989. Barrister David Renton also provides an examination of the background and issues exposed by the Independent Panel. As I write, the Attorney General Dominic Grieve QC is in the process of announcing to Parliament that he will apply to the High Court to have the original inquest verdicts of 'accidental death' overturned.

With the Olympics having finished, attention is once more focussing on the coalition Government's ideologically driven austerity programme which appears to be doing little to alleviate the economic difficulties afflicting the UK at this present time. The Conservative's use of the simplistic metaphor of the country's economy being like a household budget is being exposed. It is difficult to forget the scene of George Osborne being booed by a capacity Olympic stadium during the Paralympic games.

The Olympic games laid bare the notion of private sector efficiency in delivering essential public services as the army had to be drafted in in some numbers to provide the security that G4S could not deliver. Despite the G4S debacle, privatisation of public services remains something of a sacred cow for the coalition Government. Kevin Greenway from the PCS warns in his article of the problems that lie ahead in the planned privatisation of criminal court enforcement, including the criminal fine collection process.

The Olympic games saw a clamp down on protest, most notably with the arrest of Critical Mass cyclists on the night of the opening ceremony. The Haldane Society has for some time now been training and organising legal observers to be present at protests such as the anti-EDL demonstration in Walthamstow in September 2012. The Haldane Society joined

the TUC march against austerity and for a future that works on 20th October 2012. An NUS march is being arranged for 21st November 2012. As Stephen Knight explains in this issue, in these times of austerity it has become increasingly important for there to be well trained legal observers to help guarantee that people's right to protest is upheld as an essential part of being in a democratic State.

There is a review of *The Protest Handbook* in this issue. The hope of the authors of that book is that they see well used copies of what is an accessible, user-friendly text on marches and demonstrations.

The right to protest seems to be under threat in Europe as well. As the journalist Pascual Serrano explains in his article in the magazine, a serious clamp down on protest is taking place in Spain, one of the nations so closely affected by the current European financial crisis, driven by the ruling right-wing Partido Popular.

An historic attempt at forging a peace process is underway in Colombia after five decades of conflict. The Colombian Government and the Farc are meeting initially in Oslo on 18th October 2012. The Haldane Society has an ongoing commitment to support human rights defenders and political prisoners such as David Rabelo in Colombia. During the last six years many Haldane members have travelled to Colombia on delegations such as the Caravana Internacional de Juristas and have created links with those who risk their lives on a daily basis carrying out human rights work in Colombia. In this issue there is analysis of the peace process and what is in store as well as a call for the voice of civil society organisations such as the lawyers cooperative Cajar and the victim's advocacy group Movice, not to be lost in the negotiations.

We are extremely grateful to Linton Kwesi Johnson who has kindly permitted us to re-print his poem *Liesense fi Kill* on deaths in police custody. This poem featured in his book of selected poems *Mi Revalueshanary Fren*. His poems use Caribbean dialect and the rhythms of reggae and dub. As the introduction remarks to *Mi Revalueshanary Fren* set out, his poems are a powerful voice of disaffected dissent and radical politics. It is vital that such voices can continue to be heard.

Tim Potter, editor, *Socialist Lawyer*