

2.7 Deputy S. Power of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the appropriateness of a statement made by the Deputy Chief of Police on 23rd February 2008 in relation to the Haut de la Garenne historic child abuse investigation:

Given that the States of Jersey police have confirmed that the fragment of skull found at Haut de la Garenne is possibly over 50 years old, would the Minister now agree that the statement made by the Deputy Chief of Police on 23rd February 2008 referring to finding what appeared to be the partial remains of a child was an inappropriate summary of the situation at that time?

Senator W. Kinnard (The Minister for Home Affairs):

The statement made about the fragment of skull on 23rd February 2008 was accurate. It was and continues to be the partial remains of a child. The police have always maintained that they did not know when, where or how the person died. The fact that it was not proved possible to date the fragment of skull does not change the fact of what it was, nor does it remove the possibility that he or she died of foul play. As a general point, as this is still an ongoing investigation, with information disclosed to the police not in the public domain, it will remain premature to judge the content of police media statements until the investigation is concluded. Sir, I asked for an independent specialist review team from A.C.P.O. (Associate of Chief Police Officers) to review the investigation so far and they undertook the first review from 29th February to 2nd March, and they have just undertaken a second review. I have seen their report and received a personal briefing and, as a result, I am reassured that the correct approach is being adopted. The fact remains that the piece of skull was found in suspicious circumstances in a building where a number of other objects have been found to corroborate extremely serious allegations. It is too soon, Sir, for Members to judge while the investigation continues. **[Approbation]**

2.7.1 Deputy S. Power:

Might I ask the Minister a follow up question on this? Does the Minister know how the Deputy Chief of Police decided on or before 23rd February that this bone fragment was the remains of a child?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I do not know the exact workings of the mind of the Deputy Chief, so I cannot answer that question.

2.7.2 Senator S. Syvret:

Would the Minister agree with me, that the age of the fragment is largely an irrelevancy? If it is the remains of a child who died possibly in suspicious circumstances, 60, 70, 80 years ago, that is still a matter we should be deeply concerned about?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I would agree with that statement, but I must just say, this is an ongoing investigation. There are still matters still coming to light and I think it is far too early for Members to seek to judge at this time.

2.7.3 Senator J.L. Perchard:

The police forensics scientists working at Haut de la Garenne identified in February of this year that the bone fragment was human remains; is the Minister able to advise Members if the piece of skull found has been confirmed as human remains in a laboratory environment?

Senator W. Kinnard:

I believe that it has, but I think it is very important that we do not try and get drawn on the details of this. This is still a live ongoing investigation and I urge Members to be sensible and realise that there is an awful lot more to go where this matter is concerned.

2.7.4 Deputy J.B. Fox of St. Helier:

I wonder if the Minister could just expand on the words “possibility of foul play”? Is there anything further she can enlighten this House on, on that particular statement?

Senator W. Kinnard:

No, Sir, I think it is not appropriate for me to be drawn on such details.

2.7.5 Deputy A.J.H. Maclean of St. Helier:

I wondered if the Minister might be kind and just confirm whether or not the review that she has referred to will be released to either States Members or, indeed, publicly at some point in the future?

Senator W. Kinnard:

No, Sir, it is an internal document which is obviously for my eyes as the Minister, but it is not something that would be appropriate, given the contents of the document, to be circulated in a public domain.

2.7.6 Deputy C.J. Scott Warren:

Does the Minister agree that the less the very detailed information regarding this ongoing investigation by the police is discussed in the States Assembly, the better the future ongoing proceedings in a court will not be prejudiced and that they will be able to have fair trials without the risk of any prosecutions having to be dropped because too much information has come out previously?

Senator W. Kinnard:

Yes, Sir.