

TDA –UK in Employment Corruption

About a fortnight ago (03/10/06 – 19/10/06) Aiga Website, Hmbashsa Website, and the London Evening Standard advertised a job opportunity with Tigray Development Association in the United Kingdom (TDA – UK) for a Managing Director with annual salary of £26, 277 and invited interested people to apply.

In good faith, I took time off to diligently fill in an application form and prepare for the interview I was invited to attend on 27/10/06. Apparently, I was one of three candidates that were short listed for the interview.

On the 1st of November 2006 two of us who were interviewed for the job were informed by letter that we failed to satisfy the interview panel which was entirely composed of Management Committee members without any external observer. This you might think would be a fair and normal procedure to follow in order to fill a vacancy by a suitable candidate. I am afraid it was not. For a start, the person selected for the job is the spouse of the Treasurer who is a member of the Management Committee of the Association. According to the Charity Commission byelaws and the United Kingdom Employment Law, no person should be appointed to a job where such employment would lead to a conflict of interest as it would have a damaging effect on the association's objectives and reputation. Such a candidate with inside support from the Management Committee would have an unfair advantage over the other interviewees for a number of reasons, including but, not solely, the prior revelation of or access to the interview questions.

At a time when members of TDA are demanding transparency and accountability in the Association's activities – and are succeeding somewhat - it is lamentable that the branch in the UK is still engaged in corrupt and dishonest employment practice. How else can one explain the elaborate charade the TDA Committee employed in carrying out their unfair and illegal means of appointment?

It is difficult to fathom how a person who runs another Ethiopian charitable association in London, who is also now chairing TDA-UK, was somehow not aware of the basic conflict of interest that naturally emerged when a spouse or partner of a management committee member applied for a job in the same association. It seems to me that the clear conflict of interest was deliberately ignored and the candidate was short listed (a serious mistake) and is now selected for the job (a clear breach of the law).

If an association cannot put its house in order and operate lawfully and honorably, what hope is there then for it to attain its lofty aspirations? After the recent upheavals and recognition of mismanagement in the affairs of TDA as a whole, one would have thought that the Association would grasp the nettles, reorganize and avoid any mishap that would antagonize its members. Despite the recent working visit by the Executive Director of TDA International or rather because of it, a simple activity like employing a member of staff in a TDA branch is perilously placing the Association in direct confrontation with the employment law of the host country.

Haileselassie Girmay