

#### **4.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier of the Minister for Housing regarding the provision of flooring in States properties:**

Will the Minister confirm that it is his department's policy not to provide carpets or flooring for its properties and, if so, will he advise whether he thinks that it is reasonable and appropriate to expect tenants to provide their own flooring before moving into a property?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier (The Minister for Housing):**

I can confirm that it is not the Housing Department's policy to provide carpets or floor coverings for its properties. As I have stated on many occasions, I believe it is the responsibility of the Housing Department to provide homes. It is for the Social Security Department to provide financial assistance to support those with limited financial means who might need help with this.

#### **4.8.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

I wonder if the Minister would be prepared to change tack. What I would like to ask is, does he not believe there are some circumstances in which, in order that a house can appear to be totally habitable, it is essential that flooring be seen as an integral part of that house or apartment?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

Clearly every house and flat that we have has a floor, but whether it has covering or not is entirely a matter for the tenant moving in. If the tenant needs help with that, then Social Security will provide it. One policy that has slightly changed - and I am pleased to say that - over the years is, when serviceable carpets were left by previous tenants before, they used to be removed. They are now left if they are serviceable and cleaned if they require cleaning, again with the support of Social Security.

#### **4.8.2 Deputy C.F. Labey of Grouville:**

I do not think the Minister is current with all his practices in the department because I happen to know a tenant that was made to rip up wooden flooring in his apartment before the new tenants were able to move in or even see the flat. Could he go back to his department and make sure this practice stops?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I have to check that in relation to wooden flooring. I was initially talking about carpeting.

#### **4.8.3 Deputy T.A. Vallois:**

Albeit that the Minister stated that they do not provide the carpets or flooring for moving into a property, does the Minister not agree that the change in policy for rents in advance rather than rents in arrears will cause more of a problem for tenants and more of a problem for Social Security in them being able to furnish their property once they have moved into it?

#### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

We have a clear choice here at Housing. We provide more homes and maintain those homes properly or we provide fewer homes and we carpet them. People that need help with carpeting get help from Social Security. There are a few exceptions that I did not mention before because I had one of my senior moments. If we make people move, if we insist that people move to downsize, then we will assist them in the Housing Department.

#### **4.8.4 Deputy M. Tadier:**

First of all, would the Minister explain that there is also a policy which says that if you live on a first, second or third floor, *et cetera*, you should not have wooden floors; you should have carpets? Would he explain how that fits in? If somebody does not have any carpets when they move in and may even have a wooden-type floor or concrete floor, are they obliged to put carpets in or are they allowed to have concrete floors which are bare but not have wooden laminated floors because that will make noise?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

The Deputy raises an interesting point. When you are living in flats you have to take account of your neighbours and behave in a sociable way. These laminate wooden floors do make a lot of noise and that is why, not just in social housing but in lots of blocks of flats, it is not unusual for that sort of flooring not to be allowed. With regard to the question about waiting until you can afford carpets, I had concrete floors for 5 years in my house before I could afford my carpet.

**4.8.5 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Although we are not here to talk about the Deputy's house, presumably he owned his own house. Is the underlying point again here - not the under-laying point, but the underlying point [**Laughter**] if you will excuse the Mexican carpet joke slipping into question time - not that the person who owns the house is not the tenant? It is the landlord and by adding a carpet you are increasing the asset which belongs to the landlord. Therefore, if you are in a home for a year before moving to the private sector, to a trust or to another social house, why, as a tenant and as one of the most vulnerable, probably in the Island, in one of the poorest sections of the Island, should you be expected to pay for an asset which ultimately goes to the landlord because over decades the States has not been investing in housing and it has been ...

**The Bailiff:**

Concise question, please. I think you have asked that.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I think the Minister knows the gist.

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

It is quite simple. Whenever I have moved house I have taken my carpets with me.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

That is not an answer. We are talking about the rental sector. Is it reasonable to expect tenants for a short period of time to carpet a property which does not belong to them?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

Our tenants are not normally in place for a short period of time. Our job is to provide homes and then the tenants go in and make that structure their home. Some people will need help with that. That is what Social Security is there for. They will provide that help.

**4.8.6 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Is the Minister currently working to establish some sort of uniformity on transfer of homes in the States sector, in the trust sector and indeed in the private sector so that there is some uniformity about the terms on which people transfer and move from one property to another?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I can confirm that I am working on uniformity between the trust and the Housing Department.

**4.8.7 Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

It does occur to me, is it not time to improve the building procedures so that people can have the floor they wish?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

Certainly, and we are always looking at ways of improving the standard of our social housing.

**Senator S.C. Ferguson:**

No, I said the standard of buildings. The Minister has not answered the question.

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

No, because the by-laws that relate to buildings in that respect would be one for Planning. However, as the Minister for Housing, yes, we are looking all the time at how we can improve our quality of social housing.

**4.8.8 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

Would the Minister not concede that he should have a more fitting policy in terms of people for whom good flooring does indeed help, for example, with noise mitigation? He seems to be obsessed with the idea that people who have carpets are somehow exceptionally rich.

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

That is not what I have said at all. What I have said is that those that can afford to put their carpets in do so and those that need assistance from Social Security would get it. That is as I see it. It is very simple. My job is to provide homes.