

**CLAIM NO. HQ 05 X 02706**

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE**  
**QUEENS BENCH DIVISION**  
**BETWEEN;**

**POST OFFICE LIMITED**

**AND**

**LEE CASTLETON**

I LEE CASTLETON OF GRO  
WILL SAY, THAT AFTER SEVEN YEARS SERVICE IN THE ROYAL AIR  
FORCE AS AIRCRAT ELECTRICAL ENGINEER I LEFT TO PURSUE A  
CAREER IN RETAIL AT THE FLAMINGOLAND SUPERMARKET,  
MALTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE. A STORE THAT TURNS OVER MORE  
THAN £100,000-00 PER WEEK AS MANAGER.AFTER EIGHT YEARS  
THERE I LEFT TO PURSUE A CAREER IN RETAIL  
STOCKBROKING,BEFORE DECIDING TO BUY THE FREEHOLD TO  
MARINE DRIVE POST OFFICE BRANCH,BRIDLINGTON. I APPLIED  
AND WAS APPOINTED SUB POSTMASTER ON THE 18<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2003.

1. CHRISTINE TRAIN HAD BEEN RUNNING THE BRANCH FOR A  
NUMBER OF YEARS ON BEHALF OF THE FORMER OWNERS. I WAS  
RECOMMENDED TO MAINTAIN HER EMPLOYMENT BY ALL WHO  
HAD MET HER INCLUDING MRS OGLESBY. SO THIS IS WHAT I DID.  
IT ALLOWED FOR AN EASY TRANSITION FOR MYSELF AND THE  
CUSTOMERS.

2.EVERYTHING RAN SMOOTHLY. CHRISTINE AND MYSELF  
ADOPTING AN EASY WORKING RELATIONSHIP. WE GOT ON WELL.

3.UNTIL WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2004 WE BALANCED £1103.15  
SHORT WE COULD SEE NO REASON FOR THIS AT THE TIME. BUT  
THOUGHT WE MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE. WE WENT BACK  
THROUGH OUR DECLARATIONS CHECKING FOR THE MISTAKE  
BUT NOTHING CAME TO LIGHT.I RANG NBHL (HELPLINE) THE  
OPERATOR TOOK BOTH CHRISTINE AND MYSELF THROUGH ALL  
THE RELEVANT CHECKS. I WAS TOLD THAT WE MUST HAVE MADE  
AN ERROR AND THAT AN ERROR NOTICE WOULD BE SENT TO OUR  
OFFICE IN SIX WEEKS. CHRISTINE COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT AN

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**ERROR HAD OCCURRED. WE DECIDED TO LEAVE IT OVERNIGHT AND REVISIT THE PAPERWORK THE NEXT MORNING BEFORE OPENING.**

**4. WE WERE STILL UNABLE TO FIND THE ERROR SO HAVING ALREADY REPORTED THE ERROR I MADE GOOD THE LOSS OUT OF MY OWN POCKET.**

