

### **3.13 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier of the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding Operation Blast:**

Would the chairman explain why the committee has issued no formal statement in relation to Operation Blast?

#### **The Connétable of St. Mary (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):**

The Committee has not made a formal statement to the Assembly because, as yet, the issues arising from the statement made by the Minister for Home Affairs concerning Operation Blast do not appear to fall within its terms of reference. Nevertheless, Members will be aware that I wrote to all States Members on 22nd June to clarify P.P.C.'s position. For the avoidance of doubt, the Committee fully accepts that the statement raised by the Minister for Home Affairs raises issues of significant concern to the States Assembly, although it also notes that several Members have been reported as saying that the concern regarding Operation Blast has been blown out of proportion. Clearly the Minister for Home Affairs has taken this issue seriously and that is why he has taken the action that he has. P.P.C. also acknowledges that a report and proposition calling for a Committee of Inquiry has been lodged for debate in September. That proposition will no doubt be given careful consideration by the Assembly. Members will be aware that P.P.C.'s terms of reference are set out in Standing Order 128. They may also know that several references have been made to possible breaches of parliamentary privileges arising from the existence of Operation Blast. Had the States been faced with such a potential breach, it would have been quite appropriate for P.P.C. to make a statement advising what action P.P.C. would be taking under paragraph (f) of its terms of reference. However, it is quite clear that parliamentary privilege is not relevant to Operation Blast, as the files have no bearing on any proceedings of the States as such. None of P.P.C.'s remaining terms of reference would empower the Committee to get involved in this matter. Indeed, the more relevant issues arising from the statement of the Minister for Home Affairs appear to fall squarely within his own remit and the Minister has already indicated that he is taking appropriate action. All the feedback P.P.C. has had to date indicates that States Members are very satisfied with the Minister's handling of this matter and the Committee is confident that the Minister will make the results of his inquiries known to the States as and when it is appropriate for him to do so. P.P.C. will be monitoring developments closely in the intervening period and it reserves the right to consider taking substantive action in the event that further revelations raise issues that do fall within its terms of reference. Thank you.

#### **3.13.1 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:**

I wonder if the chairman could identify whether the decision she has outlined was a unanimous decision and, if not, what the vote was in regard to that decision.

#### **The Connétable of St. Mary:**

I asked for the matter to be considered at the meeting of P.P.C. the Friday following the declaration was made by the Minister for Home Affairs. There was some discussion about whether a statement should be made but the matter was acknowledged by the majority to be more appropriately dealt with by a letter, as there was no follow-up information and advice that could be given following a statement.

#### **Deputy R.G. Le Hérisssier:**

What is the definition of a majority?

**The Connétable of St. Mary:**

More than half. [Laughter]

**3.13.2 Deputy P.V.F. Le Claire:**

I wonder if the chairman would be able to tell us what her opinion will be if it is later revealed that these files have also contained information on States Members' families.

**The Connétable of St. Mary:**

I believe that would fall squarely within the remit of the Minister for Home Affairs to deal with. If there are potential breaches in either regulatory powers, perhaps, or data protection, for example, that would be a matter to be pursued in a different dimension, I believe.

**3.13.3 Deputy R.G. Le Hérisier:**

I wonder if the chairman could define or could acknowledge whether she sees the role of P.P.C. to be the defence, albeit constructively, of Members' interests when faced with pressures from other quarters. How would she define that role I regard to the role that P.P.C. appears to be playing?

**The Connétable of St. Mary:**

I would refer the Deputy to the terms of reference which have been set out for P.P.C. by this House in Standing Orders. They are very clear: we must defend the privileges of the States. There are others issues which are not relevant to this particular Operation Blast but certainly I do believe that P.P.C. is acting wholly according to its terms of reference in this matter.