

3.3 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding the negotiations on terms and conditions for States employees.

Will the Chief Minister agree to provide Members with a schedule setting out when his proposals outlined in the management sides position will be produced in order that negotiations on terms and conditions for States employees can be put to staff representatives in a timely manner to co-ordinate with the 2012 Annual Business Plan, the Budget and the 2011 election dates?

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

Yes, this question is very similar to the written question 12 which the Deputy submitted today also. The answer is the same as in the written question in that the employees' position will not be finalised before the Annual Business Plan is debated by the States in the autumn. In addition, the 2012 Pay Terms and Conditions of Service claims from public sector pay groups have yet to be received. It is anticipated that such claims will be forwarded to the employer's side in the autumn of this year.

3.3.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The question is very different. It asks to put a timetable of when things will be scheduled to be decided before Members. Will the Minister agree to put a schedule, a timing, of when things are expected to happen and are tabled to happen so that, for example, will the public know what the position is before they go to the polling booths?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, because the management side's position is one of talking and discussion with the union representatives in trying to find a mutually acceptable solution and so it is not a question of one position being held without the chance of any flexibility whatsoever. That would be detrimental to employment relations.

3.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Chief Minister, I think, is avoiding the question. The question is will the Minister put a schedule of when things will be proceeded with so that we know how you are going to proceed?

The Deputy Bailiff:

He has said not before the elections, which was your question last but is there anything to add to that?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

No, I do not think I can be very much more helpful. Negotiations like this are done by officers acting on the general policy of the States Employment Board and they have the flexibility to negotiate within those parameters without any particular date or time being fixed, and I would not wish to have dates held to either side's head which might restrict the freedom of discussions.

3.3.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier:

Unlike the shambles of the pay freeze negotiations, could the Chief Minister give assurances that any individuals put forward to oversee negotiations will have the stature and the mandate to carry out those negotiations?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I regret the implication that the people negotiating in the previous situation did not have stature or ability; they did, and they have negotiated in accordance with the terms and conditions which States Members have imposed upon them.

3.3.4 Deputy D.J.A. Wimberley of St. Mary:

My understanding is that when we come to allocate on the medium-term financial plan, we will be allocating 3 years ahead and in that regard, I am still puzzled as to how we will not have any information about the likely pay settlements and yet we will be effectively setting envelopes for the overall States expenditure for 3 years. Can the Chief Minister elaborate on that a little bit?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Simply to say that budgets sit, as the Deputy says, in spending envelopes and those spending envelope will be fixed within those 3 years. Within those spending envelopes, there is ample scope for negotiation by all parties on pay and on other matters as well.

3.3.5 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The Fiscal Policy Panel talked about proper strategic planning beyond the 3 to 4 years that is currently done. Does the Chief Minister not think that he should be starting with something like this: the proposals on how to deal with the ever-burgeoning States employment bill over the next 20 years?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

That is some way removed from the original question, I think.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I agree with that. You may answer it if you wish to but I think there is no need to.

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I think it is straying a bit too far from the question.

3.3.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Chief Minister not accept that in voting for an unknown, that there is £7 million in the Annual Business Plan towards pay but there is £7 million to be taken from terms and conditions about which we will know nothing? Does the Minister not accept that that is a poor way to do business when we will be voting on debating an Annual Business Plan not knowing what one of the components actually means?

[15:00]

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

On the contrary, what we will be voting for in the Business Plan is a spending envelope for the coming year. That spending envelope includes a figure put in for pay. What the States Members will do in September when they debate the Business Plan is to decide whether or not they believe that is an appropriate figure.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

I do believe that the Chief Minister is misleading the House here because that is not a spending envelope for 2012. It is the Annual Business Plan for 2012. The spending envelope applies to 2013.

The Deputy Bailiff:

You have had your answer, Deputy, and we now go on to the next question.