**5. OVER THE NEXT WEEK WE WERE LOOKING AT THE COMPUTER MORE CLOSELY. LOOKING FOR ANY REASON FOR THE LOSS FROM THE PREVIOUS WEEK. WE NOTICED THAT THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURE WOULD FLUCTUATE DAILY FROM THE FIGURES THAT WE ACTUALLY HAD AND THE FIGURES THE COMPUTER EXPECTED TO SEE. WE HAD A VISIT FROM MRS. OGLESBY ON FRIDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY AT 11AM. WE EXPLAINED THAT WE HAD HAD A LOSS THE WEEK BEFORE AND THAT THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURES WERE NOT FOLLOWING WHAT WE ACTUALLY HAD. MRS. OGLESBY TOLD US THAT THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURES ARE ONLY A GUIDE AND THAT THEY WOULD EVEN THEMSELVES OUT WHEN THE SYSTEM REACHED FINAL BALANCE. CHRISTINE WAS NOT HAPPY SHE FELT THAT THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURES SHOULD REPRESENT THE DAILY FIGURES AND CHECKED IN THE BALANCING WITH HORIZON HANDBOOK WHICH CONFIRMED HER THOUGHTS. MRS. OGLESBY TOLD US THAT WE MUST HAVE MADE A MISTAKE AND AN ERROR NOTICE WOULD COME BACK TO US IN SIX WEEKS TO GIVE ME BACK THE MONEY. I WAS NOT CONVINCED. I KNEW FROM PRIOR EXPERIENCE THAT I HAD MADE A MISTAKE IN NOVEMBER WHILST CHRISTINE WAS AWAY ON HOLIDAY AND I HAD TO MAKE THAT GOOD. I HAD PAID A CUSTOMERS CHEQUES IN AS AN AMOUNT ON A GIRO BANK BUSINESS IN PAYMENT. THEN I REMEMBED OUT THE CHEQUES TO THE HANDLING DEPT. WHO REALISED THAT I HAD PROCESSED THEM WRONGLY AND SENT THEM DIRECTLY TO THE CUSTOMER WHO PROMPTLY PAID THEM IN TO THEIR ACCOUNT IN EFFECT RECEIVING THEM TWICE. I THEN RECEIVED AN ERROR NOTICE WHICH WAS FOR THE WRONG AMOUNT AND WAS TOLD THAT I MUST HAVE BEEN THE VALUE OF THE CHEQUES UP AT BALANCE ON THE WEDNESDAY NIGHT. BUT OF COURSE HAVING RECEIVED THEM AS CHEQUES AND PAYING THEM OUT AS CHEQUES HAS NO BEARING ON THE CASH. BUT AS I POINTED OUT THESE FACTS I KNEW IT WAS EASIER JUST TO PAY THE MONEY AND NOT LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.**

**6. WHEN WE CAME TO BALANCE ON WEEK 43 WEDNESDAY THE 21<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY, WE WERE £4230.97 SHORT. WE WERE BESIDE**

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OURSELVES. AGAIN WE WENT THROUGH ALL THE CHECKS AND THEN STARTED TO PRINT OUT TRANSACTION LOGS. I RANG HELPLINE I EXPLAINED HOW UNHAPPY I WAS AND THAT OUR LINE MANAGER HAD TOLD US THAT THE PREVIOUS WEEKS LOSS WOULD BE JUST AN ERROR WAITING TO BE RETURNED. I EXPLAINED THAT WE FELT THAT WITH THE BALANCE SNAPSHOTS NOT MATCHING OUR STOCK AND MOP THAT WE FELT WE HAD A COMPUTER PROBLEM. I WAS TOLD IT WOULD JUST HAVE BEEN A MISTAKE AND THAT AN ERROR NOTICE WOULD COME BACK IN SIX WEEKS. I WAS NOT CONVINCED AND I ASKED FOR A SYSTEM CHECK OR AT LEAST AN ENGINEER TO COME OUT AND LOOK FOR THE REASON FOR THIS PROBLEM. I EXPLAINED THAT I COULD NOT AFFORD TO JUST KEEP MAKING GOOD AND WAITING FOR ERROR NOTICES TO COME BACK. I WAS TOLD THAT BUSINESS SUPPORT WOULD RING ME THE FOLLOWING DAY. BUT THEY DIDN'T. I WAS ALSO TOLD THAT THEY WOULD CONTACT MRS. OGLESBY. BUT AGAIN NO RESPONSE.

7. WE PRINTED MORE AND MORE REPORTS TRYING TO FIND THE REASON FOR THIS PROBLEM. AGAIN THROUGHOUT THE WEEK WE MADE REPEATED CALLS TO HELPLINE BUT NOBODY COULD OR WOULD HELP. I WAS ANNOYED, FRUSTRATED AND BEMUSED.

