

4. Questions to Ministers Without Notice - The Chief Minister

4.1 Deputy J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

Can the Chief Minister advise whether his department will be giving any fresh publicity to the issues raised on both sides by a potential move to Central European time in advance of the referendum?

Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

The department is giving publicity, but there is no guidance or no thought on how the public should vote; in other words, whether the public should vote for or against. I am aware that there is a fairly strong campaign against the introduction. There is no current campaign that I am aware of in favour, but information will be provided, yes.

4.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

It is really a follow up which I would like to have asked the Minister for Home Affairs, but I think it would be fair to ask the Chief Minister. With reference to page 11 again of R.99 where reference is made to a Haut de la Garenne inquiry, as there would appear to be no inquiry, would the Chief Minister agree with me that possibly it may be necessary to alter what is said about the Haut de la Garenne inquiry on page 11 of R.99?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have not looked at page 11, R.99, but I would certainly be happy to do so and go back to the Deputy.

The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just elaborate, Sir, it may give the impression there is an inquiry when probably there is not one. So, I am grateful for the Minister's answer.

4.3 Senator L. Norman:

Might I remind the Chief Minister again of the proposition to the Constable of St. Ouen which was adopted by the States in 2006 which requested the Council of Ministers to consider all options to preserve the headland at Plémont and to recommend a preferred option to the States within the least possible delay? Now that 2 years have past I wonder if the Chief Minister and the Minister for Planning and Environment have sorted out who is taking responsibility for this and when we might receive the preferred option?

Senator F.H. Walker:

It is not, sadly, as simple an issue as the Senator would suggest and discussions have been taking place between me and the Minister for Planning and Environment and indeed the Constable of St. Ouen in recent weeks, but there are legal considerations which have yet to be fully resolved. But I would hope some information and perhaps even a proposition would be coming to the States in the not too distant future.

4.3.1 Senator L. Norman:

I am pleased to hear that discussions have taken place between the Ministers. I wonder during the 2 years since the proposition was adopted by the States, have any discussions taken place with the owners of the land?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have not had discussions with the owners of the land and nor would it be appropriate for me to do so.

4.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

L:\The States\Questions\2008 Questions\oral questions for website\Questions without notice\16.09.08 Questions to Minister without notice CM.doc

Notwithstanding the confident statements emanating from some of our colleagues and from within the finance industry, Sir, would the Chief Minister inform the House whether or not the situation in place about the United States is being monitored closely and could he inform the House what the findings are of this monitoring; whether indeed we need to be cautious or whether indeed, Sir, we will avoid the worst of the storms that are brewing up?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Of course the situation in the U.S. (United States) and indeed throughout the world is being monitored closely. I cannot give the House at this juncture, and perhaps never would be able to, the results of the monitoring because I do not think anyone in the financial world anywhere understands exactly where we have got to or where we may be going. But as I have said we are monitoring the situation very closely indeed. What I can say to the House is that because of the diversity of Jersey's finance industry and because of the fact that we are generally speaking on industry based on investment rather than lending, we are in a much stronger position than many other financial capitals in the world to sustain any consequential impact that may arise from the current position in the U.S. and elsewhere.

4.4.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder on a follow up, I want to see if the Chief Minister could say whether, for example, he has received any news that the credit crunch is impacting on Jersey's housing market?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I have only received so far the odd informal comment that it may be; that prices may be slowing down and that properties that perhaps would have sold almost immediately not so long ago are now taking longer to move. I think that is inevitable. I think people are bound to be more cautious in the current climate than they were a few months ago, but there is certainly no evidence that has reached me of any serious decline at this juncture.

4.5 Deputy S.C. Ferguson:

The latest fashion among millionaires is to buy large tracts of land for conservation. Has the Chief Minister considered encouraging our imported developers - I am obviously thinking of Plémont here - in this area, rather than overdeveloping the Island?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Well, Sir, overdeveloping the Island is a personal point of view and of course any development is robustly controlled by the Minister for Planning and Environment who has indeed in recent times introduced penalties - if that is the right word - introduced obligations upon developers to contribute to the Island. Now, I do not believe he could force a developer to buy a large tract of land for conservation purposes. I have no doubt that he would actively wish to encourage any developer to do so and I would not be at all surprised if he has been already, but the fact is that the Minister for Planning and Environment is very much on top of the development of Jersey as I think he has illustrated on many occasions in the last 2 years.

4.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

Will we be receiving a full Council of Ministers comments on P.138 and especially now we have P.138 the amendment which states the Deputy has been asked to remove domestic fuel from his proposition? It would really be helpful for the House to know exactly where the Council of Ministers stand on this new amended proposition and I cannot see any comments coming forward, but I would like the reassurance that we will get some well in time for the debate from the Chief Minister. Thank you, Sir.

Senator F.H. Walker:

L:\The States\Questions\2008 Questions\oral questions for website\Questions without notice\16.09.08 Questions to Minister without notice CM.doc

It is not currently the intention of the Council of Ministers to issue a comment, but I can assure the Deputy that she will be made very clearly aware of the Council of Ministers views when it is up for debate.

4.6.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just ask, if it was important enough for the Council of Ministers to give comments on the Deputy of Grouville's proposition, would he not think it would be consistent to give comments on Deputy Le Fondré's?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Probably, yes, Sir, ideally, but the Council of Ministers has been more than a little stretched in the last week or 2 with the Business Plan and other aspects. I would accept that in an ideal situation comments would be made available. I think in this instance it will be for Members to accept, I am afraid, the verbal comments of Ministers during the debate.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to ask any questions of the Chief Minister? Very well, we close questions to the Chief Minister. Now, there are no matters under J and I have been informed, Chief Minister, you no longer wish to make a statement under K; is that correct?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Not only do I no longer wish, I never wished to make a statement under K and no one was more surprised than I was to discover this morning that it was on the supplementary order paper.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well. Then we come to Public Business