

2018.02.20

4 Deputy J.A. Martin of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding the appointment of Assistant Ministers: [OQ.28/2018]

In light of the Assembly's adoption of P.53/2016, will the Chief Minister advise when, and how, Assistant Ministers will be selected in the new Assembly?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

Assistant Ministers for the new Assembly will be appointed using the existing procedures. Initial proposals that would have changed this were developed in response to P.53, brought in the name of the Deputy, but did not meet with a sufficient level of support across this Assembly. It does remain an important matter, which should be addressed by the next Chief Minister, in line with the decision of this Assembly.

3.4.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Just hypothetically, I know I must not ask that, but say the Chief Minister now is going to go for Chief Minister next time, would he be able to, when he gives his slate of Ministers, would he be willing, not able - the word is "willing" - to give a slate of Assistant Ministers? It is quite simple.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I think hypothetical questions are without Standing Orders but when I stood for Chief Minister last time I did things which were new and changed, and moved portfolios or said there was that intention. I think that it would be a good act of goodwill towards the Assembly for a Chief Minister to put alongside those people that he was or she was proposing for ministerial positions to acknowledge publicly who they had spoken to at least about being Assistant Ministers. Because what we know happens, sadly - it is not appropriate - is that people right, left and centre, are told that they will be given an Assistant Minister's job in exchange for a vote for that ministerial position. That is what is wrong. That is what we need to eliminate, so we have to find a way of dealing with that.

3.4.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not think it is left, right and centre that they are offered at, I think it is just right of centre. Certainly not left. But that may change. Does the Chief Minister acknowledge that the reason that no changes are forthcoming to the way in which Assistant Ministers are appointed or when they are appointed is because he successfully amended Deputy Martin's proposal to water it down just to ask for it to be investigated rather than any changes implemented? Is that not the case?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Absolutely not. Proposals were developed... he will know because he sits on some of those committees that my officials and I on some occasions attended and discussed the proposals and what their view was. All of those were collated into a letter to me from the Chairmen's Committee, and it is interesting I have received a recent letter from the Chairmen's Committee as well saying that the proposals are fundamentally flawed. That is why we had to go back to the drawing board and then officials were, unfortunately, taken up with other issues.

3.4.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

In his heart of hearts does the Chief Minister - irrespective of political pragmatism and what this Assembly will accept - not still believe that the ultimate way forward, for whoever the next Chief Minister is, is to be able to be elected, him or herself, first, propose his or her team *en bloc*, and then

stand by that ministerial team irrespective of ... sorry, without letting the Assembly choose their individual Ministers?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I think I, on previous occasions, have - if not proposed it to this Assembly - developed it, and the difficulty that Members had with that proposal was the backstop position. Do you have 3 strikes and you are all out or do you have 3 strikes and then the third strike is assumed to be in place? My proposal for Assistant Ministers, in light of P.53, was just that, that Assistant Ministers were elected *en bloc* by this Assembly. It was that proposal that Members were not satisfied with.

3.4.4 Deputy J.A. Martin:

That was not as simple as that. They were not fundamentally rejected, they were fundamentally flawed and they made it very complicated. Does the Chief Minister not accept that a proposition brought by a Back-Bencher in 2016, supported very heavily by this Assembly, is being totally ignored, and we are going to be in a position again when this House elects a new Chief Minister, will be electing Scrutiny before anybody knows who is going to be Assistant Minister? That is absolutely not the place we should be. Will he apologise to myself and the Assembly for ignoring the wishes of this House in P.53/2016?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Of course I would apologise if nothing had been done and the wishes of the Assembly had been ignored. But hours and hours were undertaken by officials in trying to bring forward an appropriate proposal. They attended upon the various committees of the Assembly, sometimes more than once. We thrashed out round the Council of Ministers' table on many occasions a proposal, and it resulted in, and she has admitted it... She believes it would appear, from her final supplementary question, as well, that it was fundamentally flawed. I do not believe it was but when the Assembly, after all of that work ... Assembly committees believed it was, those officials had to move on to other work. But it is still an important issue for the very issue that the Deputy in her final supplementary question raises, and that is that Members of the Assembly would benefit from knowing who the proposed Assistant Ministers are in advance of the selection of Scrutiny. If - and it is a big if - I think that whoever sits in the seat of Chief Minister after the election, I think it would set an excellent precedent for them, with their candidates for Minister, also propose and put into the public domain who it is they would have as Assistant Ministers.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

She never said it was fundamentally flawed, I said they were fundamentally complicated and "she" is the Deputy.