8. WEEK 44 WEDNESDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY. AGAIN THROUGHOUT THE WEEK THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURES DID NOT MATCH THE ACTUAL AMOUNTS WE WERE HOLDING. WE BALANCED £2525.12 AS A CASH SHORTAGE. I WAS FRANTIC. WHAT WOULD WE HAVE TO DO TO GET SOMEBODY FROM POST OFFICE TO HELP ? AGAIN HELPLINE TOLD US THAT THEY WOULD FORWARD OUR PROBLEM TO BUSINESS SUPPORT AND OUR LINE MANAGER. I TOLD THEM THAT WE HAD SPENT HOURS ON THE PHONE TRYING TO GET SOMEBODY TO HELP BUT NO HELP WAS FORTHCOMING. I EXPLAINED THAT I COULD NOT AFFORD TO MAKE THE AMOUNT GOOD AND WAS TOLD THAT BUSINESS SUPPORT WOULD RING TO HELP.

9. I KNEW THAT NOBODY COULD BE TAKING THE MONEY AS ONLY CHRISTINE AND MYSELF HAD ACCESS TO THE KEYS AND THE AREA BEHIND THE POST OFFICE COUNTER IS INDIVIDUALLY ALARMED WITH NO ACCESS TO SHOP PERSONNEL OR CUSTOMERS BY A LOCKED DOOR. ALL OF WHICH HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY CHECKED FOR SECURITY COMPLIANCE BY FIRSTLY THE AUDITORS WHO ON THE 18<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2003. AUDITORS WHO VISITED THE OFFICE TO ALLOW THE TRANSFER OF THE OFFICE TO ME FROM THE PREVIOUS OWNER ONLY SEVEN MONTHS PREVIOUSLY.

**THERE HAD BEEN NO CHANGE OF GUIDELINES NOTIFIED TO ME DURING THIS PERIOD.**

**10. WEEK 45 WEDNESDAY THE 4<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2004. WE STILL HAD CASH AND STOCK FLUCTUATIONS WHEN COMPARED TO THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURES ON THE BALANCE SNAP SHOTS BUT WHEN WE GOT TO THE FINAL BALANCE WE WERE £26.08 IN CASH SURPLUS. WE CONTINUED PRINTING OFF REPORTS BECAUSE WE WERE STILL UNHAPPY WITH THE DIFFERENCES.**

**11. WEEK 46 WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2004. AGAIN THROUGHOUT THE WEEK THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURES FROM THE BALANCE SNAPSHOTS DID NOT FOLLOW THE FIGURES WE HAD. WE HAD £ 1513.09 SHORT IN CASH. IN WEEK 45 WE HAD NO STOCK DELIVERED AND HAD VERY NEARLY BALANCED BUT IN ALL THE OTHER WEEKS WE HAD HAD STOCK DELIVERED. WE RANG HELPLINE AND EXPLAINED OUR FINDINGS. THEY JUST FOBBERED US OFF. THEY SAID THAT I WOULD GET A CALL FROM BUSINESS SUPPORT TO PUT THE OUTSTANDING AMOUNT INTO SUSPENSE ACCOUNT UNTIL THE REASON FOR ITS OCCURANCE COULD BE FOUND.**

**12. I RECEIVED A CALL FROM BUSINESS SUPPORT AND WAS TALKED THROUGH HOW TO PLACE THE FIGURE INTO SUSPENSE ACCOUNT.**

**13. WEEK 47, 18<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2004, AGAIN THE BALANCE SNAP SHOTS DO NOT MATCH THE ACTUAL STOCK AND MOP. THE FIGURES MADE NO SENSE AND AT THE END WE BALANCED.**

**14. WEEK 48, 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2004 AGAIN THE STOCK AND MOP FIGURES BORE NO RESEMBLANCE TO THE ACTUAL STOCK AND MOP THROUGHOUT THE WEEK. WE BALANCED £ 3509.18 AS A CASH SHORTAGE STILL NO HELP STILL NO ANSWERS. CHRISTINE AND I DISCUSSED WHAT WE MUST DO NOW TO GET SOMEBODY ELSE INVOLVED AT THE POST OFFICE. WE DECIDED TO ASK MRS. OGLESBY TO ARRANGE AN AUDIT WE FELT AT LEAST THEN SOMEBODY ELSE WOULD PUT THE WHOLE SORRY SAGA TO AN END. WE RECEIVED A CALL FROM HORIZON HELPLINE REF.E0402251077. WE EXPLAINED THE PROBLEMS AND THAT WE FELT THE MISS BALANCES MUST HAVE BEEN COMPUTER GENERATED.**

