

3.2 Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour of the Chief Minister regarding approaches to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution head office in the U.K. in relation to the standing-down of the St. Helier Lifeboat Crew: [1(228)]

Will the Chief Minister be approaching the R.N.L.I. (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) head office in the United Kingdom regarding the recent standing-down of the entire St. Helier lifeboat crew?

Senator P.F. Routier (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

It is a source of great regret for our whole Island that the relationship between the R.N.L.I. and the St. Helier lifeboat crew has reached this stage. I do hope that Members will join me in showing appreciation of the contribution the Jersey crew has made to the safety at sea. **[Approbation]** The coxswain of the St. Helier lifeboat crew was stood down by the R.N.L.I. as a result of an internal disciplinary process. This led to some of the crew handing in their papers and their spokesman announcing that the whole crew had stood down. I have spoken with the R.N.L.I.'s Director of Community Lifesaving and Fundraising twice during the last week and I have also arranged for the Chief Minister today to talk with a senior executive of the R.N.L.I.

3.2.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

We are all aware that the entire crew has stood down. They are indeed volunteers and the volunteers are not paid because they are worthless, they are not paid because they are priceless. This may well be an internal dispute but bullying in the workplace should not be tolerated in any area. Does the Assistant Chief Minister not agree?

Senator P.F. Routier:

With regard to the specific disciplinary action I cannot comment about what is involved in that particular issue because I do not know what has been claimed and counterclaimed, but I do know what is in the public domain, that there has been issues suggested of bullying and of course that is not an appropriate thing to be happening in any organisation.

3.2.2 Deputy R. Labey of St. Helier:

Could the Assistant Minister confirm that the current difficulties arise out of the Jersey Ports authority contacting the R.N.L.I. headquarters in the U.K. (United Kingdom) in the first place to make a complaint against the local R.N.L.I.? Is he aware and can he confirm that the catalyst for our current difficulties were a successful mission completed by the R.N.L.I. but marred by an intervention at the harbour gates by the Jersey Ports Authority tug who offered to take over the towing-in of this stricken French vessel, at which point the master of that vessel said: "I would rather stay with the R.N.L.I. because it will save me £1,500." R.N.L.I., I believe, did tow the boat in. If that is the case, does the Assistant Minister condone that sort of behaviour on the part of the Jersey Ports which some might say is akin to piracy.

The Bailiff:

There are 3 questions there, Assistant Chief Minister.

Senator P.F. Routier:

Yes, 3 questions, and I cannot confirm any of what the Deputy has said with regard to those circumstances. But what I do know is there are so many half-truths and rumours going around this whole issue which is clouding the issue about the relationship between the R.N.L.I. and the crew and the Ports of Jersey. That relationship is not good. There is no denying the fact, and I think it is recognised by all parties that there is a need to ensure that they do work together

and understand each other's positions a lot better. As I say, with regard to those specific incidents, I cannot comment on those at all.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Can I say to Members that Deputy Lewis's question is a very narrow question about approaching the head office; Senator Ferguson's question is a much wider question so I propose to close down quite shortly this particular question and we will come on to those in Senator Ferguson's question and supplementaries then. Final supplementary, Deputy Kevin Lewis.

3.2.3 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

To change the locks on the lifeboat station was downright insulting. I've no idea why they did it. Throughout the country lifeboat crews are held in very high esteem, none more so than an Island community such as ours. With all due respect to the visiting crew, if I am going through the Minquiers at certain tides I would certainly want a local coxswain on board with me. Does the Assistant Chief Minister intend to take this further, especially as it may well be an internal problem but the fact that the Ports of Jersey are involved does make it our problem too? Does the Assistant Chief Minister not agree?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The process which is being carried out currently which is part of the Volunteer's Code of Conduct which is being followed at the present time, it is vitally important that we let that continue and once that is settled we will have to take a complete fresh look to see what needs to be done. Certainly if there is a need to ensure that the relationship between the R.N.L.I., as I said previously, and the Ports of Jersey and the Coastguard and the Fire Service and all the people who are involved in our safety at sea, need to have a session with a mediator or sit down in a room and discuss these things, I would wholeheartedly support that action.