

4. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Chief Minister

4.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

It is almost, I think, some 8 months now since the States agreed to look into the issue of the abuse inquiry. Is the Chief Minister able to give an update as to when this inquiry will be undertaken and what sort of steps will be taken to appoint people to sit on that inquiry?

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

Yes, the Deputy will be aware that I met him along with other Deputies who were interested and who had brought propositions earlier in the year and, as a result of that meeting, we commissioned a piece of work on the terms of reference. That work is now complete and it will be presented to the Council of Ministers next week for them to implement and go ahead. The next step will then be to put forward proposals for a chairman and for that committee to commence work. So the next stage, as I say, will be a meeting with the Council of Ministers followed in due course by a proposition to this Assembly.

4.1.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I have a supplementary because I think there is an omission here? I believe it was agreed that Senator Le Gresley, Deputy Tadier and myself would have sight of what was being proposed at the time before it went to the Council of Ministers. Could I remind the Chief Minister of that and will he agree and, if so, can he explain as to why I have not seen any report at all that would have come up from Verita?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The report is still in its draft stages. It will not be finalised until towards the end of this week but after that, I will certainly honour any obligations given to Senator Le Gresley, Deputy Tadier and the Deputy of St. Martin.

4.1.2 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Could I just press the matter? Some of us will not be in the House after next week. Is it possible for us to have sight of this before we leave this Chamber?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Yes, as I said, it will be completed by the end of this week.

4.2 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

What achievement does the Senator consider to be his legacy as Chief Minister?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I think a Chief Minister is merely one of 10 Ministers and it is the Council of Ministers to whom any credit is directed for successes in the last 3 years and those successes are significant and have been presented in a report, R.128, which I lodged with the States last week where the Constable will see some of those many things. It would be invidious perhaps of me to single out the best one but I am satisfied that through the economic downturn of the past 2 or 3 years, this Island has ridden that storm better than virtually any other jurisdiction and that has been due to good planning and co-ordinated policies by the Council of Ministers and myself.

4.3 Senator F. du H. Le Gresley:

Does the Chief Minister think that the role of Assistant Minister for International Affairs should be upgraded to a full Ministry in the next Assembly?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

There is a limit to the number of Ministers one can reasonably expect to appoint. There have been suggestions for a Minister for International Affairs, just as there have been suggestions for a Minister for Children. On the other hand, there have been suggestions to reduce the number of Ministries. One cannot please all the people all the time. What I can agree with the Senator is that it is important that international affairs receives a higher priority than it has done up until the recent past. I can very much affirm the good work that has been by the present Assistant Minister during his brief term of office in that post.

4.4 The Deputy of St. John:

I note in my written question to the Minister, yet another poor response by the Minister in relation to the emergency exercise that was held some weeks ago. I put it to the Minister in the written question of who from France, the other Channel Islands, *et cetera*, were present to represent those areas within the exercise and the response, apart from Guernsey, is zero. Given that the Channel Isles fall within the French rescue zone, as there is a dividing line down the mid English Channel where France is responsible for emergencies at sea, can the Minister please explain why all the invitees were from the United Kingdom and elsewhere but none whatsoever from the Executive Directors of Channel Islands Air Search, the Lifeboat, I presume St. John Ambulance in Guernsey, and obviously our French cousins who would be working on any major disaster within the sea routes on this side of the Channel? Can you please explain why no one of the executive of any of those safety organisations was part of this particular exercise?

[12:00]

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Yes, because the Deputy has misunderstood the purpose of this particular training exercise which was to be carried out at a strategic level and was not in respect of any particular incidents, either at sea or land, but of a generic nature. A sea disaster was taken as an example because that was something which is very appropriate for a Jersey situation but it was much more a generic, high level managerial exercise, not an operational one. As I said in my answer, any consultation at an operational level would indeed involve people on the ground, people with the hands-on activities, but this was a different nature and the exercise needed to be seen as such.

4.4.1 The Deputy of St. John:

Supplementary, please. Given this was at a strategic level, the officers within, whether it is the R.N.L.I. (Royal National Lifeboat Institution), Air Search and the French rescue services also have officers within the strategic level and they should, in my view, have been part and parcel of this exercise given that the French are responsible for sea rescue on this side of the pond. Will the Minister not agree?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I tried to make it clear to the Deputy that this was more than simply a matter relating to a particular type of disaster at sea. This was a general exercise for any disaster and it may well be that for many of those sorts of situations, skills other than those possessed by R.N.L.I. or the French authorities or anybody else would also be appropriate. The Deputy seems to misunderstand the purpose of this particular training exercise.

The Deputy of St. John:

Supplementary, given we are being misled, Sir.

The Bailiff:

You have had your 2 questions, I am sorry, Deputy.

The Deputy of St. John:

In the statement by the Minister ...

The Bailiff:

Well, Deputy, please. You have had 2 questions and they were quite long ones so we must give other Members a chance. Deputy Southern?

4.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Chief Minister regret not following through on his promise of inclusive government and does he have any advice for his successor on this topic?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

One has to interpret these words in the right way. I hope that this Assembly is and will continue to be inclusive and that we should all work together for the good of the people of the Island. In choosing a Council of Ministers, I point out firstly that this is a decision made by Members as a whole and not just by the Chief Minister but, in any event, because the arrangements of the States of Jersey Law are such that any Minister is a corporation sole and has significant responsibilities of their own, it is important that every Minister is one of the highest particular quality in that regard and I believe that the States Members who appointed the Council of Ministers also believe that the people who were selected were selected with that in mind.