**15. WEEK 49, I PUT THE PREVIOUS WEEKS LOSS INTO SUSPENSE ACCOUNT AGAIN UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF ONE OF THE BUSINESS SUPPORT HELPLINE STAFF WHO HAD RETURNED MY CALL TO THE HELPLINE FROM THE 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY. AGAIN THE SYSTEM FIGURES**

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FROM THE BALANCE SNAPSHOTS THROUGHOUT THE WEEK WERE NOT COMPATERBLE WITH OURS OR THE TRANSACTIONAL WORKED FIGURES DISPLAYED ON THE BALANCE SNAPSHOTS.WE AGAIN BALANCED £3512.26 AS A SHORTAGE IN CASH. AGAIN WE MADE THE CALLS TO HELPLINE AND AGAIN NO HELP WAS FORTHCOMING.

16. WEEK 50, 10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2004. WE HAD REALISED THAT THE SHORTAGE AND SURPLUS FIGURES DID NOT MATCH THE WAY THE BALANCING WITH HORIZON HANDBOOK DEPICTED THAT THEY SHOULD LOOK. I SHOWED THIS TO MRS. OGLESBY AT HER MONTHLY MEETING ON FRIDAY 5<sup>TH</sup> MARCH. SHE WAS NOT INTERESTED SHE TOLD US THAT THE BOOK WAS WRONG AND THAT THE £3512.26 WAS A FURTHER LOSS. WE WERE BEYOND OURSELVES. I ASKED HER TO ORGANISE AN AUDIT AND THAT EVEN IF SHE WAS HAPPY WITH THE PROBLEMS WE HAD I WAS NOT AND I NEEDED SOMEBODY TO INVESTIGATE THE MATTER.

17. BY THE END OF THIS WEEK WE WERE A FURTHER £7140.85 SHORT ACCORDING TO THE SYSTEM IN CASH.DOUBLE THE PREVIOUS WEEK. AGAIN NO HELP FROM ANYBODY HORIZON, HELPLINE AND MRS. OGLESBY JUST WERE NOT INTERESTED.

18. WEEK 51, 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2004, A FURTHER LOSS OF £557.45. AGAIN SHOWING AS A CASH LOSS IT JUST COULD NOT BE RIGHT. OVER THE PREVIOUS WEEKS WE HAD NUMEROUS PROBLEMS WITH THE COMPUTER. FROM FLASHING SCREENS TO LOST TRANSACTIONS BUT AS I WAS PROCESSING A CHEQUE IN PAYMENT FOR A CUSTOMER MRS. DOROTHY CONSTABLE THE SCREEN CLEARED AND FROZE I CHECKED THE TRANSACTION LOG AND THE TRANSACTION DID NOT APPEAR. I HAD NOT COMPLETELY FILLED OUT THE FORM AND HAD NOT STAMPED IT. I EXPLAINED TO THE CUSTOMER AND SHE REALISED THAT SHE HAD NOT BROUGHT HER I.D. DETAILS WITH HER SO SHE SAID SHE WOULD GO HOME AND FINISH THE FORM AND PUT IT IN THE POST BOX OUTSIDE. WHICH SHE DID. IT WAS AN APPLICATION FOR A NEW N.S. AND I ACCOUNT TO REPLACE THE OLD ORDINARY ACCOUNT. AFTER A FEW DAYS SHE CAME BACK INTO ME HOLDING THE SAME CHEQUE WITH A LETTER EXPLAINING THAT N.S. AND I. WERE UNABLE TO PROCESS THE APPLICATION ANY FURTHER BECAUSE SHE HAD FORGOTTEN TO GIVE THEM DETAILS OF ANOTHER ACCOUNT. I TOLD HER THAT I WOULD PAY THE CHEQUE INTO HER N.S. AND I. INVESTMENT ACCOUNT AND THEN AT A LATER DATE WE COULD ALWAYS APPLY TO OPEN THE NEW ACCOUNT. SHE AGREED AND I PROCESSED THE TRANSACTION.

