

IN THE MATTER OF JEFFREY DOSS-LINDSEY, solicitor

- AND -

IN THE MATTER OF THE SOLICITORS ACT 1974

Mr. A H Isaacs (in the Chair)
Mr. D E Fordham
Lady Bonham Carter

Date Of Hearing: 17th October 1996

FINDINGS

of the Solicitors' Disciplinary Tribunal
constituted under the Solicitors Act 1974

An application was duly made on behalf of the Solicitors Complaints Bureau by Andrew Christopher Graham Hopper solicitor of PO Box 7, Pontyclun, Mid Glamorgan on the 1st April 1996 that Jeffrey Doss-Lindsey of London, SW1 might be required to answer the allegations contained in the statement which accompanied the application and that such order might be made as the Tribunal should think right.

The allegations were:-

- (i) that the respondent was liable to have his name struck off the Roll of Solicitors on account of his failure to comply with the requirements in respect of service under articles and with the training Regulations 1989 (as amended), and/or any reason that his admission and enrolment as a solicitor was obtained irregularly and by means of fraud;
- (ii) that he had been guilty of conduct unbecoming a solicitor in that he failed to bring to the attention of the Law Society matters within his knowledge which questioned his fitness to become a solicitor, despite accepting an obligation so to do.

The application was heard at the Court Room, No.60 Carey Street, London, WC2 on the 17th October 1996 when Andrew Christopher Graham Hopper solicitor of PO Box 7, Pontyclun, Mid Glamorgan appeared on behalf of the applicant and the respondent was represented by Arnold Stevenson of Messrs. Stevenson & Co. of 45 Great Peter Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3LT.

On 23rd August 1996 the applicant filed a revised and extended statement of facts.

On the 4th July 1996 the matter came before the Tribunal. The matter had been brought before the Tribunal in haste in view of the provisions of section 54 of the Solicitors Act 1974 which provided that no solicitor should be liable to have his name struck off the Roll on account of any failure to comply with requirements in respect of service under articles or any training regulations or on account of any defect of his admission and enrolment unless the application to strike his name off the Roll was made within twelve months of the date of his enrolment, or fraud had been proved to have been committed in connection with his failure or defect. The applicant received instructions only very shortly before the expiry of that time-limit. He had not been able to amass and supply the information to Mr. Stevenson, who represented the respondent. The respondent was American and at the time of the adjournment hearing was in America where his wife was seriously ill. Without the whole of the information Mr. Stevenson was unable properly to advise his client when the Tribunal agreed that the matter might stand adjourned but expressed concern that the case was a serious one and the way in which it had been handled was very unsatisfactory. The Tribunal hoped that it would be able to deal with the case with despatch.

At the opening of the hearing, Mr. Stevenson told the Tribunal that the respondent had returned to the United Kingdom between the adjournment hearing and the current hearing but he was no longer in the United Kingdom. The respondent expected to be in the United Kingdom in December 1996. The respondent had informed Mr Stevenson that his wife continued to be seriously ill. Mr. Stevenson had not been able to take instructions in any detail and sought an adjournment of the matter until Mid December 1996. The respondent's basic position was that on the whole he denied almost all of what had been alleged. The applicant opposed the application for adjournment. He said the matters before the Tribunal revealed an appalling catalogue of deceit employed to obtain admission and employment. Documents had been forged and lies had been told. In truth no real defence could ever be raised. An adjournment would waste time. The respondent had appeared to claim illness either of members of his family or himself to explain, for example, his own poor performance from time to time. The respondent was a solicitor and should be able to read the papers in support of the application and give written instruction to his solicitor without undue difficulty.

The Tribunal took the view that the respondent had been given every opportunity to instruct his legal representative. On the face of it the matter was a serious one and it was right that the matter should proceed to a full hearing. At that juncture Mr. Stevenson told the Tribunal that he was without instructions and sought leave to retire from the hearing. The Tribunal expressed no objection.

The evidence before the Tribunal included exhibit JD-S1, a bundle of copy correspondence.

At the conclusion of the hearing the Tribunal ORDERED that the respondent Jeffrey Doss-Lindsay of London, SW1V solicitor be struck off the Roll of Solicitors and they further ordered him to pay the costs of and incidental to the application and enquiry to be taxed if not agreed.

The facts are set out in paragraphs 1 to 21 hereunder.

