

5.11 Deputy M. Tadier of the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding proposals to adopt Jèrriais as one of the official languages of the States Assembly, alongside English and French: [1(523)]

Will the Privileges and Procedures Committee give consideration to bringing forward proposals to adopt Jèrriais as one of the official languages of the States Assembly alongside English and French?

Connétable L. Norman of St. Clement (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

I am content to add this matter to our agenda for consideration.

The Deputy Bailiff:

A supplementary, Deputy?

5.11.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Oui, Monsieur, je suis très content si on me permettrait de poser la prochaine question supplémentaire en français; une autre langue officielle de notre assemblée dont on doit être fier, aussi, également. Et ce serait bizarre si, par exemple, on pourrait poser des questions en anglais, en français, mais - et on est des gens de Jersey - pas dans la langue qui nous appartient aussi: le jèrriais. I will just translate that for those who are listening. I am sure the Chairman obviously does not need to ...

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think you are probably only allowed to ask the question once.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Okay. [Approbation] I am happy in whichever language the Chairman wishes to reply, so long as it is one of the official languages.

The Connétable of St. Clement:

It is nearly 11.10 a.m., Sir. [Laughter]

The Deputy Bailiff:

The Deputy obviously was posing the question where he viewed it as strange that he could speak in English and in French but could not speak in the third language of the Island.

The Connétable of St. Clement:

I think that is an example, Sir. I tried to be amusing and clearly I was to one or 2 Members. That does give an example of the difficulties of having 2 or maybe 3 official languages. The important thing about language in this Assembly is communication and we are communicating not simply or not only with our public and our electorate but also among each other. If we start using French or Jersey French, very few of us are going to be able to understand what is being said, so there will then be resource implications of having simultaneous translations, interpretations, having all our written documents in 2 or 3 different languages. So there is a real issue here and really I think one of the things we also need to understand, and I do not understand it at the moment, is what is meant by an official language. I think this is in the depths of history and some research will need to be done to understand that. I have a lot of sympathy for the work that Deputy Tadier is doing to support Jèrriais and I hope that he recognises the bit I did all those years ago when I was president of the Education Committee and I persuaded the States to introduce and to fund the extracurricular activity of teaching

Jérriais in schools. But as I said in my answer, which I think was quite clear, yes, we are prepared to put this on our agenda for consideration.

5.11.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

When the committee considers it as part of their agenda, would they be willing to look at the example that the Isle of Man has where their indigenous language does feature in some parliamentary documentation and does not do so in an overbearing way where people who do not understand the language would not be able to understand the proceedings but has small contributions every now and then as a symbolic celebration of their heritage and culture? That is something potentially that Jersey could also emulate.

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Yes, I think that is a wise contribution, but when I say the committee would be prepared to consider it, I think we are not going to put limits on what we are prepared to consider in the round.

5.11.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

I do thank the Chairman for his answer. I appreciate this is not just a simple, straightforward matter about adopting something and that consideration needs to be given to how we deal with our pre-existing non-English other official language because there are potential resource implications. But I think ultimately it does come between a choice of either having only one language which is what the majority speaks but if we do want to recognise the history then making some kind of accommodation for that. I thank the Chairman for his positive response.

The Deputy Bailiff:

Very well, we come now to question 12 that Deputy Southern will ask of the Minister for Social Security. Do you have the text of your question, Deputy?