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19. FINALLY THE AUDITORS ARRIVED AT 08.00 ON THE 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2004. I WAS EXTREMELY RELIEVED. I FELT THAT FINALLY SOMEBODY ELSE WOULD BE INVOLVED. I EXPLAINED THE SITUATION AND HOW OVER THE WEEKS I FELT WE HAD REPEATEDLY BEEN FAILED. MISS HOLLINGSWORTH TOLD ME THAT WE HAD BEEN AND THAT THE LINE MANAGER SHOULD NOT HAVE ALLOWED THIS TO HAVE LASTED THREE WEEKS LET ALONE THREE MONTHS. SHE SAID THAT THE LOSSES WERE UNAUTHORISED AND THAT MY LINE MANAGER WHILST WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE PROBLEM SHOULD HAVE SOUGHT A REMEDY. MRS OGLESBY I WAS TOLD WOULD ARRIVE SOON AND THEN THEY WOULD DISCUSS HOW TO MOVE FORWARD. MRS OGLESBY ARRIVED AND WENT STRAIGHT INTO THE POST OFFICE COUNTER TO SPEAK TO MISS HOLLINGSWORTH. I WAS TOLD TO GO INTO THE REAR STORE ROOM. I HAD NOT SIGNED THE STOCK HANDOVER FORM AND THE STOCK WAS STILL OUT ON THE DESK. I WAS ASSURED THAT THAT WAS ALRIGHT AND LEFT. MRS. OGLESBY CAME OUT TO TALK TO BOTH MYSELF AND CHRISTINE SHE TOLD ME THAT I HAD TWO OPTIONS, FIRSTLY I COULD CLOSE THE BRANCH PENDING AN INVESTIGATION OR SHE SAID THAT SHE KNEW A POST MISTRESS VERY WELL FROM HULL WHO WOULD BE WILLING TO COME AND RUN THE BRANCH ON A TEMPORARY BASIS AND ONCE THE COMPUTER WAS PROVEN TO BE FAULTY, THEN WE COULD REVERT BACK TO OURSELVES RUNNING THE OFFICE. THIS I AGREED WITH. MRS SIMPSON ARRIVED AT ABOUT 16.00 THAT DAY AND OFFICIALLY TOOK OVER THE OFFICE. WHEN MRS. OGLESBY INTRODUCED MRS. SIMPSON SHE INTRODUCED HER AS A VERY EXPERIENCED SUB POST MISTRESS WHO HAD ON THE INTRODUCTION OF HORIZON BEEN GIVEN EXTRA TRAINING TO HELP OTHER POSTMASTERS HAVING PROBLEMS IN HER AREA. BUT ALSO SHE TOLD US THAT THEY WERE VERY GOOD FRIENDS AND SHE WOULD LOOK AFTER THE OFFICE AND CUSTOMERS AS THOUGH THEY WERE HER OWN. THIS OF COURSE WAS NOT THE CASE. RUTH REPORTED VIA MOBILE PHONE DIRECTLY TO CATH NOT THE HELPLINE. ON WEDNESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH RUTH WAS HAVING A PROBLEM BALANCING AND PHONED CATH REPEATEDLY. BOTH DENIED THIS. SHE WAS CONSTANTLY ADDING ON A CALCULATOR AND WRITING AND CROSSING OUT FIGURES ON A FINAL BALANCE. THEN TO FIND SHE CLAIMED TO ONLY HAVE MISSED BALANCE BY £2.12 IS COMPLETELY FALSE. THERE ARE TWO LOTTERY ERRORS OUTSTANDING FROM RUTH SIMPSONS TEMPORARY TENURE. BY THE BALANCE ON 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL RUTH SIMPSON WAS UNABLE TO TRANSACT BUSINESS ON THE COMPUTER ALL MORNING. AT FIRST

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SHE CLAIMED THIS WAS BECAUSE SHE HAD NOT COMPLETED A STAMP PRICE INCREASE. THEN SHE CLAIMED IT WAS BECAUSE ~~THERE HAD BEEN AN OVERNIGHT POWER LOSS WHICH IS FALSE.~~ THEN SHE CLAIMED THAT THE COMPUTER HAD LOST ITS CARD PROCESSING LINE WHICH IS AGAIN IS FALSE. I BELIEVE THE COMPUTER WAS HAVING A SOFTWARE REWRITE. AFTER FAILING TO BALANCE ON THE 24<sup>TH</sup> MARCH AND THE 1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL.