1. The respondent was admitted a solicitor on the 3rd April 1995 and his name remained on the Roll of Solicitors.
2. The respondent obtained articles of clerkship with Messrs. Slaughter and May (S&M), scheduled to be from 10th March 1992 to the 10th March 1994. He had been employed by the firm as a paralegal between November 1991 and the 9th March 1992.
3. The respondent did not serve out his full term of articles and left the firm prematurely on the 29th October 1993. The firm had become disenchanted with his performance. No application was made to the firm for a transfer of articles, nor did the firm expect such an application as the respondent's next employer, Messrs. White & Case (W&C), was a firm of American attorneys, not able to provide articles of training.
4. The respondent obtained employment by S&M by means of deceit. He claimed to have a first class degree from Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. In fact he obtained a third. He provided a reference from his tutor at Lady Margaret Hall in terms which were highly complementary to the respondent, and which also confirmed that he had a first class honours degree. The letter was forged.
5. The respondent also claimed to be admitted to the California State Bar. This also was untrue.
6. The false statements above were repeated in a curriculum vitae provided to S&M by three recruitment consultants.
7. Two versions of the curriculum vitae also untruthfully claimed that the respondent was the holder of a Fulbright Scholarship.
8. Despite the fact that the respondent's articles of training with S&M were terminated prematurely, the respondent submitted a Certificate of Training in Articles to the Law Society. He falsely claimed that his articles had been served through to the 10th March 1994.
9. At the time that the Certificate in question purported to be signed, the 16th March 1994, the respondent's principal at S&M, Mr. Robson, was absent from the firm by reason of ill-health. He had since died and his signature upon the Certificate of Training could not be checked with him. The signature purporting to be that of Mr. Robson on the Training Certificate appeared different from that on the application for registration of articles.
10. Between November 1993 and July 1994 the respondent was employed by W&C, an international American law firm who employed the respondent in the belief that he was

a qualified solicitor, as had been asserted to them by recruitment agents, and also that he was admitted at the Californian Bar. The firm pressed the respondent on a number of occasions for evidence that he was qualified. This led to the respondent providing a document purporting to be an extract from the Mark Results Register for the summer 1993 law finals, saying that he had passed (the respondent had in fact failed two of the heads of examination), copies of letters which he purported to have written to the New York and California State Bars, seeking confirmation from those organisations that he was admitted to practise in both jurisdictions when in fact he was not, a forged degree certificate from the University of Oxford showing that the respondent had a first and not a third class degree and what purported to be a practising certificate for the year 1993/94, which was also a forgery.

11. In due course, W&C became unimpressed with the quality of the respondent's work and he departed in July 1994.
12. The respondent was next employed by Allison & Humphreys (A&H), solicitors, from the 4th October 1994 until the 8th February 1995, when he still had not been admitted to the Roll, as an assistant solicitor.
13. He also untruthfully maintained to A&H that he was an admitted solicitor, that he was also admitted to practise as the California and New York Bars, that he had a first class degree from Oxford and was a Fulbright scholar.
14. The respondent counter-signed the letter of engagement which contained the description of his title as an assistant solicitor and acknowledged an obligation to keep in full force a practising certificate. He promised A&H that he would obtain details of all his qualifications from W&C but made no request of that firm for that information.
15. The respondent did supply to A&H a copy of what was purported to be a certificate of Admission as an attorney and counsellor at law in the state of California, which document was a forgery. A further copy of the forged finals pass certificate was also supplied.
16. In their turn A&H became disenchanted with the respondent's performance, and his employment was terminated on the 8th February 1995. They became suspicious about the respondent's claims and made enquiries contemporaneously with that decision. The true circumstances were then discovered.
17. A&H clarified with Chambers and Partners that the assertions made in the respondent's CV had been based on information provided by the respondent to that firm.
18. Because the respondent did not pass his examinations until summer 1994, he was obliged to serve a further period in training (the two years with S&M were insufficient to comply with the training regulations in those circumstances).
19. According to the forms filed by the respondent with the Law Society, he purported to serve in articles of training with the firm of Mathias, solicitors, Elephant and Castle, between the 18th April 1994 and the 21st February 1995 (a period of time during

which he was successively employed by W&C and A&H with a break between June and October 1994).

20. The respondent entered into articles with Dr. Saleem Sheikh a consultant to the firm of Mathias. Because Dr. Sheikh was not a principal, the leave of the Law Society was required, but this was not obtained; thus, in any event, the service of articles under Dr. Sheikh would have been irregular. It had been Dr. Sheikh's understanding that the respondent only required to serve out about three weeks of his articles and agreed to give some general training on that basis.
21. In February 1995 (at which time he had been employed by A&H as a solicitor for some months), the respondent applied to the Law Society to register the discharge of his articles with Mathias and provided a Certificate of Training under articles. Those documents purported to show that articles had been served up to the 21st February 1995. While Dr. Sheikh confirmed that he signed the form whereby application was made to register the articles of training, he asserts that his signature on those forms which certified service in articles to the 21st February 1995 were forged.

The Submissions of the Applicant

22. The respondent had been guilty of lies, deceit and forgery in connection with his academic and professional qualifications. He had held himself out to have obtained a first class honours degree from Oxford University and to be the holder of a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship when that was not true. When the respondent's explanations had been investigated they were found to be of limited veracity. The respondent was a dangerous individual who ought not to be allowed to practise as a solicitor.

The Tribunal accepted the applicant's evidence that the respondent had used lies and forgery to obtain admission to the Roll of Solicitors and had similarly made misrepresentations supported by forged documents to secure employment. The respondent's behaviour was wholly inconsistent with standards of integrity, probity and honesty that was required of a solicitor. The Tribunal considered that the respondent should not remain on the Roll of Solicitors and ordered that his name be Struck Off the Roll of Solicitors and further ordered him to pay the costs of and incidental to the application and enquiry to be taxed if not agreed.

DATED this 11th day of November 1996

on behalf of the Tribunal



A H Isaacs
Chairman

