

4.16 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chief Minister regarding 2012 pay negotiations with public sector employees:

What progress, if any, has been made in negotiating 2012 pay, terms and conditions with manual workers, teachers, nurses, health workers, uniformed services and civil servants and will the Minister state whether any pay offer has yet been made to these groups and what detailed work has been done in respect of the States Employment Board's aim of achieving £7 million of savings on employee terms and conditions?"

[11:15]

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

Pay plans for 2012 have been received from some of the groups mentioned by the Deputy, but not all; for example, nurses and midwives remain outstanding. The new States Employment Board will meet for the first time later this week to discuss its position towards the 2012 and 2013 public sector pay review. At this meeting the claims received thus far will also be discussed and the States Employment Board will then be in a better position to agree its response to pay groups and this question. Regarding the terms and conditions review and the C.S.R. (Comprehensive Spending Review) savings target, considerable work has been undertaken in consultation with employee representatives that will form the foundation of detailed discussions with all pay groups in 2012.

4.16.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Could the Minister explain to Members why it has taken such a long time to produce any changes to terms and conditions and is he certain that he has entered negotiations on terms and conditions with any of these groups because my understanding is that negotiations have yet to start at all on terms and conditions.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

It is quite difficult for me to say exactly what has gone on prior to my appointment to this office. As I have said, the States Employment Board has not yet met. We will be meeting later this week to consider the 2012 groups and of course the work which has been undertaken with regard to modernisation of terms and conditions. It is my understanding that consultation and negotiation has taken place.

4.16.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Could the Minister inform Members whether he has employed a consultant on this process?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I cannot confirm or deny that. No doubt I will find that out when we discuss these issues at the States Employment Board later this week.

4.16.3 Deputy M.J. Higgins:

Just following on from Deputy Southern's question about the discussions or negotiations that have taken place on terms and conditions. Will the Chief Minister publish a paper to States Members setting out the date and details of these negotiations so we can get this matter dealt with once and for all. In the past Ministers have said, yes, they have had these negotiations. Others have disputed it. Will you produce a paper showing when these negotiations took place, whom they took place with and just publish it as soon as possible?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I will of course need to understand exactly what negotiations and discussions took place before I could give that undertaking. By the very nature of negotiations, they have to be done, I think, rightly behind closed doors so that all groups can feel that they are being taken seriously, that they can openly together discuss and move forward. Not to be done in the realms of the public domain,

which is perhaps where we went wrong in the past where this Assembly was trying to make decisions, which should more rightly be undertaken through negotiation with employer and employee representatives.

4.16.4 Deputy M.J. Higgins:

Just following up on the question, I do not believe it is going to be as complicated as the Chief Minister indicates. All we are asking for is there has been dispute for months on this, whether there has been any formal negotiations with any of these parties. All I want to know is the date that there were discussions, with whom and you can just say: "Okay, it is to do with terms and conditions for public sector workers." Do not go into the detail; just give us the facts so we can put this thing to rest once and for all.

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As I say, it is quite difficult for me to give a definitive answer. I shall certainly go away and see if I can collate that information, which might be able to be put into a form which could be circulated. But I should say, that must be against the back drop that it cannot be right for the employer or for employee representatives to feel that every meeting and every discussion is going to be carried out by the public domain.

4.16.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Here we are in December and I can assure the Minister that no concrete proposals on terms and conditions have been put to the manual workers, no concrete proposals have been put to the teachers, for example. When the Minister finds out, if he is engaging a consultant in this process, will he circulate the name and the salary of that particular consultant?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

It is not practise for Ministers to circulate private and personal contract details. What perhaps I can say is that if we are to deliver a modernised public service it is important that we try and build trust in a way, which I believe perhaps has not been there in the past, and therefore it is difficult for me to start making public pronouncements. We have to work together, employer and employee representatives, in a new way and understand what the future holds for us so that we can work more effectively and efficiently going forward. Therefore I am loathe at this point to start making public pronouncements which might undermine that trust which we need to start to build.