

The LUNDIAN

04 Special Edition: Antidiscrimination Bureaus/Europe

An International Magazine

Learning from Europe -- Swedish Anti-discrimination Bureaus Travelled to Rotterdam and London to Learn How to Fight Discrimination

Learning from Europe

Sweden's Anti-discrimination Network went on an educational tour to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. It was a first for us as a group and for some it was their first time in Holland and the UK. Each of us were representing the different faces of discriminated people in the Swedish society (race related, religious, ethnicity, gender and so on)

It was a wet and rainy night when we arrived in Amsterdam. Our bus was waiting outside Schipol Airport where we were met and taken on a forty-minute ride from the airport to our hotel. Our fluent Swedish and English speaking guide pointed out that Amsterdam is built under sea level and that some buildings are gradually sinking due to the softness of the ground.

Marianne Plugg from LDR had agreed to meet with us for lunch and a meeting afterwards so we made our way to the city of Rotterdam where she would come and pick us up. It was a cold wait as we gathered by the bus parking lot after we had arrived but in the meantime, I was asked by the group to be secretary of the meetings.

Marianne, our contact person, is a bright, cheerful and young. It seemed that most in our entourage is well in their

thirties or more, except for Betsay who is 21. She had reserved tables for our group at Restaurant Bazaar, where they serve North African cuisine. It is her favourite place to dine in Rotterdam's avant-garde area. As I took to being secretary during the lunch time rush Marianne told me some of the differences in the anti-discrimination work in Holland compared to Sweden.

One is the extensive support received from local and national government. They get support from the Ministry of Justice and the departments of Education, Labor and Social Welfare whereas in Sweden it is mainly the Board for Integration and the local municipalities. The Dutch



Betsay Goitom disembarking from the bus in The Hague.

system also provides education, resources and publications to combat racism.

RADAR

After we parted ways with Marianne we made our way to RADAR (the Dutch abbreviation for the Rotterdam Anti-Discrimination Action) for our second meeting. The people there welcomed us warmly on arrival.

RADAR operates as a foundation and began some 20 years ago. Their work consists of taking complaints, monitoring discrimination, providing training, doing research and investigating media reports. The cases they handle add up to about 500 or more per year.

"Police don't always register discrimination," said Cyril Triesscheijn, our host. "Official police statistics that are documented as discrimination are multiplied by forty and this makes a more accurate assessment for RADAR." He continued to give an example of a field experiment where they documented discrimination in discotheques in 1995.

One discotheque in particular had had several individual cases of discrimination against it. But, it being hard to prove cases that are individual, the case had to be built on the total number of complaints found through their special system of monitoring media reports. This provided enough pressure where even the Mayor stepped in.

They are also engage in prevention work which consists of training of housing authority personnel, police,



Photo: James Houston and Marianne Plugg in Rotterdam.

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bouncers, students, teachers and others.

Our work was done for the moment in Holland and we rushed back to our bus filled with ideas for the betterment of the Swedish system for Anti-discrimination.

Up until this point it seemed we had had a smooth transition but every trip has its surprises. What happened on this trip was that one person in the group had forgotten their passport back home in Sweden, which motivated a trip to the Swedish Embassy in Den Haag. But everyone was understanding, and we got to see yet another city in Holland.

London and Brixton

We departed from Rotterdam at 4:30pm in order to make



Disembarking from the bus in Rotterdam. It was cold and wet.

our flight from Schipol airport to London, Heathrow. Betsay could not get on the plane because of new entrance policies making him not eligible for entrance without a visa. It was a short flight and we reached London by nightfall. As the city was such a beautiful sight from the sky no one was in the mood to go sightseeing at 9:00pm on empty stomachs.

The next day we waited for the bus to our first meeting in London but due to complications it never arrived. So we had to make our own way but the office we were going to was difficult to find because due to increasing leasing costs they had relocated to another part of the city. Somehow our visit had been forgotten. Eventually, we found the place.

London's Race Discrimination Unit (RDU) was formed in June 2000 to provide free advice and representation to applicants who live or work in a London borough. This is a joint venture between Lambeth Law Center and Two Garden Court chambers with purposes of securing justice for persons complaining of racial discrimination to the employment tribunal. They conduct about 150 cases a year.

Richard Leong, deputy manager for RDU, gave us an informal introduction about how they operate. They offer accredited training courses for advisors and they had been invited to offer training courses in the framework directive for EU legal aid attorneys.

Eventually RDU will take a new name, London's Discrimination Unit, reflecting an EU directive to represent all forms of discrimination.

They will have to expand their legal services in order to meet this challenge, in anticipation of the Single Equality Act that will cover all forms of discrimination. RDU produces two publications: Color of Justice and Equal Justice Review.

The visits to both England and Holland will for certain leave us with some very rewarding experiences. As Kristina Larsson, chairperson for Malmö's Anti-Discrimination Bureau said: "It was quite rewarding and I will be pleased thinking about it later on. I felt that I made good contact with others in the group, and now I have a more clear picture of London and Holland. London was enjoyable!"

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Edited by
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Swedish Anti-discrimination group at a dinner at St. Giles Hotel, London.



Swedish Anti-discrimination group sharing a happy moment at the Three Sisters Restaurant and Pub, Amsterdam.

The Lundian is grateful to James Houston and Betsay Goitom for this article. M. A. Diakité, Publisher.

Important Dates Coming Up. Stores and services may be closed on some of the following days in Sweden:

28 March	Summer Time Starts (Sweden)
6 April	Passover
9 April	Good Friday
11 April	Easter Day
12 April	Easter Monday
17 April	Muharram (1)
26 April	Muharram (10)
30 April	Walpurgis Night

The Lundian is published in English by The English International Association of Lund for the benefit of the thousands of immigrants, foreign students, researchers, businessmen and other non-Swedish residents of the 1000-year old city of Lund, which is home to Scandinavia's largest university. The publisher aims to provide readers with local community news and current events, hence most of the articles are contributed by readers and members of The English International Association of Lund. The Lundian is distributed through membership in English International, by subscription, or by picking up a free copy at the Lund City Library, the University Library or the Tourist Office. For subscription details see our website: www.thelundian.com or send us an email at: englintern@hotmail.com (write subscriptions in subject area) Phone: +46 46 211 2825.