20. MRS OGLESBY REPORTED TO ME THAT THE SYSTEM WAS HAVING NO SUCH PROBLEMS.

21. ON THE 10<sup>TH</sup> MAY MRS OGLESBY ARRIVED AND TOOK AWAY ALL RELEVANT PAPERWORK FOR MY SUSPENSION HEARING ON 13 MAY 2004. SHE TOOK WITH HER CASH ACCOUNTS, BALANCE SNAPHOTS, FINAL BALANCE READINGS, TRANSACTION LOGS, CASH DECLARATIONS. IN HER VIEW TO GET A PICTURE OVER THE WEEKEND AS TO WHAT HAD OCCURRED OVER THE ELEVEN WEEKS OF PROBLEMS AT MARINE DRIVE BRANCH. AGAIN I ASKED FOR AND INVESTIGATION. I WAS TOLD IT WAS HER DECISION NOT MINE.

22. 13 MAY 2004 THE SUSPENSION HEARING WAS ATTENDED BY MRS OGLESBY, MRS LESLEY JOYCE, MRS CHRISTINE TRAIN AND MYSELF. I ASKED TO TAPE THE INTERVIEW. MRS OGLESBY TOLD ME I COULD NOT. IT WAS NOT ALLOWED.

23. AFTER A FEW DAYS MY CONTRACT WAS TERMINATED BY LETTER. THE NOTES FROM THE MEETING BORE NO RESEMBLENCE TO THE MEETING AND I DID NOT SIGN THEM TO SAY THEY DO.

24. I FORMALLY ASKED FOR AND APPEAL AGAINST MRS OGLESBY'S DECISION WHICH WAS GRANTED. THE APPEAL WAS LED BY POST OFFICE EMPLOYEE, MR JOHN JONES WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MR MELLOW-FACER'S P.A. TO TAKE NOTES. NEITHER INDEPENDENT. AGAIN THE NOTES BORE NO RESEMBLANCE TO THE MEETING AND YET MORE QUESTIONS REMAINED UNANSWERED.

25. MR JONES UPHELD MY TERMINATION.

26. OVER THE COMING MONTHS I WAS CONTACTED BY DEBT RECOVERY AT CHESTERFIELD. I WAS ASKED TO MAKE GOOD THE LOSSES AT MARINE DRIVE BRANCH. I ANSWERED IN THE SAME WAY I HAD ANSWERED OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS. I REQUIRED VARIOUS DOCUMENTS RETURNING AND THE SYSTEMS AUDIT

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**TRAIL. THIS WOULD THEN ALLOW ME TO DEMONSTRATE THE PROBLEMS WITH HORIZON SYSTEM AND SHOW HOW THESE SHORTAGES WERE DUE TO THE SYSTEM AND NOT MYSELF OR CHRISTINE TRAIN.**

**27. THROUGH MY SOLICITOR IN FEBRUARY 2005 I ASKED FOR PRE-ACTION DISCLOSURE. THE POST OFFICE RE-ACTED BY STARTING PROCEEDINGS AND SENDING A VERY SMALL AMOUNT OF THE REQUIRED DOCUMENTS BACK CLAIMING OTHER DOCUMENTS DID NOT EXIST. HAVING PRINTED OUT VARIOUS AND NUMEROUS REPORTS PERSONNALLY I KNEW THAT THIS WAS UNTRUE.**

**28. I NOW HAVE ENOUGH DOCUMENTS TO PROVE THE COMPUTERS FAULTS AND FRAILITES. I CAN DEMONSTRATE IN GREAT DETAIL THE PROBLEMS THAT AROSE THROUGH THE SYSTEMS FAULTS.**

I CERTIFY THAT I BELIEVE THE CONTENTS OF THIS STATEMENT ARE TRUE. 29/11/06