

NEWS REPORT

Date: 31 March 2009
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Title: The UK Equality and Human Rights Commission faces Internal Conflict and External Criticism
Country: UK

Context

Issue at stake: The functioning, policies and effectiveness of the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission.
Ground of discrimination: Other
Source: Newspaper Reports
Field: Other (enforcement/Equality bodies)
Legislative provisions: Equality Act 2006

Content:

Political development: The current Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), Nicola Brewer, is leaving the Commission. Newspaper reports have suggested that her departure is linked to internal disputes about the Commission’s internal auditing mechanisms and how it should spend its money. Kay Hampson, a member of the Commission and the last head of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), has also announced that she is resigning her post, while another Commissioner, Sir Bert Massie, the former head of the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), has indicated that he is considering his position, on the basis that he is dissatisfied with how the Commission is using its financial resources and legal powers. Media reports have suggested that members of the EHRC’s staff are also very dissatisfied with the strategic direction of the Commission and the leadership of Sir Trevor Phillips, the Chief Commissioner. Equality campaigning organisations and media commentators have also been critical of public statements made by members of the Commission and its staff, in particular recent suggestions by Nicola Brewer that campaigning for stronger legal provisions in respect of equal pay for women was seen as a luxury in the current economic crisis. The recent emphasis placed by Trevor Phillips on ‘fairness’ as a core value rather than ‘equality’ or ‘non-discrimination’ in public statements has also been criticised.

Internet link source and additional information: See

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jan/16/gender.equality>,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/mar/21/nicole-brewer-human-rights-commission>,

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7643844.stm, and
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/blog/2009/mar/21/equality-and-human-rights-commission>.