

**We need you to make history and defend British Justice.**

Dear friends, a minor miracle occurred last week following on from the news that positive advice had been given advising that there were solid grounds for judicial review proceedings against the MOJ in relation to their inept handling of the unsustainable legal aid cuts. The CLSA (Criminal Law Solicitors Association) and their sister organisation the LCCSA (London Criminal Courts Solicitors Association) are sending a letter before action. Litigation is expensive. We are organisations with limited funds relative to the unlimited resources available to the State and so we launched a financial appeal to our hard pressed legal aid practitioners.

From a standing start we went from zero to close to £50K in just 5 days!

This was an extraordinary response the like of which has never been seen in the profession before. It was almost as if sensing the 'back against the wall' defiance of the 2 associations (now rewarded by good news in the form of positive legal advice) that people wanted to be involved in the most practical way they could to help turn the tide. A real 'Dunkirk spirit' moment where we watched with awe and appreciation as, not a little flotilla of small boats, but donations big and small began to pour in. It is touching and uplifting to witness.

It really does reflect the growing concern (at last being reflected in the national press) that ordinary people will no longer be able to find a local high street solicitor to defend them against the weight of a State investigation and prosecution. The cuts (40% in some areas of the country) on top of the vast drop in income suffered over the last few years will mean most legal aid firms going out of business at great expense to the rest of the profession and the country.

The present Lord Chancellor is someone who ignores the clear evidence of his own experts that he is wrong to proceed in this manner due to the fragile finances of legal aid firms.

(Otterburn and KPMG reports). (All the time making completely bogus claims about international comparisons which the National audit office have refuted as our expenditure like for like is merely average.) But then his judgment has proved questionable. For example He is

banning books for prisoners. As the Daily Mail reported 'one senior Tory minister said: 'Chris Grayling wins the prize for the Government's least enlightened minister. He has no backing for this from any quarter at all.' (25 March).

His judgment on legal aid cuts is equally flawed. Legal aid lawyers are in terms of our freedom the 'watchers on the wall'. When the police behave oppressively we are there to prevent this or redress the wrong. It is a matter of balance and fairness. (Justice). Very soon we will be gone and until recently the country has slept through this extraordinary attack upon our access to Justice but even the Telegraph is now deeply worried with this comment appearing - 'Laments about our legal system being destroyed by Brussels are risible when our Government is so adroitly orchestrating demolition from within. It is time to rebalance the scales before it is too late. Eight centuries on from Magna Carta, we are staring at the death of English justice.'(02 Apr 2014). Think about that. The 'death of English Justice! How shameful that our generation of politicians should preside over that.

We will be heading for a non-Jury based foreign inquisitorial system, (The Lord Chief Justice has issued warnings as to the inevitability of this if clients are unrepresented ) after the collapse of our high street firms, when directly paid non-independent agents of the State are directed to assist people being prosecuted by the same State. Even after the nation was nearly bankrupted by the Second World War it was felt by all politicians that funding access to Justice was an essential part of our freedoms for which we had fought the war. Wealthy bankers have run amok causing temporary financial difficulty but this should not be used as cover to abandon 1000 years of our legal history. We do not believe we are alone in loving liberty and the right of people to defend themselves when facing the overwhelming power of the state.

We are now writing to everyone frankly to rally support to fund the JR proceedings. Legal aid

firms should not bear the burden of this alone. We want you to join this popular uprising of anger at the threat to our liberty. The right to defend yourself in a court of law is meaningless, for all but the wealthy if you, through lack of means, cannot afford representation or cannot find a legal aid lawyer to represent you. We are writing to our fellow firms of solicitors who do not practice criminal Law and yet benefit indirectly from the high international reputation we have as an essential part of the criminal Justice system. We are writing to our Local Law Societies and asking them to spread the word. We are writing to Barristers Chambers (many Counsel are already contributing). Even prosecuting lawyers are confidentially contributing (out of principle and fear of the chaos caused by unrepresented defendants.) It may well be that people outside the law will wish to support as our fight is their fight. (Wouldn't it be nice to reply to the question 'and who do you represent' and the answer came back 'The Nation'. It is a poor attempt at humour but it illustrates where we want to be- as broad based as possible). We may write to MP's as well on both sides of the House.

We hope you will be able to make a contribution. Many have sent £250 but all contributions are welcomed (smaller or indeed larger as many have managed.)

Your legal aid lawyers need you. The country needs you. Please make a donation to the fighting fund here at this link and pass this letter to everyone you can think off.

<http://www.clsa.co.uk/index.php?q=Donate-towards-the-cost-of-Judicial-Review>

Very best wishes

Robin Murray  
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