

3.4 Deputy T.M. Pitman of the Chief Minister regarding the total cost of the dinner at the Atlantic Hotel on Sunday 23rd June 2013 with representatives of the U.K. Justice Select Committee:

No, Sir, I suggest my colleague find something better to do with his time. What was the total cost of the dinner at the Atlantic Hotel on Sunday 23rd June 2013 when the Chief Minister and selected members of the Council of Ministers met the representatives of the U.K. Justice Select Committee; and why was this venue used?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (Deputy Chief Minister - rapporteur)

As answer 7 indicates, the cost was £1,084.75. This venue was used because the U.K. Justice Select Committee M.P.s (Members of Parliament) were staying overnight at that hotel. I would point out that the Select Committee covered the costs of their flights and accommodation in the Island.

3.4.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

That is quite interesting because during the meeting with the Select Committee they said the entire cost of everything was down to Jersey, so there are obviously some crossed wires there. But my question is: did all 12 members eat and drink and does the Minister see any conflict of attitude here with the absolute feral and media frenzy when Mr. Harper spent far less money on a meal to do with the police investigation?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I was not there, presumably because I was not considered to be sufficiently select, nor I hasten to add was my friend, the Minister for Economic Development; clearly there is a very high test being applied in this. I think that it is not unusual when there are visiting people, particularly ambassadors, people of that nature, for a dinner to be put on for them. That normally involves a larger number of people and is normally held in the old library. I certainly have attended a number of those. It seems to me that probably what happened here was what was decided that something on a lesser scale, which would also have a working element to it, should take place. I do not see anything unreasonable in that at all.

3.4.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

The first comment: I do not think it is quite as bad as the notorious lobster dinner which the more senior of us may remember of the Tourism Department, but I was going to ask why the Deputy Chief Minister was not at the dinner.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I think I have already confessed the fact that I clearly was not sufficiently select. I think that if one looks at the Ministers who were there, they were those who were particularly involved, the Chief Minister, the Minister for Treasury and Resources, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs matters, plus other officers in those sorts of areas. I was of course at a meeting which happened on the Monday morning at Cyril Le Marquand House when myself and others had the opportunity to meet with these officers. I am not sore.

[10:15]

3.4.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I am resisting the thought of asking what was on the menu, but I was aware that meetings were taking place the following day. For example, we know that the Select Committee met with the Chief Minister, we know that they met with His Excellency, The Lieutenant Governor, we know that they met with the Law Officers, and while I am not against the idea of a social thing and everything else, but the point is, there were meetings scheduled and States Members got an hour as well at the end. I am not convinced that it was such - I may be wrong, I was not present -

whether it was such a working lunch or whether it added anything extra to what would have been received in the individual briefings by the officers. Does the Deputy Chief Minister agree?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

No, I do think it is perfectly reasonable that such a dinner take place, as it were. There would be 2 functions to it, as I would understand it. One would be a working aspect, hence why you had officers there in the relevant areas as well as Ministers, but also it is perfectly normal for visiting dignitaries that such a dinner take place.

3.4.4 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:

Would the Deputy Chief Minister not acknowledge it was impossible under rules to offer a sandwich lunch within this building to those dignitaries and, second, and possibly more seriously, would he not support the view that when a committee comes to deal with sensitive issues it is probably better, quite frankly, that they remain separate from all vested interests while they are carrying out their investigations?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I think that is essentially a matter for them, if they had thought there was any conflict in any way. This is a Select Committee. It is equivalent, I think, of a Scrutiny Committee although there are subtle differences in the U.K. Their primary interest, if I may say from the meeting that I attended with them, was to see how arrangements, which had been put in place as a result of their previous work, improved arrangements in relation to the working of the Ministry for Justice in terms of the things it does for Jersey was working. That was their primary interest. There were other matters they discussed as well, but they wanted to know how it was going, as it were. They have, I have to say, been extremely supportive and helpful in improving the level of service which we have received from the Justice Ministry.

3.4.5 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade:

Does the Deputy Chief Minister think that given the remit of the committee, which is in the domain of justice, that the Minister for Home Affairs may have ordinarily been invited to such a dinner?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I think there is a misunderstanding here, because I think that it just so happens that the Justice Ministry is our co-ordinating ministry into the U.K. and that was their primary interest. I believe that U.K. authorities have made it perfectly clear in the past that this is a mature democracy with very strong and resilient institutions and that they are simply not going to intervene in that unless there was some horrendous breakdown of the system. That is not their primary purpose at all. Their primary purpose was to look at the functioning of the Justice Ministry in terms of its relation as a conduit, as a point of contact, *et cetera*, into the U.K.

3.4.6 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

One of the members did say that these types of justice abuses which are going on in Jersey left, right and centre are part of the mandate of the Select Committee. However my question is to the Minister, being as Deputy Higgins and I just shared a couple of coffees, had a couple of drinks and almost had to wash the dishes it is so expensive, could that taxpayers' money not have been better used with a more constructive working environment, rather than sitting around talking over with the wine flowing? Could it not have been a meeting perhaps in the States Building with all those hours concentrated on work rather than socialising?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I am sure that that could have been considered but this was the decision that was made. I of course was not a party to that decision.