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Workplace Relations Commission 'grinding to a halt'

ALL IS not well at the new Workplace Relations Commission, according to a number of legal practitioners including **Richard Grogan** of Grogan & Associates Solicitors, a well regarded employment law firm. Recent public comments by him – on LinkedIn of all places – suggest the “WRC is grinding to a halt”, a view that appears to be endorsed by other users of the industrial relations body. He attributes this to too few adjudicators, a “crappy” IT system and a split operation with industrial dispute hearings being held in both Dublin and, eh, Carlow.

Why Carlow? Well, that’s because one of the component bodies of the new WRC, the National Rights Employment Authority (NERA), was attached to the old well-regarded Labour Relations Commission to create what then minister **Richard Bruton** promised would be a “world class dispute resolution service”. Things haven’t quite worked out that way, it seems, and lumping the Carlow-based NERA, the creaking Employment Appeals Tribunal and bits of the Equality Tribunal on board the good ship LRC appears to have left it listing badly.

Insiders say the process was all done in haste, that it was a good idea fundamentally, but needed a more steady hand. It was rushed through and serious cracks were papered over in the name of achieving the all important “deliverables” before the last election. **Kieran Mulvey**, former LRC head, ran a pretty tight ship and was

generally well regarded by trade unions and employers alike. Unfortunately for the government, most key people involved have left the pitch including Mulvey who retired as had been long planned and well-signalled. Bruton was moved on to reform the education sector and to

allow former schoolteacher **Mary Mitchell O’Connor** to tell industry and workers what’s what in her own inimitable way. **Ger Deering**, head of the Carlow-based NERA and the public servant heading the WRC

reform programme, jumped ship some time ago to the Department of the Environment and then again to be the Financial Services Regulator but he tends to be fleet of foot, having worked in Carlow County Council and for a while as national taxi regulator.

Meanwhile, employment solicitor Grogan remains one of the most vocal critics of the

new WRC. He voiced similar public criticisms in December, some of which were rebutted by **Oonagh Buckley**, new CEO of the Workplace Relations Commission. Interestingly, she thanked Mr Grogan publicly, not only for his input, but for his gift of a case of wine to the 200-plus WRC staff. The prudent Ms Buckley then said she was returning the wine, as public servants were precluded from accepting gifts.

David Hughes’s timing issues

THE Courts Service last week published an intriguing judgment relating to liquidator **David Hughes**, who just before Christmas was ordered by the High Court to provide details of work he carried out during the liquidation of a company called Denis Finn Ltd (DFL). The Revenue, as a substantial creditor of the company, had queried Hughes’s fees bill of over €½m and the judgment by Judge **David Keane** made for a lively read.

With the liquidation of DFL almost complete, Hughes applied to the High



Richard Grogan



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