

3.15 Senator B.E. Shenton of the Chief Minister regarding his confidence in the Minister for Home Affairs following publication of H.M.I. report on H.M. Prison La Moye:

Sir, following the H.M.I. report on H.M. Prison, La Moye, would the Chief Minister confirm whether he retains full confidence in the Minister for Home Affairs whom he nominated for this position in December 2005?

Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

Yes, Sir, I have full confidence in the Minister for Home Affairs who has responsibility for a wide portfolio, as we have heard throughout much of the morning, including Her Majesty's Prison. The H.M.I. report has highlighted a number of serious deficiencies in standards at La Moye Prison and Members will already be aware of these deficiencies from the extensive coverage that has been given to the report. Many of the concerns highlighted in the report are already being actively addressed and these include the recruitment of extra staff and the provision of a new accommodation block which is scheduled for completion in August this year. In addition, funding is available for a further new block in 2009 and, in fact, the Minister for Home Affairs is bringing pressure on the Council of Ministers to bring that forward to 2007. The Minister for Home Affairs is now actively addressing the remaining concerns expressed in the report. One of the main issues - and it has been for many years - is one of resources and this is something which both the Minister and the Council of Ministers is addressing. In the meantime, I repeat that I have every confidence in the ability and the determination of the Minister for Home Affairs to carry this forward.

3.15.1 Senator B.E. Shenton:

The Minister for Home Affairs stood up in this Assembly a couple of weeks ago and said that it was not her fault she could not get the funding from Policy and Resources. Given that the Chief Minister was President of Policy and Resources, can he tell us whose fault it was? Was it the Minister for Home Affairs fault or Policy and Resources?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I think the lack of resource going into the prison is a collective responsibility of past Committees. However, we do have a new system now. We are approaching this in a new way with the new joined-up ministerial approach. I repeat what I said in my original answer that I believe the Minister for Home Affairs, working with her colleagues on the Council of Ministers, will come up with the right solutions to all these problems in a very timely manner.

3.15.2 Senator J.L. Perchard:

The 2005 Inspector of Prisons Report on La Moye described intolerable conditions for inmates with drugs freely available, serious security concerns, unacceptable sanitary conditions, bullying, racism and more. What makes these findings even more scandalous, Sir, is that they follow up an equally damning report from a H.M. Inspector of 2001. This unacceptable state of affairs has not come about as a result of

an accident. This situation is no surprise. Given that the Minister for Home Affairs was Vice-President and President of the Home Affairs Committee for 6 years consecutive to her becoming Minister for Home Affairs, who does the Chief Minister think the buck stops with? Who ultimately takes responsibility for the welfare of inmates and the conditions at H.M. La Moye Prison?

Senator F.H. Walker:

The buck very clearly now rests with the Minister for Home Affairs and she is well aware of that and, as I have already said in my answers, she is addressing all these issues as speedily as sensible.

3.15.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:

Would the Chief Minister outline the conditions under which he would withdraw his confidence from a Minister?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Yes, Sir. If there was continued under-performance, non-performance or misconduct or whatever it may be, by a Minister then they would very quickly - and they are well aware of this and I have said this publicly - lose my confidence. This does not apply in this case.

3.15.4 The Very Reverend R.F. Key, The Dean of Jersey:

Would the Chief Minister accept from me that the 3 denominational heads on the Island feel that the Minister and her Assistant are to be congratulated on the alacrity with which they have worked with us on addressing the chaplaincy issues? Would he take an early opportunity when he visits the prison to pass on from us to the Governor and the staff our thanks and amazement for the relationships with prisoners that they have and the excellent work that they do?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I am very grateful to the Dean for that question and I fully accept the points he has raised and I will, of course, pass on the information as he has requested. I am extremely grateful.