

2.9 Deputy F.J. Hill of St. Martin of the Chief Minister regarding an extension of the U.K. ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child:

Will the Chief Minister advise what action, if any, has been taken to seek an extension of the U.K. ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in line with amendment 7 to the 2009 States Strategic Plan?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

The position remains the same, as I stated in my previous reply on the subject to Deputy Le Claire earlier this year. A detailed assessment is being carried out - the object is compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - to identify the extent to which we are already compliant, the further legislative and practical measures that would be necessary, and their resource implications. It will then be possible to develop an implementation plan with funding proposals to enable Jersey to progress towards compliance. Only then will it be possible to request an extension of ratification.

2.9.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

With respect to the Chief Minister, that seems to be the answer one gets every time, that tomorrow is always all right. In the comments in response to Deputy Le Claire's amendment last year, one of the reasons for ratification was given: "International reputation"; 192 countries have ratified, Jersey is one of the few who have not. Does the Chief Minister not think it is not showing the Island in good light, that we should be continually dragging our feet about ratifying this very important convention?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

While, clearly, it would be better for our international reputation were that to be the case, I do not see that the Island is suffering significant reputational damage by not doing this at the present time. I think, on the other hand, it shows that, in doing it thoroughly, we are aware of the obligations under that agreement, and we will not put our name to something until we know we can comply with it.

2.9.2 The Deputy of St. Martin

I was going to ask the Chief Minister, could he give Members some indication when he feels he will be in a position to seek this ratification?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, I am afraid I could not. The majority of this work is done by parties outside of my authority, including the Law Officers' Department. I know that the ramifications are quite considerable, and I cannot speak for the other pressures on those departments at this time. The matter is in hand but clearly, so are a number of other pressures, and with the limited resources we have, those have to be balanced.

2.9.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I think the Deputy has stolen my thunder with his last supplementary. However, one of the reasons given for why this government should not support my proposals to deal with serious youth crime, i.e. the naming of serious young offenders, was that it would delay Jersey's ratifying of this convention. With what the Chief Minister has already told us, could he not at least give us some sort of window of opportunity?

Surely, a year, 18 months; surely that is possible? Otherwise, does the Minister not agree that it looks as if the government is not serious about ratifying this convention?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, the Government is perfectly serious about this. The matter is being considered both by an officer working group and by the children's policy group. I am reluctant to give a timescale which I cannot at this stage justify, and until I am more certain of the timescale involved, all I will say is, it is not yet available.

2.9.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

It is a shame that we do not have the same appetite to ratify human rights conventions that we do for T.I.E.A.s (Tax Information Exchange Agreements), then we would probably be in a very different situation. I would ask the Chief Minister, with that in mind, does he agree that we do need to up our game when it comes to human rights, in particular, ratifying the various conventions? Would he agree that it would be beneficial to the Island to make Jersey a shining example on human rights, and to create for Jersey a centre of excellence for human rights school, which would obviously entail needing to ratify one or 2 conventions?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I think it is pretty misleading to try to compare the ratification of something like the Convention on the Rights of the Child with T.I.E.A.s. A T.I.E.A. is a very specific matter which can be dealt with on a standard international basis. Changing our legislation to make all our legislation compliant and enable us to meet the convention obligations would mean changes to significant, major primary laws on the Island. That is not something which we can do overnight. Should Jersey be a centre of excellence? It would be nice to be a centre of excellence in everything, but one has to be realistic. We are a small Island with limited resources and we have to adjust our policies accordingly, so that we can meet those obligations. In short, we need to cut our coat to suit our cloth.

2.9.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

Obviously, I did not mean to mislead. What I was comparing is not necessarily T.I.E.A.s and human rights *per se*, but the appetite which we have for passing these agreements very quickly and not for passing human rights. So I would simply ask again, does the Minister agree that we do need to up our game when it comes to human rights, especially in the light of the discrimination legislation, which it seems is going to be put back? Should we be upping our game, because it is important for our international jurisdiction, and the eyes of the world are looking at Jersey?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

As I might have implied, were we able to comply with this very quickly in a tentative timescale, then certainly, we would. The fact is that because of the complications of the requirements for this particular convention, it is not possible to deal with it in the same sort of timescale as a T.I.E.A. T.I.E.A.s are relatively simple and straightforward matters to deal with, so it is not a question of greater appetite, it is a matter of greater complexity.

2.9.6 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The United Nations Committee dealing with the rights of the child: can the Chief Minister tell us what countries are on this committee? Is this the same as the Human

Rights Committee, to which I understand such countries as Sudan and Iran are on the committee?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The simple answer is that I am afraid I do not know which countries are members of that committee. If the Senator wishes to know, I shall endeavour to find out and advise Members in due course.

2.9.7 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Just a final word. Just for Senator Ferguson's information, there are 192 who have ratified, so obviously, those 2 countries that she was mentioning may well be those who are not also in line, along with Jersey. The Chief Minister mentioned that policy groups, and I think he said, Law Officer groups, were working on it. Is it possible for the Chief Minister to give me and other Members details of those groups, so that I may be able to make direct contact with those groups in intention or anticipation, maybe, of getting them to get on with the procedure?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Certainly, if the Deputy wants to contact the children's policy group, I am sure that the members of that group would be happy to receive a communication from him. As far as the officer working group is concerned, if he wants to make contact with that officer working group through my department, I am happy to convey that message to them. I do not know who chairs that particular working group.