

2.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the inspection of food recently carried out on the visiting traders from France:

Would the Minister inform Members whether he is investigating or intends to investigate the circumstances regarding the inspection of food recently carried out on the visiting traders from France?

Senator S. Syvret (The Minister for Health and Social Services):

The inspection of food labelling and hygiene standards relating to traders who sold their produce at the Foire de Jersey was undertaken by the Health Protection Unit. The Food Safety Labelling (Jersey) Order 2005 enables Jersey to have the very same labelling laws as those which exist in the European Union. Under this Order it is an offence for vendors to display information in a language not readily understood by the intended consumer. Clearly, in the Jersey context, the majority of intended consumers would expect labelling to be in the English language. Regulation and inspection are important means by which **[Interruption]** Islanders can be protected from a wide range of risks, threats and contingencies. Jersey is subject to regulation and inspection in many areas of life. For regulation and inspection to be effective it cannot be subject to the whims of political or managerial control, otherwise it falls into an ineffective and disreputable state. Thus, I am always very mindful not to involve myself in the day-to-day substance of inspection and regulatory activities undertaken by Health and Social Services. The reports concerning the inspection at the Foire de Jersey, which appeared in the media last week, did not portray the level of dialogue which took place prior to the fair between the Maison de Normandy and the fair organisers to ensure that prospective vendors were made aware of the need for the latter to abide by local Jersey-based legislation. Notwithstanding this, I have asked the Medical Officer of Health and the Chief Officer of Health and Social Services Department to meet with the Health Protection Team to review the rules of engagement by which the Health Protection Team engage with any individual premises or businesses should an inspection be in the offing. I would be perfectly happy to share the results of this review with the States Assembly in due course.

2.1.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

Unfortunately I did not comprehend all of that because I believe the Minister was trying to read very quickly through the printed answer that he had. It does seem to me from the correspondence we have seen and media statements that there seems to be - what concerns me - some discrimination here because it has been alleged that local traders do not all comply with this matter either but do not seem to be so vigorously pursued. Would the Minister confirm that that is the case and would he also comment on the fact that this is, in fact, a bilingual Island where English and French are both our language. I was going to ask the question in French but unfortunately, although I speak a little French, I have forgotten most of my French over the last 20 years, an unhappy situation. What I am seeking to find out is why is it not satisfactory that the labelling, as this is a bilingual Island, apparently was in French but was required to be English? Surely the fact of French labelling would be entirely satisfactory?

Senator S. Syvret:

The Regulations in Jersey, which mirror those across the European Union, require that the labelling on food products be in the language that the majority of people speak rather than the official languages of a country. Clearly, the great majority of people in Jersey do use English as their first language so that is the reason for that requirement. As I say, these are Regulations that mirror those to be found across the European Union. As far as the enforcement of these requirements on local traders is concerned, the same standards are applied. It has to be remembered that none of the traders at the Foire de Jersey were stopped from trading, although there were some discussions with them and the inspectors. The same applies with a number of supermarkets and other smaller outlets in Jersey which have not been compliant with the Regulations and have been not selling goods that are properly labelled. The Health Protection Unit has been engaged in a process I suppose I could describe as negotiation and co-operation with these various outlets in an effort to try and get them into a position whereby they are complying with the Regulations. That is, I think, a more constructive approach than simply marching in and slapping some form of enforcement notice on them.

2.1.2 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of St. Saviour:

Would the Minister inform the House whether or not it is his intention to also label or to seek the labelling of food served in restaurants? Secondly, would he answer the allegation made on Radio Jersey that a person delivered a homemade cake to the hospital and was told that the patient in question could not eat it as it was not correctly labelled?

Senator S. Syvret:

As I have already indicated in answering the initial question, I have asked the Medical Officer of Health and the Chief Executive of Health and Social Services in co-operation with the department to review the whole procedures adopted by the Health Protection Unit and, indeed, to see whether any of the Regulations perhaps need amending. As far as the issue about the cake is concerned, I heard something about this but I think it applied to a nursing home somewhere in the United Kingdom as opposed to any event that occurred in Jersey.

2.1.3 Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. John:

I just wanted to bring the Senator's attention to an enraged parishioner who telephoned me on my mobile whilst I was holiday about the incident at the States Farm. She was very concerned as to the manner in which the inspector dealt with the situation. Could the Senator assure us that in the future training will be given to such officials so that they handle these situations in a slightly more sensitive manner?

Senator S. Syvret:

Yes, that will be part of the review of the terms of engagement as to how health inspectors engage with the various people who are being regulated. Yes, there will be a review of these procedures. It has to be said there was one incident where a confrontation took place between one inspector and, I think, the head of Maison de Jersey, which he has written to her and apologised. I have made it absolutely plain that that kind of behaviour will not be acceptable, raising voices to people is not

acceptable behaviour from any Health and Social Services employee, and it will not occur again.

2.1.4 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire of St. Helier:

Because I am confused on the issue and obviously he is going to review it anyway, I would like to ask the Minister what sort of criteria exists for the provision of inspecting or providing English language on foods in specialty shops where, for example, one can purchase foods, for example, baby food from a Portuguese shop which was in Portuguese. There was no English on it. Is there an inspection factor there and is that going to be part of the review?

Senator S. Syvret:

Yes, I think I have alluded to that. The fact is there are some shops - speciality shops - that are selling goods that are not correctly labelled and are, therefore, not compliant with the existing Regulations. As I have already explained, the Health Protection Unit has been attempting to address that issue through a process of persuasion and negotiation rather than blunt enforcement, which is something that they could do under their existing legal powers.

2.1.5 Connétable D.J. Murphy of Grouville:

Could the Minister assure us that during his review of these Regulations that he will look at the labelling of French wines coming into Jersey because mostly they are labelled completely in French without an English translation. **[Laughter]**

Senator S. Syvret:

I am certainly happy to check the Regulations' applicability to alcohol products.

2.1.6 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

I wonder if, in this new spirit of co-operation across government, perhaps the Minister would consider teamwork with the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture where perhaps at these fairs a dictionary could be issued and this would assist greatly in people understanding a variety of languages.

Senator S. Syvret:

I am sure the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture is very, very interested in ensuring that the Island has a very good standard of inter-language learning.

The Bailiff:

That concludes the questioning of the Minister of Health and Social Services and we return to the beginning of the list of oral questions. The next question is by Deputy Power of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services.