4.5.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Supplementary, if I may. Does the Chief Minister believe that talent should outweigh loyalty in the selection of Ministers?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The selection of Ministers requires people with a variety of expertise, including loyalty and talents and certainly I believe that I have had a Council of Ministers with an assortment of talents brought together to ensure that what is delivered is in the best interests of the Island. I repeat to the Deputy, the choice of Ministers is one made by the States Assembly.

4.6 Connétable D.J. Murphy of Grouville:

Could the Chief Minister please inform the House what has happened to the mallard statue otherwise known as *des collage* and whether it will, in fact, be returned to the airport at some stage?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I am hopeful that as we speak, the mallards are being unwrapped from their place of secure keeping and should be erected in a more prominent position within the next 7 to 10 days.
[Approbation]

4.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I would like to draw the Chief Minister and Members' attention to the written question I addressed to the Minister for Transport and Technical Services on any hospitality given to himself, his Assistant Minister and/or of any of his senior officers by any firm with whom the department has contracted over the last 3 years or expects to contract with over the next 2 years. Now, does the Chief Minister think that the answer is appropriate or adequate considering (a) the question does not refer to excessive hospitality or (b) to a particular value and (c) the Minister telephoned me before answering the question and advised me that he had accepted a day's hospitality on a racing yacht located at Cancale owned by the owners of Connex who, as Members know, are tendering for the new bus contract in 2012. Does he think that answer is appropriate to the States?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I believe that Ministers answer any question put to them in written or oral form to the best of their ability and with the objective of truthfulness in mind. I believe that the Minister for Transport and Technical Services is no different position from anybody else.

4.8 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

A supplementary, please. Does he think it is appropriate that the Minister is to be having hospitality from people who are going to be tendering for contracts within the year of this States Assembly?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

At the moment, I know so few facts about this apart from what the Deputy has suggested in the last 30 seconds that I am in no position to comment.

4.9 The Deputy of St. John:

If I can come back to the training exercise I was referring to earlier. In the Minister's own press release, it says the high level training exercise held in St. Helier yesterday and today - Thursday, 6th October - presented the delegates with a large-scale incident involving a fictional roll-on and roll-off ferry with a large number of casualties.

The Bailiff:

Deputy, I am so sorry to interrupt you again but we have apparently just gone inquorate so could you summon Members back. Very well, I think we are now quorate. Yes, Deputy?

The Deputy of St. John:

Also within that question, I noted that there were 21 local people who stayed the night at Radisson at a total cost of £19,800. Were the whole 21 necessary? I can understand a percentage being necessary, given it was a 20-hour scenario.

The Bailiff:

A concise question if you would, Deputy.

The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, Sir, but firstly has the Minister misled the House in what he has already told us, given his own press release says it was a roll-on roll-off incident?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, I have not. I have said that this was a strategic exercise of which a fictional roll-on roll-off incident was taken as one example in order to give some sort of sense of shape to a strategic discussion. I think it would be more helpful if the Deputy, rather than keep continually carping about the details about emergency planning activities, to applaud, as I do, the tremendous strides that have been made in the last 3 years in a proper emergency planning procedure which we now have in place as opposed to the very much *ad hoc* arrangements which were in place when I first took over. So if there is one activity which I am proud of, it is the development of emergency services over the past 3 years.

4.10 Senator J.L. Perchard:

This is, as Members know, the Chief Minister's very, very last question time. Will he accept my thanks and I am sure many Members' thanks and gratitude for his openness and honesty and decency shown to this House during his term of office when answering questions from Members? [Applaud]

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I am grateful for the question, Senator, if it was a question. **[Laughter]** I will accept it in the modest way I normally do.

The Bailiff:

Are there any other questions of the Chief Minister?

4.11 The Deputy of St. John:

Yes, I can think of one, Sir. **[Laughter]** Given the Minister's most recent reply to my last questions, of the 21 persons who stayed overnight in the hotel, could he please explain was it necessary for all 21 to be there, given the Island is only 9 by 5 and anybody could have got to within the centre at night within 10 minutes?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

One of the important parts of any emergency exercise is to work together as a team and it is important that all members of the team are there throughout the whole exercise activities otherwise you do not get the best benefit out of such proposals. These training exercises take place quite rarely but when they do, it is important that we do have full participation for the whole period of that exercise and I stand by all that those officers did over a very long period of time in order to make sure that if an emergency does occur in the Island, we are better protected than we otherwise might be.

4.11.1 The Deputy of St. John:

A supplementary. Will the Minister make sure before he leaves office in 14 days' time that an exercise is put in place for the rescue services this side of the Channel so it is pan-Channel Islands/French exercise because they are the people that we will be calling on when the time comes if push comes to shove?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I will certainly take that up but I will point out to the Deputy and to Members that there is a full timetable of emergency planning exercises already mapped out for the whole of next year and a variety of activities of which marine incidents are just one of many.

The Bailiff:

Does any other Member wish to ask any questions? Very well. That will bring question time to the Chief Minister to an end. **[Approbation]**