
Editorial

The *Business Law Review* in 2000

Now we are coming to the end of another year for the Review it is pleasure to thank all those who have contributed during 2000. My regular contributors are a great support and my special thanks go to (in alphabetical order) David Cowan, David Flint, Mark Furse, Ian Kirby, Mark Lawry and Julie Nazerali long may they continue to provide material for the Current Comment on a regular basis.

Thanks also to those who have written articles during 2000. It would be invidious to name individuals, but all the names appear in the index for the year. I am truly grateful for the enthusiasm of those who have submitted articles on a regular basis,

and delighted to have received articles on a one-off basis.

However, I need several more dedicated supporters for the areas not covered on a regular basis in Current Comment, such as company law, employment, consumer protection, taxation, *etc. etc.* So if there is anyone out there with the desire to use material they no doubt collect for their own purposes, please get in touch with me at the address which is set out in the Guide to Authors on page 299.

I hope you all have a very merry Yuletide and a prosperous and productive New Year.

Susan Nicholas

News

Speeding Up Justice in the Crown Court

The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, has recently spoken about the Crown Court modernisation programme. He explained how justice in the Crown Court would be speeded up by the electronic presentation of evidence on screens rather than paper, the use of digital audio recording and the provision of information about cases, hearings and court procedures on line. He said that this is not technology for technology's sake. Cases will take much less time and there will be greater accuracy in the way cases are presented to a jury. Everyone will be looking at the same document at the same time. Important parts can be highlighted on the screen and the jury's attention can be focused on what really matters.

The Lord Chancellor said that the modernisation of the civil courts would come next.

The Lord Chancellor also tackled head-on a range of topics affecting the legal profession at present – legal aid reform, the reforms to the civil justice system, payments to lawyers undertaking publicly funded work and complaints against solicitors. He repeated his criticism of the Law Society's boycott of the consultation process for judicial appointments. He said:

"In 1999/2000 5 of the 12 most senior appointments were women, so there are now more women Judges in more senior positions than ever before. 1999/2000 also saw more practising solicitors than barristers appointed as Judges in the main open competitions 211 compared to 199; and the very first direct appointment of a solicitor to the High Court Bench.

All of which makes the Law Society's continued boycott of the consultation process even more incredible and a disservice to its members. The fact that so many solicitors *have* been appointed

demonstrates my determination to make well merited appointments of solicitors to judicial office, whilst their professional body fails to provide them with the supporting testimonials they deserve."

The Lord Chancellor acknowledged the concerns within the profession over remuneration for publicly funded work, and reassured the Law Society that he was listening. He said that there are still important issues to be resolved before the contracts for the Criminal Defence Service can be agreed. He has always said that the introduction of that Service was not an exercise in cost cutting.

The latest details on judicial appointments are set out in 1999/2000 Annual Report, published in October this year. The report is available on the LCD web site www.open.gov.uk/lcd.

Lord Bach Appointed Parliamentary Secretary at LCD

Lord Bach of Lutterworth has been appointed by HM The Queen as a Parliamentary Secretary in the Lord Chancellor's Department. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, said that it is excellent that Lord Bach has joined the Ministerial team. He is an experienced barrister and has been active in the conduct of a broad range of legislation in the House of Lords. Lord Bach will be involved in all the Ministerial business of the Department, other than that expressly reserved to the Lord Chancellor.

Initially Lord Bach will concentrate on the development of commonhold and leasehold proposals. The detailed delegation of Ministerial responsibilities will be announced in due course.