

3.15 The Deputy of St. Mary of the Chief Minister regarding contingency planning to deal with the issues raised on Senator Syvret's blog posting of 23rd December 2009:

Would the Chief Minister inform the Assembly whether any contingency planning is in place or being considered to reduce the possible negative impact on Jersey's tourism and finance industries of national media coverage arising from the issues raised on Senator Syvret's blog posting of 23rd December 2009?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):

I am not aware of any national media coverage of issues raised in the Senator's blog post on 23rd December 2009, nor am I expecting any. Therefore, no contingency planning is being considered and I see no reason for any negative impacts on the tourism or finance industries in Jersey. If it was felt at any time in the future that there was potential negative impact on any sector of the Island's economy due to any individual's blog, then contingency plans would be developed and implemented in such a way as to counter those effects.

3.15.1 The Deputy of St. Mary:

Can I ask a supplementary? Thank you for that answer. I am a bit surprised that the contingency plans will be put in place later, some day, but the issues are out there now. What I would ask the Minister is... I would just take 2 issues, the Civil Service-led attempt possibly to remove an elected Minister from office and secondly the failure to pursue an alleged serial murder case at the hospital. Now, those 2 issues are very, very serious. Would the Chief Minister not agree that it would be better to be representing Jersey as being proactive with these issues to the outside world rather than waiting for it to become an open season that Jersey is trying to cover these things up? Which is the preferred strategy?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I think I should begin by deploring the use of privilege in this House to cast aspersions on civil servants or others in the course of these investigations. **[Approbation]** Turning to the relation of this to the original question, without knowing what the issues might be, it is very hard to make contingencies against any unknown, speculative idea. Certainly if there are matters which cause concern, whether they be on blogs or more likely out of any policy arising by the States, then contingency plans can be made, but to suggest that we should set contingencies on any particular hypothetical blog, which may or may not have any substance behind it, is to me a waste of time.

3.15.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

First of all, I feel like people like the Member of St. Mary's is forced to use privilege because perhaps he... but certainly a vast majority of the Island simply do not have the confidence in justice in this Island. I am not saying that is a view that I share or not, but that is simply a fact and that is why questions like this do have to be raised. The question is, I would ask of the Chief Minister, he said that he was not aware of any national media coverage, but does he not acknowledge, and perhaps he is not up to date with the times, that a blog site in itself is national media coverage? Indeed, it is international media coverage and it would be foolish to believe that it is simply civil servants and Ministers in Cyril Le Marquand House who log-on religiously every day because I am sure, as the absent Senator Syvret would tell us, that it is one

of the most read political blogs of its kind in Britain and there are people who log on every day.

[12:45]

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Frankly, what is the main contingency against any potential blog however insignificant, inaccurate or misleading it may be? I am not saying that anyone that the Deputy is talking about falls into that category, but if one may have such blanket policies, we would need a Civil Service of thousands to achieve nothing.

3.15.3 The Deputy of St. John:

Would the Chief Minister agree with me that if Senator Syvret is making all these accusations and he has evidence as having been the former Minister for Health, then any evidence he may have about any murders, *et cetera*, should be passed to the police and not aired in public through his blog?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Absolutely, and I have called upon the Senator in the past to provide evidence. So far it has not been forthcoming.

3.15.4 The Deputy of St. Mary:

The evidence came from the police, but the question is - and I suppose it is a reiteration really - does the Chief Minister really believe that these issues do not have potentially serious consequences for Jersey or does he think they really will just disappear and go away?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I hope that ultimately they can be dealt with and refuted on an evidence basis and the sooner the better.

The Bailiff:

Very well. Then we come to the next question which Deputy Shona Pitman will ask of the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. Sorry, just before that is asked, I should put to Members it is 12.45 p.m. According to my watch, there is approximately 8 or 9 minutes or so left of question time. Do Members wish to continue to finish that?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Yes, Sir, I propose that we carry on until the end of oral questions and then leave the others until after lunch.