

3.4 Deputy S. Pitman of St. Helier of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding CTPlus' official recognition of the union:

I would firstly like to thank the Minister for attending a long meeting last night with some bus drivers, and so I do know the answer to this question but for the benefit of colleagues and members of the public, I would still like to ask it. Will the Minister confirm whether CT Plus has fulfilled its obligation to officially recognise the union and if so, does he consider that this will represent a step towards resolving some of the service problems being experienced by both staff and customers since the company took over the contract?

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

I would refer Members to Code 1 of the Employment Relations (Jersey) Law 2007 which includes the following: "A trade union is recognised by an employer where it is agreed that the employer and union will engage in collective bargaining for any purposes." Collective bargaining is a process of conducting negotiations in relation to matters relating to the workplace. I hope that negotiations are speedily concluded. Several meetings have taken place and discussions are ongoing.

3.4.1 Deputy S. Pitman:

Will the Minister clarify precisely how long the process of concluding union recognition in his opinion should last?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes. There is, I believe, a series of meetings planned between the company and any union that wishes to represent the workforce. If negotiations break down after a series of meetings, then I believe J.A.C.S. (Jersey Advisory and Conciliatory Service) will be brought in to mediate.

3.4.2 Deputy S. Pitman:

How long does the Minister think the process should go on for?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Hopefully within weeks.

3.4.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Is the Minister aware that in the normal course of issues where there is a recognition dispute, the parties have 10 working days to agree a new bargaining unit, or else J.A.C.S. will be called in?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I believe J.A.C.S. have been notified of the situation. As I say, negotiations are ongoing.

3.4.4 Deputy T. Pitman:

I attended the meeting as well and it was very long, but hopefully helpful. Could the Minister advise whether he is aware of the fact that the company is attempting to break down the staff in a sort of divide and conquer process, where the drivers are trying to be isolated from other colleagues in an attempt to sort of break down collective bargaining and is he happy with that approach?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am not aware of that approach but, as I say, as Minister for Transport and Technical Services, I think most of my workforce are members of a union. I do not have a problem with it.

3.4.5 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

I wonder if the Minister could tell us: what are the key factors that determine whether or not a certain union is recognised?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

This is down to negotiation between any proposed union and the company involved. This is not a company being taken over by another company. This is a completely new company, so the bargaining starts from scratch.

3.4.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

The Minister knows there is a comparison in Guernsey. There was a bit of a long and arduous road to recognition. Could he tell us what lessons were learned from that situation?

The Bailiff:

I am not sure that the Minister is responsible for the Guernsey ...

Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Same operator.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

You took the words out of my mouth, Sir. I will be blamed for lots of things but not for Guernsey. [Laughter]

3.4.7 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Is the Minister aware of the fact that the main players with CT Plus are devoutly anti-union, and have taken the view that they do not want to recognise the union under any circumstances?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I am not aware of that. I believe the parent company involved has, I think, about 19 companies in franchises throughout the United Kingdom, and I believe there is recognition there.

3.4.8 Deputy S. Pitman:

Is the Minister aware of the need for the urgency of these negotiations and recognition of the union, given the health and safety issues regarding the long hours worked and the split shifts?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, I am aware that there are some drivers who are unhappy with split shifts and that is going to be looked into. As I said previously, I hope there is a speedy conclusion.