

5.2 Deputy G.P. Southern (Chairman of Economic Affairs Panel) regarding the relocation of Jersey Dairy to Howard Davis Farm:

I make no apologies to the Assembly that this statement contains no entertainment and no jokes. Nonetheless, do bear with me. The Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel has studied the preliminary conclusions of the P.A.C. report into the relocation of Jersey Dairy to Howard Davis Farm and considered the concerns that have been raised. As a result, it has decided to form a multidisciplinary sub-panel involving members of the Economic Affairs Panel, the P.A.C. and other Scrutiny Panels to investigate the requirements for and structure of support for the dairy industry. This will involve examination of the progress that has been towards the financial viability of the dairy industry since the publication of the McQueen Report in 2003. Further, examination of the terms of and background to the sale of land at Howard Davis Farm, consideration of the provision of subsidy for welfare and school milk, and review the composition and levels of support provided for the dairy industry in the Rural Economy Strategy. The sub-panel will be chaired by Deputy Alan Breckon, the Vice-Chairman of Economic Affairs Scrutiny Panel, and its membership has yet to be decided. The panel intends to report back to the States by 24th of October 2006 in order that undue delay is not caused to the debate of P.56 of 2006, Draft Howard Davis Farm Removal of Covenant (Jersey) Law 200- and P.68 of 2006, Howard Davis Farm Trinity, Part of Fields 562, 827 and 828, Sale of Land. Thank you.

5.2.1 Senator F.H. Walker:

First of all, just to establish the reason I am asking the question is that, for a variety of reasons, the Ministerial responsibility for the future of the dairy industry, currently, has passed to my hands. I have become very aware in discussions recently with producers and others - I always was but it has enhanced my view - just how vitally important the dairy industry is to the Island both in environmental and economic terms [**Interruption**] and not least to the consumers. I will get to the question, Sir. There is a complex situation also relating to imports and exports. As a result of that, a further review has been agreed to be held, further to the McQueen Report in 2003. That has been agreed with the board of the Milk Marketing Board and, through them, the producers. My question, therefore, Sir, to the Deputy is; will Scrutiny and the Public Accounts Committee work together with me and with producers and all other interested parties to develop over the next few months the best way forward for the dairy industry? Because there is some real urgency here?

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Absolutely, Sir. It is my firm intention, and I am sure it will be shared by Deputy Breckon, that we will attempt to co-operate as fully as possible in the best interest of the dairy industry on the Island because that is our concern as well.

Deputy J.A. Martin:

Just a point of clarification for the Chief Minister. When he says this has been passed to him, does he mean his department? Why has it gone from the Economic Minister?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Two reasons, Sir. First, the Economic Development Minister is conflicted because of family involvement in the dairy industry. Secondly, it is appropriate that it should come to me because

there are some very significant and very complex international issues affecting the future of the dairy herd.

Deputy J.B. Fox:

Can I just ask a point of clarification please, Sir?

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

You can ask a question to the Chairman of the Scrutiny Panel. We cannot have a further debate or questions.

Deputy J.B. Fox:

I do not want a debate, Sir. I just want a point of clarification, if I may, just on will this review look at the alternatives that have been suggested, i.e. that there are multiple farm use of producing products directly to the public etc., that sort of thing? That is what I am looking for.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Our terms of reference will be published later in the week and I ask the Member to attend on those.

5.2.2 Senator F.H. Walker:

Will he ensure that the terms of reference are discussed with me before they are finalised because, clearly, the last thing we want here is to have 2 different inquiries or 2 different reviews going on at the same time, possibly at a cost to the tax payer? What we need to ensure is that we have a co-ordinated approach to this whole topic.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

May I answer please? I thought you might answer for me. In answer to the Chief Minister's question, absolutely we will co-operate fully. However, I must reserve the position that it is for the Scrutiny Panel, and the Scrutiny Panel alone, to set up its terms of references. Certainly, we are perfectly willing to talk so that we do not end up 2 groups of people doing the same thing. We will carefully delineate where we are going. I suspect we are going to a slightly different area to you already.

Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Just a point of information. Standing Orders require that Members must declare an interest in matters. I am not sure what the issue is in relation to a statement being issued but the Chief Minister has indicated kindly - I am sorry I was out of the Assembly - that all of the Ministerial powers concerning the dairy industry have indeed been passed to the Chief Minister. The Assistant Minister for Economic Development, Constable Fisher, deals with dairy matters but there are some issues of reserve powers but I just would like Members, in the avoidance of doubt, to register the fact that while I do not have a direct interest - that my father being a dairy farmer has an interest in the dairy - and, therefore, I shall take no part in any matters concerning the future of the J.M.M.B. (Jersey Milk Marketing Board) et cetera.

The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):

Thank you, Minister. That, therefore, concludes statements.