

23.04.18

**3 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Children and Education regarding education staff pay rises (OQ.62/2023)**

Given that teachers and lecturers have rejected the current pay offer proposed to them, will the Minister confirm whether or not she supports them in asking for a minimum cost-of-living pay rise and, if not, why not?

**Deputy I. Gardiner of St. Helier North (The Minister for Children and Education):**

I thank the Deputy for his question. First of all, it is important for me to say that I recognise and appreciate the hard work and dedication of all our teachers and lecturers. **[Approbation]** I have really enjoyed seeing first-hand the excellent work they do when I have visited the school in Highlands College. I am supportive of all trade unions requesting the pay increase they feel their members require, considering all relevant factors. As the Deputy is aware, negotiations are carried out between unions and the States Employment Board and they are not something that I am a part of.

**4.3.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I do not believe that answered the direct question that was put but I will try again. Does the Minister believe that the teaching and lecturing staff on this Island are worth and should be given at least a cost-of-living pay rise in her role as Minister for Children and Education?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Thank you for the supplementary question. I think it is an important point that my role, as a Minister for Children and Education, is to bring policies for children and education. My role as a Minister for Children and Education, it is not to intercept negotiations between unions and the States Employment Board. Saying this, I completely agree; teachers and lecturers have a unique role that really makes a difference in the outcomes of the children and adults. They use skills and experience in education, I completely recognise their role. As I have mentioned previously, the unions are entitled to ask for whatever rise they think is appropriate for their members. All unions do this and through the negotiation with the States Employment Board and others they ballot their members, they come to the agreement, and I am sure it might be the Deputy knows more details about this negotiation than myself, as a union member.

**4.3.2 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

Of course unions are entitled to make those claims and Ministers are entitled to come out and say: "I support those claims because I believe they would be helpful for me seeing my political ambitions through of having a sustainable workforce in education to serve the children of this Island." Can the Minister for Children and Education say whether she supports the representatives of Jersey's teachers who are asking to safeguard their profession by having cost-of-living pay increases and, if she does support them, what representations has she made around the Council of Ministers' table to achieve that?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Thank you, Deputy, for the question. It is important to say that I am questioned here as the Minister for Children and Education and not as a private member and it is 2 different roles. It is important for me that my workforce will be valued and I value my workforce, the workforce who deliver the best education for the children will be recognised. What is also important to mention that it is not black

and white because it is not just a number and we are talking about terms and conditions for the ongoing negotiations. There are extra days, there are different supplements, there are lots of details within the negotiation and it is not just a number. Because I am not a party and I am not aware about detailed negotiation, I urge both sides and I know they are having meetings. Following this we can next week come together and to find ... and I do make representation around the Council of Ministers' table. It is important that our teachers, as any other workforce as well, because I am also aware for all workforces in the States will be recognised and valued.

#### **4.3.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:**

In 2019 the then Minister for Children proudly marched alongside Jersey's teachers as they demonstrated for more pay. That Minister was joined at the time by the person who is currently Chief Minister and the person who is currently the Minister for Children and Education. Will the current Minister for Children and Education publicly come out in support of the representatives of the teachers who are fighting for their profession and say that she supports their argument for a cost-of-living pay rise?

#### **Deputy I. Gardiner:**

As I previously mentioned, that I support the full rights of the teachers and their unions as their representatives to ask whatever they feel that it is right and there is a negotiation, and I will not interrupt in the middle of negotiations.

#### **4.3.4 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

As the Minister suggested, pay negotiations are complex and I think she mentioned that things like supplementary allowances and there are all sorts of things that are part of that. Given that that type of negotiation could have an impact on the operations and functions of her department, does she think that Ministers should have more of an involvement in the negotiations that impact their areas?

#### **Deputy I. Gardiner:**

Thank you, Deputy, for the question. I completely agree that the morale of the profession is affected by the pay negotiations; it is not an easy place to be. The teachers and all school staff are completely committed employers that want the best outcome. This is the system, this is what we have in place. I am not a member of the States Employment Board. It is not in my remit, it is not the policy that I am developing. When it will be brought to the Council of Ministers, it will be brought eventually to the Council of Ministers, where we would have the conversation. As the Deputy rightly recognised, the offer, it is complex, it is not just one number, it is lots of things that come together and we need to see this as a package and not just a number.

#### **4.3.5 Deputy L.V. Feltham:**

Quite rightly it is particularly complex when it comes to teaching negotiations and I myself have been part of some negotiations around teaching assistants as well. Would the Minister and has the Minister made clear the impact to services that would happen if negotiations are prolonged or unsuccessful?

#### **Deputy I. Gardiner:**

I really, really hope that the parties will come together and I urge both parties to come together around the table and to find a way forward for the benefit of our children.

#### **The Deputy Bailiff:**

Yes, final supplementary, Deputy Rob Ward.

**4.3.6 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Does the Minister accept that any pay rise that is below inflation means that teachers and lecturers face a real-term cut in their earnings?

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

As I said, I am not sure what is the package that is offered and it can be complex and it can be meeting their demands. I do not know the package. When I know the details it will be easier to us to discuss.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Can I just say it was a very specific question about the effects of a below-inflation pay rise on income?

**The Deputy Bailiff:**

Yes, do you want to ask it again?

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Yes, could I? You have thrown me there, Sir. Can I ask the Minister whether she accepts that a below-inflation pay rise will mean a real-term drop in incomes for anybody facing those pay rises? Perhaps that is better wording.

**Deputy I. Gardiner:**

As I answered previously, it is very complicated and I know there were several negotiations over several years and different packages were offered and as a combination we need to sort the combination over the years to say yes or no if it is a real cut.