

2018.07.10

3.10 Senator S.Y. Mézec of the Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding implementation of the recommendations of the C.P.A. Election Observer Mission: (OQ. 97/2018]

Will the Privileges and Procedures Committee commit to implementing all of the recommendations made in the report from the C.P.A. (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association) Election Observer Mission and, if not, why not?

Deputy R. Labey (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

The P.P.C. has not met since the publication of the C.P.A. E.O.M. (Election Observer Mission) report, but it is due to do so next week. What I can commit to, for the Senator, is that the committee will look at every single one of the recommendations and give them proper consideration and report back to the Assembly with recommendations accordingly.

3.10.1 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Does the Chairman agree with me that while the recommendations made in the report are sound, in many ways they do not go far enough and there were aspects that do not appear to have been reported on, that could well have been reported on, such as the convenience of the process of voting for the actual voter? Would he agree that when the committee looks at implementing these recommendations that it should, in fact, look further at some of the issues that do not appear to have been considered in the report?

Deputy R Labey:

The committee is very much in listening mode with regards to this report. We would welcome representations from Members, either written, or to come and see us in person, with opinions such as that which we have just heard from the Senator. I do not want to offer opinions on the report just yet.

3.10.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not want to solicit an opinion, but I would like to talk about matters of facts. The good thing about mathematics is that you have hard answers sometimes, so we know that 2 and 2 equals 4 and we know that the square root of 4 - in fact there are 2 square roots of 4 - which are minus 2 and 2. But I am not sure if electoral reform falls into that category. But, does the Chairman of P.P.C. agree with the underlying findings of the election observers, which we already knew, which said that you cannot have fair elections if the Constables remain in the States Assembly by right?

Deputy R. Labey:

I am not sure that the report says it in exactly those terms, does it? But I have been on record as saying - I think twice now in this Assembly before the report - would it really tell us anything we did not already know? We have to get to grips with those things that we already know are difficult and not right and need reform.

3.10.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

How many times do we need to be told in this Assembly and with various reports that we have a completely, if you like, unintentionally but, nonetheless, gerrymandered electoral system, which is unfair and unrepresentative, that it needs to change, that we do not need 3 types of States members? How do we get to grips with that and what proposals will the Chairman bring to implement them?

Deputy R. Labey:

But, yes, it is absolutely up to the Assembly how many times it wants to receive reports that say exactly the same thing and something that they may know already. I think we both have made that point before. I have committed to bringing back to the Assembly, on behalf of P.P.C., a recommendation for electoral reform in the first year of this parliamentary session, so that we have got a chance to reform internally. If we do not manage to reach a consensus on that - because the *status quo* is not, in my opinion, an option - we will once again, perhaps, have to invite an outside body to recommend reform. But I am hopeful that we can bring something to the Assembly that the Assembly will be able to reach a consensus on and we can move forward.

3.10.4 The Connétable of St. John:

Could I ask the Deputy which is more important: the will of the people, who, in a referendum, asked to keep the Constables, or these numerous reports we have saying that perhaps they should leave?

Deputy R. Labey:

It is interesting, is it not? I wonder if ever it is stated how long a referendum result is active for. Is it in perpetuity, so that the Constables cannot be amended, or that that position cannot be looked at, at all? But it is an interesting question, is it not? It is one that we are going to be talking about later on in this sitting.

The Deputy Bailiff:

But it is not a question that you are inclined to answer, Chairman?

Deputy R. Labey:

I have just given my answer and I do not know if the Constable of St. John is unhappy with it, or happy with it.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think it is perhaps impossible.

3.10.5 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

The report made recommendations on voter registration and how to improve that system. In an answer to a written question I posed to the Comité des Connétables about incidences where people were permitted to vote, despite having not been put on the electoral roll, at the recent election, which shows that there has been a massive spike in the numbers who are able to do that, does the Chairman agree that it would be sensible to not hold any public votes in Jersey, referendums I am thinking here, until the issues with our voter registration system have been fixed, in accordance with the recommendations made in this report?

Deputy R. Labey:

That is a point of view. This train was set in motion and we should see it through if we are going to stay on schedule with this particular issue with regards to the dual role. It will mean that we go to, effectively, another public election, which will be a public referendum, without many of the changes that we might want to bring in, with regards to the C.P.A. E.O. Mission, but that is an impending matter for the Assembly to determine.