

2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier of the Minister for Social Security regarding the integration of the reduced price milk scheme into the proposed income support scheme:

Will the Minister inform Members how he intends to integrate the reduced price milk scheme into the proposed income support scheme?

Senator P.F. Routier (The Minister for Social Security):

The States has approved a proposition on income support - that was P.86 of 2005 - which discontinues the milk at a reduced price scheme along with other benefits and replaces them with one system based on a common means assessment. The budget for milk at a reduced price scheme will be subsumed into the budget for income support. Income support will be based on a series of benefit components with a living component based on the cost of food and clothing. As milk is an important part of people's food basket it will be catered for within the basic living component.

2.2.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister accept that the intention of the reduced price milk scheme is to target a completely different group; the elderly, pregnant women and young children, with a completely different earnings limit, currently around £36,000, to that which could be proposed for the income support scheme? Surely the 2 cannot be integrated in a straightforward manner?

Senator P.F. Routier:

The States have made a decision that all the benefits which have those high income limits would be included in the income support system. It will include elderly people, it will include young people, it will include expectant mothers and the States have made that decision and certainly the amount of money that will be spent on providing support for people to buy milk will be targeting those most in need.

2.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister saying that those ineligible, because of income limits, for any other form of income support will be targeted by a small amount of support intended to continue reduced price milk?

Senator P.F. Routier:

I think the Deputy will be aware that the income support system is going to provide a phase protection for people who are already receiving the benefits which are going to be integrated into the income support system. So people who are currently receiving the support of milk at reduced rates will receive a phase protection for a number of years.

2.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister not agree that the implication of what he just said is that reduced milk is effectively going to be phased out?

Senator P.F. Routier:

In the current form that is certainly what the States has decided. The existing scheme has already, to a certain extent, been reduced because of the action of the dairy industry in stopping deliveries in the form that they did. So the scheme itself has, by way of that, fallen by ...

2.2.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister have any evidence that the health needs of these particular targeted groups of people has changed in the past few years to warrant the elimination of reduced price milk?

Senator P.F. Routier:

Certainly the discussions I have had with the new Medical Officer of Health is that the Medical Officer of Health would certainly prefer people to be spending more money on fruit and vegetables rather than milk and that is a clear question I asked in a meeting when we were talking about the health strategy quite some time ago. I asked the particular question, if there was a certain amount of money which was to be spent on health improvements would the money be better spent on milk or would it be better spent on the Grab 5 programme which is carried out in schools? Certainly the indication from the Medical Officer of Health was the Grab 5 programme is a far better programme.