

2.11. Deputy K.C. Lewis of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the sale of alcohol to people under age:

Further to yet more reports of young teenagers being drunk and violent in town, what action if any has the Minister taken to clamp-down on shops selling alcohol to people underage?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

This is a matter which I take very seriously, partly because of my experience as Magistrate. We go through cycles in relation to this where there may be a period where there are a number of groups of youngsters misbehaving regularly in this way. Then we can go through a cycle a year or 2 later where things are much quieter. Now we are clearly in an up-cycle in relation to problems. I do treat this seriously. I have discussed the matter recently with the Acting Chief Officer.

2.11.1 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

May I preface my questions by stating I seek to protect children not to criminalise them? Children as young as 12 can obtain strong alcohol which they drink with Red Bull. This makes them hyperactive and very violent. Any shop knowingly selling alcohol to children should have their drinks license revoked and never have it returned. Does the Minister not agree?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

This is exactly the sort of matter that I have been discussing with the Acting Police Chief. We are going through a process of looking at a new Licensing Law and certainly penalties in relation to those who breach the law and a quick manner of revocation - perhaps on a temporary basis - of a license is one of the factors that we are looking at.

2.11.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Further to yet more reports of adults being drunk and violent in town, what action if any will the Minister be taking to clamp down on establishments selling alcohol to adults?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

This also is part of the overall review of the Licensing Law. This is why it is very, very important that we get this right. The place operates within a framework where we have existing Licensing Laws which have certain side effects and consequences. They are not picking up the paces as it were. We need to have a better legislative framework to reduce the risk of people getting drunk in this kind of way. Not all that happens of course is down to the licensees because sometimes people drink considerably before they go out and then misbehave on trying to get in to licensed premises.

2.11.3 The Connétable of St. Helier:

I think the previous question was perhaps a bit subtle. Could I ask the Minister whether he agrees with me that the vast majority of our young people in Jersey are well behaved, well motivated [**Approbation**], well brought up and do not constitute a hazard either in St. Helier or anywhere else in the Island?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Of course I agree with that. My experience as Magistrate was of course that we were dealing with a small minority of youngsters who were repeat offenders and that was very frustrating. But I totally agree the vast majority are well behaved.

2.11.4 Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would agree entirely that the majority of children are very well behaved but it just needs a small minority to create this devastation. The Scottish Parliament is set to announce plans to raise the age at which young people can buy alcohol in off-licences and supermarkets from 18 to 21, although people under the age of 21 can still buy alcohol in pubs and clubs. This could be a strategy that would be beneficial for Jersey. Does the Minister not agree?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

This is a strategy which needs to be looked at as part of the current Licensing Law review. It is a matter I am aware of. There are other possibilities as well.