

In the news

Abstract

The case involves whistleblowing on a company's unethical overseas employment practices.

Key words

Employment practices, whistleblowing

The case

You are a strategic planner for a multinational organisation, which owns and manages tea plantations in a developing country. The organisation's advertising emphasises the organisation's 'partnership with the developing world'. In recent weeks, the organisation has been the subject of a series of critical articles in a national paper. The articles have contained detailed data about the pay and conditions on the plantations and have described those pay and conditions as exploitative. The newspaper has also commented unfavourably on the arrangements, which the organisation has made with the country's government for the repatriation of profits. The information in the articles has been accurate, and it is evident that a member of the organisation has been supplying the information, although the organisation has a rule that a member of staff 'must not disclose commercial information to unauthorised persons' and another one which says that 'all contacts with the press must be handed by the properly authorised officers.'

At a social function, a member of your department inadvertently makes it plain that it is she who has been supplying the information to the newspaper. She immediately recognises what she has done and says you 'must ignore what I've said or I'll be sacked'.

Discussion points

- What should you do?
- What view do you take of people who behave as the colleague has done, that is, who 'blew the whistle' on the organisation? What general principles support your view?

Tutor's guide

The case provides a hook for the discussion of whistleblowing. The whistleblower's actions could be compared with the procedures recommended in the Public Interest Defence Act (PIDA). The case also hints that the personal cost of whistleblowing may be high if they are discovered. Ought there to be more support for whistle blowers?