

3.5 Deputy T. Pitman of the Chief Minister regarding the Assistant Chief Minister (with responsibility for External Relations) and his access to confidential documents central to the suspension of the Dean's Commission:

Further to concerns raised by a member of the public travelling on the same flight as the Assistant Chief Minister with responsibility for external relations, that he was able to identify details of both the victim and alleged abuser central to the suspension of the Dean's Commission case, did he receive these confidential documents in his official capacity as Assistant Chief Minister?

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

I have liaised with Senator Bailhache regarding this question, and he has confirmed to me that he has read no such document on a flight. The only document he has read on a flight is the independent review of a safeguarding complaint for the Diocese of Winchester published in March, which is available to all on the internet.

3.5.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

Given that the document that I was contacted about by a member of the public identified both the victim and the alleged abuser, can this be the same document, I would ask the Chief Minister, and has he bothered to check to find out if that answer is true?

[10:15]

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Hence my request earlier, as a matter of common courtesy. If the Deputy had follow-on questions which were outside the scope of this particular question, it might have been far better for him to address it to the person who is a Member of the States and can answer more fully than I can. As I have just said, the document that the Assistant Chief Minister read on the flight was the review which is in the public domain and all members of the public could read.

3.5.2 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Will the Chief Minister tell us whether he received a copy of that report, that was different to anybody else, because certainly the document that I saw, the document that has been on the web, put it that way, did not state the name of the victim or the name of the perpetrator but members of the public did find out that information from that flight. How could that be if it was only that same document?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I was not on the flight in question. I do not believe that the questioners were on the flight in question. I have, of course, read the public document and, if I recall correctly, it is a number of weeks since I read it, the individuals concerned were referred to by initials but I can only assume that those initials did not correspond to their actual initials, and therefore I do not quite understand how we have arrived at the question before us today.

3.5.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I just wanted the Chief Minister to confirm that he is responsible ultimately for the political conduct of his Assistant Ministers when it comes to the remit of his own department, and the fact that the Assistant Chief Minister is not here today to answer those questions is immaterial, because it is ultimately the Chief Minister with whom the buck stops?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

It is and I have no problem with that. If the Deputy can provide me with evidence which is contrary to the answer I have given, then I will of course investigate that but I have no evidence or grounds to suggest that the answer I have given is incorrect in any way.

3.5.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I have to say these glib answers do not do the Chief Minister any favours at all. In asking this final question, I would just like to apologise on behalf of the States to H.G. for totally inappropriate footstamping earlier, very very disappointing and disrespectful to the victim, but what I would like to say to the Chief Minister is, it seems to many that this is a clear breach of code of conduct and data protection and I would suggest to him that if you changed the name from Senator Bailhache to a Syvret, a Pitman, perhaps a Tadier, then there would certainly be some action on the Chief Minister's part. Perhaps he would be putting out a press release to criticise the action ...

The Bailiff:

Are you going to ask a question?

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

What will he be doing as Chief Minister? What action will he be taking to ascertain the true facts?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As I have just said, if the Deputy has evidence which is contrary to the answer that I have given, then of course I would be delighted to receive it, but the report that all Members of this Assembly could have seen is in the public domain and the confirmation that I have from my Assistant Minister is that that is the document that he was reading on the flight. Therefore I do not, without evidence to the contrary of that, believe that there is any other action which needs to be taken.

Connétable J. Gallichan of St. Mary:

I am sorry to interrupt, Sir, but during that last "question", Deputy Pitman said he wanted to speak on behalf of the States of Jersey. I would like to say that Deputy Pitman does not speak on behalf of me.

Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I was saying the footstamping was not on behalf of me.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Yes, I would like to add the same. The footstamping earlier for the return of the Dean was not on my behalf.

The Bailiff:

We are in question time, please. We are not discussing that.