



Professional Interpreters for Justice
Report of the Steering Committee

Date: Thursday, 10th May 2012

Time: 1:30 p.m. to 3.10 p.m.

Venue: at Unite House – in Holborn - London

Present at the meeting:

Andrew Murray, Regional Officer of Unite (presiding); Amelia Naranjo, Secretary, NUPIT Branch; Eileen Ford, Chair NUPIT Branch; Geoffrey Buckingham, Chairman, APCI; Guillermo (Willie) Makin, Chairman, SPSI; Laura Orsoni, Director, SPSI; Keith Moffitt, Chair, CloL Council (Observer); Lalia White, Director, NRPSI (Observer); Klasiena Slaney, Director, SOMI; Magdy Abbas, Director, SOMI; Paul Wilson, CEO, ITI.

Via telephone link: T Wilcox, WITS; Jennifer Smith, BSL Interpreter; John Podvoiskis, Director, PIA [late arrival].

Apologies received: Madeleine Lee

The meeting started at 1.30.

A four-point agenda was set:

- i update on each group's activities
- ii projected parliamentary event
- iii briefing paper
- iv the current political situation as it affects the campaign.

i individual groups' activities

[Discussion of this item took place without the participation of the PIA representative]

Making sure that our objectives are kept in the public eye has been everybody's main concern. Following the appearance of more than ninety items in the press and other

media, we are now experiencing something of a lull; this was to be expected as such a momentum could not be kept up indefinitely but this does not mean that more is not to come.

Sometime was devoted to an examination of the best way to approach the various media and how to make the most of any contacts obtained. Following their involvement with the publicity campaign with Involvis, some members of the Steering Group have acquired useful information in this respect. Each news service has its own way of operating. Different producers and reporters are interested in different aspects and it is important to know not only what facet to present to each in order to capture their interest, but also the best moment at which to do so because some TV channels, for example, set the political tone of their news programmes well in advance.

G. Buckingham read out a quotation from the presiding judge at Snaresbrook which was revealing in that it showed the way in which the outsourcing plan was carried through regardless of objections. [See text below]

Interview with David Radford

Tuesday, May 01, 2012

Interview with David Radford

Author: Malcolm Duxbury @ 5:36:02 PM

HHJ Radford is resident judge at Snaresbrook Crown Court. He spoke to Malcolm Duxbury.

Q: Have you been having any difficulties with interpreters recently?

A: Yes, most certainly. In this building, we have been badly affected by the change to one contractor and I've ensured that the difficulties have been communicated to the senior presiding judge and to the management of the courts and tribunals service.

Indeed, I have personally spoken about them to Lord Justice Goldring.

The change was piloted, I understand, on one circuit, the Northern circuit, and it was thought that the change would not be problematical but they didn't sufficiently have in mind the whole country. It was introduced without the full board approval of Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service, including the judicial representatives. I believe the contract is now being monitored on a weekly basis.



ii parliamentary event

On advice from Ben in the campaigns department, it seemed that a targeted event would be the most effective. Andrew Murray needs to give the campaign office some more detailed plans. At a previous meeting it was decided to target MPs on justice and public accounts committees, and now it was time to decide whom to target and with what stated aims.

There were two options for the form the event would take: a general lobby or targeting certain MPs. If the latter option were selected, it would be necessary to decide which MPs and how they would be targeted.

It was established that what would be said to the MPs should be linked to what was to be said in the briefing paper.

After considering various possibilities, it was concluded that it would be useful to contact not only MPs in the Justice and Public Accounts departments but also all those MPs with whom interpreters had already made contact with regard to the outsourcing proposals. This would enlarge the pool of MPs who might make themselves available and also broaden the political spectrum.

It was decided to compile a list of all the MPs concerned, using as a starting point a list of 27 Midlands MPs that G. Buckingham has in his possession. All interpreters who have contacted their MPs are to be asked to furnish the MPs' details for this purpose.

Given the amount of press coverage, most MPs will have some awareness of the situation.

It was thereupon formally agreed to change the emphasis of the event from a small targeted group to a wider group of MPs.

It was agreed that a room would be booked for the event and we would be advised by Ben as to the date because of the small number of dates available. The PIA had information indicating that the best days would be Tuesdays or Wednesdays.

It has yet to be decided exactly what we are going to ask the MPs to do. If they ask questions, what questions are we going to suggest, and how will the meeting be structured.

On this last point it was tentatively agreed that representatives from all six organizations would speak, each making a specific point.

Those interpreters who have spoken to their MPs will be asked to say to them 'there is a meeting which I would like you to attend'.

M.A said that what we really needed to achieve was to persuade the MoJ to talk to the interpreters. This was considered to be a fundamental requirement, so we need to ask the MPs to press for talks, to meet with representatives of interpreter organizations to discuss the problems associated with outsourcing to a central agency. Since it is not just a matter of proving ourselves right, but of actually obtaining something, a whole series of talks would be necessary. It is clear, moreover, that an alternative is needed to interpreters' current tactics. We need to find other forms of persuasion because they will not wish to appear to be backing down. A face-saving exercise would be in order.

We would ask them to suspend the contract with ALS and revert to the NA until a satisfactory solution is found.

iii The Briefing paper

Amelia Naranjo had already made a draft paper which had been circulated to the members of the committee and commented upon by some. Everyone felt that that document was very well expressed and suitable for the purpose, although one person felt that it did not contain enough detailed information.

G. Buckingham had circulated his 'blueprint' for the paper, the format of which was agreed by most to be the most apt for the purpose.

Most people were in agreement that for a document of this nature, the inclusion of too much information can deter busy people from reading it. The problem was that there is such an abundance of high-quality information that it is difficult to know what to include and what to omit. Opinion was divided as to how far we could go in using language that was readily comprehensible to the general public without misleading them.

It was understood that material had to be presented in a way that will engage the attention of the reader, and various styles of presentation were discussed, it being generally agreed that the best solution was to give the final decision to the Unite campaigns office who knew from experience what sort of presentation would be likely to have the best effect. The draft document, with annotations will be passed to them together with the 'blueprint' and a copy of the Snaresbrook Judge's statement.

iv The political aspect

A little time was devoted to the political aspect, it being noted that since the outsourcing was first proposed, there had been a change in government, further to which there had been changes in civil service personnel and not all the replacements were known to us.

There has moreover been a shift in public opinion since the General Election, as recent poll results have shown.

There has been talk in the Press of a forthcoming reshuffle, the likely impact of which cannot be known at present. All we can do is to be alert to the possibilities and be ready to act when the information is to hand.

AOB

Reference was made to the fact that the contract for interpreting services to the Scottish courts has been renewed, and that Scottish interpreters are at a loss to know what to do. It was decided to invite them to take part in future meetings by telephone link we could benefit from each other's experiences.

Attempts by ALS to engage in talks with organizations were mentioned and it was generally agreed that to talk to ALS would amount to de facto recognition and therefore not to be countenanced.

The date and time adopted for the next meeting were in two weeks' time Monday, 28th May at 3.30

The meeting concluded at 3.10pm.

Report by Eileen Ford (NUPIT)