

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, June 12, 2000

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EEOC SETTLES LAWSUIT AGAINST LONDON INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR RACE DISCRIMINATION AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

BIRMINGHAM - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) today announced a \$625,000 settlement with London International Group, LLC (LIG) in a lawsuit charging the Eufaula-based plant, which manufactures condoms, with subjecting a class of employees to a hostile work environment in which they have been subjected to numerous racially and sexually derogatory cartoons and comments since 1995.

"This settlement sends a strong message to employers in Alabama and across the country that workplace discrimination comes at a high price," said EEOC Chairwoman Ida L. Castro. "It is an unfortunate reality that discrimination still exists in the 21st century workplace, more than three decades after passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964," she added. "As the Commission prepares to commemorate its 35th anniversary in July, employers should be aware that the EEOC will remain vigilant in its mission of eradicating workplace discrimination wherever and whenever it occurs."

In addition to monetary relief for eight named plaintiffs and a class of similarly situated individuals, LIG has agreed to implement and widely distribute a "Statement of Zero-Tolerance Policy" on discrimination to its current workforce and all new hires at its Eufaula plant. The company, a manufacturer of gloves and condoms, will also provide training for management and hourly employees on discrimination prevention, as well as conduct internal staff training on how to properly investigate charges of discrimination.

The complainants alleged that they brought the situation to the attention of management but that no effective action was taken to correct the discriminatory conduct and alleviate the problem. EEOC's resolution of the suit also includes claims of individuals represented by Birmingham attorney Chris Roberson of the law firm Roberson and Roberson, which joined the suit in March 2000 as plaintiff-intervenors. In order to determine whether other workers are eligible to take part in the settlement, Jill Lolley Vincent, Acting Regional Attorney for the EEOC's Birmingham District Office, urged other LIG employees who believe they were discriminated against to contact the EEOC at (205) 731-2252 or (205) 731-1299.

EEOC filed suit against LIG and Aladan Corp. (a separate company which no longer exists) on September 16, 1999, in U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, Northern Division. The lawsuit charged LIG with violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act by subjecting a class of workers to a racially and sexually hostile work environment, different terms and conditions of employment based on race, and discharge based on race.

"The Commission is seeing a rising national trend in cases involving egregious harassment of a racial and sexual nature," said EEOC General Counsel C. Gregory Stewart. "We will continue to strategically utilize our litigation resources to pursue and remedy such instances of employment discrimination."

Cynthia G. Pierre, Director of the EEOC's Birmingham District Office, said: "LIG worked cooperatively with the Commission to reach a fair and equitable resolution in this case. All the parties are to be commended, as the company is implementing policies and procedures to greatly increase its ability to effectively address problems of racial and sexual harassment at the plant."

Acting Regional Attorney Vincent, who was also responsible for prosecuting the case, said, "This settlement is a win-win outcome because the charging parties and other aggrieved individuals at the facility will be able to get on with their lives, while the company will be greatly improving the quality of life for its employees which will increase the morale and productivity of its workforce."

This is the second major settlement of an employment discrimination lawsuit by the EEOC's Birmingham District Office in the past year. In July 1999, the EEOC settled a class action suit against Tyson Foods, Inc., for \$3.2 million, the largest settlement ever by the agency's Birmingham office involving racial and sexual harassment. The EEOC's Birmingham office has enforcement jurisdiction for Alabama and Mississippi.

In addition to enforcing Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin, the EEOC enforces the Age Discrimination in Employment Act; the Equal Pay Act; Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which prohibits employment discrimination against people with disabilities in the private sector and state and local governments; prohibitions against discrimination affecting individuals with disabilities in the federal government; and sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Further information about the Commission is available on the agency's web site at www.eeoc.gov.

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