

5.10 The Deputy of St. Martin of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the height of the deepest void/cellar at Haut de la Garenne:

At the police press conference on 12th November 2008 it was stated that under Haut de la Garenne there were no cellars but there were floor voids in which a grown-up person could not stand up straight, will the Minister inform Members of the height of the deepest void/cellar investigated at the premises and state how many allegations were received of abuse in the areas under the floorboards?

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

I have a figure of 1.4 metres for the first answer which I calculated to be just over 4 feet 7 inches, that is the greatest height. I am assuming, although I am not sure of this, that that will have been the height at the time when digging started and it is quite possible that heights may have changed as a result of material having been removed. In relation to the number of allegations, I do not know when these were made, whether before or after press matters in February and March 2008, is approximately 30.

5.10.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am interested about the heights of 1.4 metres, could I just ask the Minister has he been there himself to measure those or whether these were given to him?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

These were given to me, of course.

5.10.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

There was a reason for it. As some Members know I did invite some to come with me last week to measure the depth of it, would the Minister accept that it is possible that the depths of some of those cellars were much deeper, in fact that the one that I measured was as deep as 7 feet; would the Minister say that it is possible?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

What I do not know is what the change in height levels has been as a result of materials being removed. I have assumed that the figure I have been given was the figure before materials were removed. I simply do not know down to what depth things were dug out. That is highly relevant because there would be a difference between the height when work started and the height now.

5.10.3 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I can understand the difficulty the Minister has and I have sympathy with him, but it is rather important because on 12th November a statement was released to the world that these are floor voids, they are not cellars; it is impossible for a grown-up person to stand up straight in the floor voids under Haut de la Garenne, so quite clearly that statement does not appear to be true. Bearing in mind that I have been there and measured for 7 feet, would the Minister now say that it is likely that that statement made by those 2 officers on 12th November is incorrect?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

If the figures given to me of 1.4 metres are correct then I think that statement is correct. If the figure were 7 feet then obviously it would be incorrect. But, as I say, I do not know how much material was removed and I am going on the information provided to me by the States of Jersey Police.

5.10.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

First of all I would like to ask whether the depths were uniform. So was that 1.4 metres an average, was it right across ... why are people sighing? Is child abuse not important in Jersey? I think these are very important questions and I think at least one Deputy who has gone to Haut de la Garenne to do the research should be respected and not have people tutting while questions are being answered. Back to the questions, are the depths uniform, is the 1.4 metres right across the board? I have heard that it is quite common for cellars to be slanting because they are built on uneven surfaces. Also as a mathematical man, would the Minister say what he thinks the minimum height requirement would be for child abuse to be carried out in a cellar?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

The question I have answered is the question as to what was the greatest - the deepest - height, not the average. Now, I am under the impression that the voids increase in height as one moves away from the road because of a natural slope on the ground. I could be wrong on that but on the basis of pictures that I have seen, I think that that is highly likely. In relation to how high a height there would have to be in order for sexual abuse to take place there, I am afraid I have absolutely no idea on that, it would depend upon the height of the abuser and the person who was being abused.

5.10.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

To clarify the situation, would the Minister undertake then to give in a written answer or written information to States Members detailing the heights of the various cellars at the time that the investigation started so we can see exactly what the height of those voids were.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes, it would be helpful if someone could ask me ... although I am loathe to invite yet more written questions than the 8 I have this time, it would be helpful if someone could define exactly the information they want and that I will produce.

5.10.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could we do that outside of States sittings so if he provide him with the information would the Minister please reveal the information?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes, I am happy to make inquiries of the police as to whether they have precise measurements of the heights in different areas that were in fact dug up. I shall do that.

The Bailiff:

Very well, do you wish a final question, Deputy of St. Martin.

5.10.7 The Deputy of St. Martin:

I am grateful. Could I just again ask the Minister, I missed the number of people ... the allegations that were made. There were 30 allegations that were made about crimes that may have occurred under the floor? I am grateful, thank you.