

2.7 Deputy M. Tadier of the Chief Minister regarding the absence of the Verita recommendations within the proposition entitled ‘Committee of Inquiry – Historical Child Abuse’ P.118/2012:

Will the Chief Minister explain why the Verita recommendation (agreed by the States in 2011) to “review what actions the Government took when concerns came to light in 2008 and what, if any, lessons there are to be learned” has been omitted from the Council of Ministers’ proposition “Committee of Inquiry - Historical Child Abuse” P.118/2012?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

It is considered that the term of reference referred to by the Deputy is covered by the other proposed terms.

2.7.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

And that is one way to use up a question without giving an answer, therefore forcing a supplementary and wasting a supplementary. The Chief Minister will be aware that Verita recommended quite explicitly, and it is on page 29 of his own report and proposition: “To review the actions that Government took when it came to light in 2008 and what lessons there are to be learned.” This, quite singularly, has been missed out even though Verita is being used as a basis for the agreed terms of reference and will the Minister say in which particular term of reference under his on page 8 and 9 this is included?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

It is right through as he can see. Term 3 looks right up to current political oversight and therefore decisions made in that regard right up to the current day. Number 5, number 7... if the Deputy does have a specific concern with regard to the terms of reference, then of course I am prepared to sit down and discuss it with him and if necessary then discuss that with the Council of Ministers.

2.7.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Chief Minister is clearly more ill-prepared than I thought. He is misleading the House, I believe, whether intentionally... I would not have thought so.

The Bailiff:

No, Deputy. You know very well that you cannot allege that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It must be unintentionally, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Yes, well then say that.

Deputy M. Tadier:

But I am nonetheless surprised because he refers first of all to paragraph 3, which looks at political oversight of children’s homes and fostering services by the various Education Committees between 1960 and 1995, which has absolutely nothing to do with what Verita said about what actions the Government took when concerns came to light in 2008. That is completely a different term of reference. The same can be said of points 5 and 7, which he identified and did not even explain how it relates to the Verita terms of reference. The reason I have concerns about this is because Verita have concerns about it and because those asking for a Committee of Inquiry also have concerns about the actions the Government took when these issues came to light in 2008. Will the Chief Minister give a straight answer as to why this has been omitted and what, if anything, he is trying to cover up?

The Bailiff:

Sorry, Deputy, repeat that last bit?

Deputy M. Tadier:

What he is trying to cover up by not having them, Sir? Which may be an entirely valid political valid reason for doing...

The Bailiff:

I do not think you are entitled to infer that the Minister is trying to cover up something. So will you withdraw that?

Deputy M. Tadier:

In that case, I am happy to withdraw that and simply, again, to answer the first question, if he can.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Yes, I have answered the first question and it is not really appropriate. As I tried to say in my opening answer, if the Deputy has concerns, then of course I am more than happy to sit down with him and, in due course, ask the Council of Ministers to consider them. The reason I reiterate that is because while the Deputy has made a number of accusations in his supplementary question there with regard to me, he has simply read the first sentence of the referred term of reference and not followed on because it follows on and says: "... by the various Health and Social Services committees between 1996 and 2005 and by Ministerial Government from 2006 to the current day." So, rather than bandying comments across this Assembly, it might be far better if we were to sit down and he would allow me to have an understanding of where his concerns lie.

2.7.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I have to say; Standing Orders seem to get more confusing every session. I had to sit here 2 sessions ago and 10 minutes of what I would say is personal abuse. Three Members intervened they were so concerned and yet your Deputy just allowed it to happen, Sir.

The Bailiff:

Can you confine yourself to the question...

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Absolutely, Sir. Of course I will. It is just frustrating. Could I just ask then that the Chief Minister - perhaps in good will and wanting to move forward - sits down with all of us who have concerns? Because I share exactly the same concern as Deputy Tadier; the 2 are completely different. Would he not agree to sit down with all of those of us who are concerned and perhaps agree that this could go in, because clearly from what you are saying, it does not do any harm, does it?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Of course I am more than happy to sit down with Members. Perhaps it comes around to the understanding of what political oversight means. Political oversight is regard to setting policy, it is with regards to the decisions that were made. I do not see a problem with that but obviously some Members do not quite interpret it in the same way that I do. Inevitably there might be concerns about different interpretations of terms of reference but I am more than happy to sit down with the 2 Members.

2.7.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Chief Minister shows a complete disregard for giving an answer in oral questions. There is a purpose to questions with notice. There is a time when I might want to sit down and no doubt will sit down with the Chief Minister and there is a time when I, and the public, expect a straight

answer to a very straight question. Yet again the Chief Minister evades answering the question. He refers to terms of reference 3, terms of reference 3 only recites to the political oversight of children's homes and fostering services. It has nothing to do with the actions that the Government took in response to Operation Rectangle in 2008. Why does the Chief Minister insist on continuing this political circus and not give a straight answer during question times and invitations to covert meetings for backbenchers to come and see him. Is that how far he has stooped?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Perhaps I need to apologise. It was never my intention to issue an invitation for a covert meeting. I do not for a minute believe that the Deputy would respond to such an invitation. I would expect as from experience that when I have a meeting with the Deputy, the contents of that meeting are made public in due course by the Deputy. So I do not believe that that is a fair accusation. I can do no better than to try and invite the Member to understand what his concerns are. Perhaps we did finally hit on what his concerns were in his final supplementary there with regard to Operation Rectangle.

[10:15]

Much has been said about that, many reviews have been undertaken and perhaps that is the area that the Deputy wishes to discuss.

Deputy M. Tadier:

It is a point of order, Sir. If the Minister really does not understand what I am asking and the question, he receives these, I believe, on Thursday or Friday, he can contact me and in fact, this is completely disingenuous, the question is very clear. The Minister has just given us a great example of evasion of a question and wasted everybody's time and money. I think that is all I have to say. A good reason, perhaps, for answers to be required of Ministers that at least try to address the question.