

## **4. Oral Questions**

### **4.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman of St. Helier of the Chief Minister regarding the impact on the so called 'Troy' rule of the creation of a post of Minister for External Relations:**

Does the Chief Minister plan to propose the creation of a Minister for External Relations and if so, has he considered how this would impact on the so-called Troy Rule in the eventuality of the number of States Members being reduced, as proposed by the Electoral Commission?

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

The Council of Ministers decided in December that a proposal to create a new Minister for External Relations should be brought forward for the States to consider. The next step will be for the necessary Draft Regulations to be scrutinised by the Corporate Services Panel. The final report of the Electoral Commission notes that the so-called Troy Rule will need to be considered by the States if the Commission's recommendations were to be accepted. The report also notes that this rule evolved from the assumption that Ministers and Assistant Ministers would act as a Government bound by some form of collective responsibility but that in practice, experience has shown that Assistant Ministers do not always vote with the government. My own view is that that is illogical. I hope the States will therefore consider this matter as the Electoral Commission's recommendations are taken forward.

#### **4.1.2 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

I thank the Chief Minister for his answer. However, even allowing for the fact that the Electoral Commission does not seem to fully acknowledge the importance of the Troy Rule, in order to prevent us slipping into what some would probably call a Chinese type of democracy, does the Chief Minister not concede that really any decision on the increase of Ministers and the inevitable increase in Assistant Ministers must wait until that issue has been decided, i.e., are we going to have a 42-Member Assembly?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I can see the Deputy's argument and I certainly think or I hope that the decision-making process will be aligned with P.P.C.'s (Privileges and Procedures Committee) Sub-Committee and the work that they are doing but I think at this point, it is important that they work in parallel. I hope that during the course of the year, they will come together and inevitably the States will be required to make decisions, certainly about a referendum question, with regard to the Electoral Commission's work, but it is important that Scrutiny do their work so that the States can be in a position to make a decision.

#### **4.1.3 Deputy J.H. Young of St. Brelade:**

Does the Chief Minister anticipate giving any guidance to the P.P.C. Sub-Committee currently looking at the machinery of government on whether the Council of Ministers would wish to see an increase in the size of the Executive as implied by this proposal or a reduction as implied by the Electoral Commission's proposals?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I think we have to be clear that should the Electoral Commission's recommendations, whichever option A or B, be approved, then we will need to consider the Troy Rule and the number of Ministers and Assistant Ministers so I am absolutely supportive of that. The Privileges and Procedures Committee have invited me to attend the problem to discuss this issue. I have not yet been able to find an appropriate date but I hope that I might be able to attend upon them in February.

#### **4.1.4 Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier:**

Since one of the functions of the Electoral Commission was to put a hold on piecemeal changes, does the Chief Minister not think that he has come in with his own piecemeal change in the wrong timescale?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

Absolutely not. I have been supportive of this particular work, that is the work of a person responsible for helping the Chief Minister acting concurrently in relation to external relations. I have been supportive of this post being a Ministerial post right from the start when it was initially decided to create it as an Assistant Minister post. It is incredibly important. The challenges that we face we need to be out engaging and addressing them and liaising with our political partners around the world and that is why this post is so important and it needs to be given the appropriate value and one that is internationally recognised.

#### **4.1.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Notwithstanding the Chief Minister's answer, does he not accept that it was part of the reason for setting up the Electoral Commission that we should suspend piecemeal changes to the structure of the States in the meantime? Does he not accept that that was the wish of the House and of P.P.C. at the time?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

This is not a piecemeal approach to changes to the structure of the Assembly. It is quite simply we do already have a department with an accounting officer that is dealing with external relations. This, on one level, is quite simply ensuring that the individual fulfilling this function is appropriately named a Minister rather than an Assistant Chief Minister because that is how that office is understood around the world.

#### **4.1.6 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:**

The Chief Minister will be aware that there have been calls for the creation of other ministries and Ministers, notably the Minister for Children which I believe at least one report a few years ago, the Williamson Report, suggested that it should be taken ahead. Will the Chief Minister be giving priority to this ministry to be created? If not, why not, and which of the 2, the creation of a Foreign Minister or the creation of a Children's Minister, is his priority?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

Both are important but as I think I just said in answer to the last question, this department already exists so it is relatively straightforward to create a Minister to head up the department to carry out the functions concurrently with the Chief Minister, which is exactly what happens in virtually every other jurisdiction around the world and we would be coming into line with that international standard which is understood, accepted and functions well around the world. The Deputy is right and I know that he was one who supported the creation of a Ministerial post for external relations rather than an Assistant Minister when it was first created and therefore I hope that he does support this particular element, but he is also right that when we reform government as a whole, and there are lots of issues that need to be considered and I know that P.P.C. are considering them in their various subgroups or the Electoral Commission, we should be considering how we deal with children's issues, how we deal with housing issues. There are lots of functions that I am supportive of individuals being given responsibility for.

#### **4.1.7 Deputy M. Tadier:**

May I have a supplementary? It is quite a simple question. Does the Chief Minister think that the good safeguarding of care for our children is more important than the perception of our image internationally?

**Senator I.J. Gorst:**

As I have said before, it is not that straightforward. They are both important.

#### **4.1.8 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

I would just like to put it to the Chief Minister that far from getting to a position of honing down and making government more lean and effective, given as Deputy Tadier said the need for a long overdue Children's Minister, there has been talk of a Disability Minister and a Justice Minister, which Senator Farnham is bringing, is there not a danger that we end up with a situation with lots of chiefs and hardly any Indians? Does he not agree that that could not lead to very effective government at all?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

I do not think we can say that approach would not be an effective government. It is an approach that the Isle of Man has where they try to ensure that Members across the Assembly have specific responsibility for specific portfolios. I am in a position where I cannot even juggle individual Ministers' portfolios even though I might think it is in the best interests of Jersey to move responsibilities across portfolios. I cannot do that without the approval of the individual Minister, without the approval of the Council of Ministers and without the approval of this Assembly. There are some things which I believe have to change in the way that we carry out and function as a government currently.

#### **4.1.9 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

From what the Chief Minister has just said, is he not making a case that we need more Members so he can juggle to his heart's content?

#### **Senator I.J. Gorst:**

No, simply that I can try and get the best person to do the best job in any particular portfolio requirement for the best interests of Jersey.