

Translation from the
September 2007 issue
of Ergo, the Uppsala
Student Union newspaper

"The Vice-Chancellor is spreading untruths"

Bo Berndtsson, professor at Chalmers University of Technology, accuses the Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University Anders Hallberg of telling lies regarding the conflict at the Department of Mathematics in Uppsala. Anders Hallberg replies that Berndtsson's statements is on the verge of being slander.

During last Spring I filed a complaint to the Parliamentary Ombudsman (JO) against Vice-Chancellor Anders Hallberg for his actions in the affair where two mathematics professors in February resigned from their positions. After one week I got the answer that JO had no intention to investigate the case. The reasons were "JO investigates ... only in exceptional cases circumstances that have connections to labour legislation". I had also written to the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (HSV) making an enquiry whether they were considering to make a review of the actions of the Vice-Chancellor. Their answer was negative as well, since the University Chancellor at the time did not consider it the Agency's task to make statement regarding "issues that can be appealed in court or tried by some other audit authority". In Ergo no. 9/07 Anders Hallberg is interviewed. He says:

— JO as well as HSV has looked at the case and they have nothing to object to.

This is simply not true. Regrettably, this is far from being the first untruth that has been spread by the University management in this context. The university lawyer Per Abrahamsson says in UNT, March 28, that many "false rumours" have been around, but "the Vice-Chancellor preferred to keep the professors, but they chose to resign". In the transcription from the Vice-Chancellor's meeting with Oleg Viro, Hallberg says however:

— And what I want to say prior to continuation of our conversation is that we, and I, personally, want that you would complete your position at the university.

Soon before this the Vice-Chancellor had declared that

— The investigation of the working environment in the Mathematics Department has been completed, and it is absolutely clear to me that you had made multiple service violations.

The written report on the work environment is however dated six weeks later and does not contain a single word about Viro or Jöricke. On the contrary one can read:

— It is the firm conviction of the committee that it is not possible to overcome deep antagonism of this kind by establishing guilt.

In an interview by Radio Uppland on June 24 the Chairman of the Board of Uppsala University says:

— We have confidence in Anders Hallberg's way of handling this issue.

It is hard for me to understand what this confidence is based on.

Bo Berndtsson
Professor of Mathematics at
Chalmers University of Technology

Answer from Anders Hallberg:

Once again I want to emphasize that my overarching goal is to create a good working environment at Uppsala University for students, teachers and other employees. Bo Berndtsson states in his letter to the editor that I am not speaking the truth. This is a statement that verges on slander. JO writes as follows "JO investigates however only in exceptional cases circumstances that have connections to labour legislation. JO should in such cases intervene only if there is a particular reason. I have not found that there is any such reason." JO has therefore reviewed the case and judged that there is no particular reason to pursue the case.

Berndtsson says furthermore that the University Chancellor did not consider it the Agency's task to make a statement regarding issues that can be appealed in court or tried by some other audit authority. In reality the Chancellor says that "HSV cannot investigate these issues". Neither professor Oleg Viro nor professor Burglind Juhl-Jöricke have chosen to let a legal court decide whether any error have been made. Moreover Berndtsson refers to the tape recording made with concealed microphones. The tape recording is a testimony of one of the involved parties [Swedish: partsinlaga] whose objectivity can be questioned, which Berndtsson should realize. The disconnected quote by Berndtsson is in no way representative for what was said during a whole day of negotiations. That neither professor Oleg Viro nor professor Burglind Juhl-Jöricke are mentioned in the work environment investigation is because they had chosen to resign from their positions and hence were no longer concerned by the investigation. I want to point out that the purpose of the working environment investigation was not to find culprits but to come to terms with the generally bad work environment at the department.

Anders Hallberg