

2.10 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the President of the Chairman’s Committee regarding an investigation by Scrutiny into the establishment of a media ombudsman:

Is the Chairman planning to pursue an investigation by Scrutiny into the establishment of an independent media ombudsman?

Deputy T.A. Vallois (President of the Chairman’s Committee):

There is no current plan to pursue an investigation into the establishment of a media ombudsman, as current work programmes are full with regards to reviews with particular panels.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

A supplementary, Sir?

The Bailiff:

Yes.

2.10.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Credit should always be given where it is due, and this was the Chairman/President’s own excellent idea. Given that the Press Complaints Commission in the U.K. was described only last year in the House of Commons as: “Well-meaning but a joke, and about as much use as a chocolate teapot” does she not feel that Jersey could really go with something independent to monitor the standards, basically to ensure that facts are given out rather than what would in the real world be described as lies, I suppose?

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

I never said that we do not need a media ombudsman. All I am stating is that Scrutiny does not currently have area within their work programmes to pursue an investigation. I would also say to the Deputy that there are plenty of officers within the Executive’s department who could carry out this investigation, such as the Chief Minister’s department, to look into whether a media ombudsman would be the appropriate way to go for the Island.

2.10.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I am just trying to read between the lines. The Chairman tends to suggest that she is supportive or is not against the idea of an ombudsman for the media, and I appreciate also that Scrutiny is tight in terms of its manpower. If she were willing to find a Scrutiny Panel who would look into this issue, I am sure there would be States Members that are not currently on Scrutiny that could be co-opted to look into it and I am sure there would be a great take-up from the public, particularly those who live around Grosvenor Terrace area, to join in and make submissions. So will the Chairman consider at the next Chairman’s meeting raising the issue of the media ombudsman, offering a Scrutiny review and offering for co-option to take place?

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

I am happy to place it on the agenda for the next Chairman’s Committee for the Chairman to discuss. As the Deputy will know, there are no powers for me to make a Chairman review anything, but we can certainly discuss it and I can circulate the minutes from that discussion to everyone after, if the Members wish to see that.

The Bailiff:

Senator Ozouf and then a final question, Deputy Pitman.

2.10.3 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Would the President agree that, notwithstanding her remarks, the world of media is changing beyond recognition and governments need to learn, and indeed, the other side of government, Scrutiny also needs to learn how we need to be better communicating with our constituents and

those that we represent? New social media opportunities do give us as parliamentarians the ability to communicate directly with people, not through the filter, sometimes the commercial filter of news organisations, and does she think that perhaps in the light of this changing world that this might be a useful subject of not just simply the issue of an ombudsman, but a Scrutiny review within the not too distant future, there could be some useful research with bringing people in, giving evidence in a public way that perhaps might be able to help with this whole agenda?

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

That may possibly be the case, but as I stated, we are happy to discuss it at the next Chairman's Committee. I will place it on the agenda and I will take into consideration everyone's comments made today in the Assembly and it will be up to the relevant Chairman to decide whether they want to go ahead with reviewing...

Male Speaker:

Who is that?

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Well, that is what we will have to find out. We will have to identify who the relevant Chairman will be first, obviously, and decide whether that would be the appropriate way to go. As I have already stated, our work programme is full with regards to the M.T.F.P. (Medium Term Financial Plan), Health White Paper, housing paper *et cetera*.

The Bailiff:

Yes, Deputy Pitman, do you wish a final question?

2.10.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Absolutely, Sir, and I am happy to volunteer my time, not to chair it obviously. But Deputy Tadier touches on a very important issue, because normally in a larger community, a media organisation that was perhaps somewhere between the *Sunday Sport* and the *Völkischer Beobachter* from the 1930s would probably just fall by the wayside, but in Jersey we have at least one media outlet receiving the best part of £300,000 of the States money. As Deputy Tadier pointed out, that was the latest incident of a completely fictitious letter attacking politicians, a long chain of fictitious letters from people who do not exist. Why, the editor of that paper knocks back letters from real people, in fact, former election candidates. Given that huge amount of money that is given to the *Jersey Evening Post*, would the Chairman not at least consider that when she is having her discussions with her colleagues?

Deputy T.A. Vallois:

Yes.