

2015.04.28

3.1 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Chairman of the Privileges and Procedures Committee regarding the establishment of an independent boundary commission:

Does the Chairman consider that there is a need for an independent boundary commission to be established to review and create a fair distribution of seats, and, if so, when can we expect such a commission to be engaged, and if not, why not?

The Connétable of St. Clement (Chairman, Privileges and Procedures Committee):

The simple answer really is that it is too early to say. The Privileges and Procedures Committee has established a sub-committee to investigate further the question of reform and while we are in the early stages of our life we do intend to thoroughly review the current electoral arrangements, including constituency boundaries. Above all the sub-committee considers that the priority of any reform proposal should be to improve voter equity and create a fairer distribution of seats. Nevertheless at this stage it is difficult to see how an eventual reform proposal might look and indeed whether a boundaries commission will be required.

3.1.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

Do we not already know the answer because the work was done by the previous P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee)? The way to do it is that we know that Senators will remain, we know that Constables will remain and the only fair way to get voter equity and fairness, which the Connétable referred to, is to revise some of the seats and their boundaries. If he does agree with that presumably this can only be done by some independent body, and so the question is why not save a lot of time? We know what any review is going to come out with because there are only very limited options, and engage the Boundary Commission now to help with that work.

The Connétable of St. Clement:

The Deputy has made some presumptions that Constables are going to stay and Senators are going to stay, which have not been confirmed by this Assembly, and until they are confirmed by this Assembly we really cannot accept those presumptions.

3.1.2 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

Is the Chairman confident that his committee will finish its work and bring recommendations to the States for implementation in time for the next election?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

In view of the history of reform proposals over the last 15 years it is difficult to have such confidence. What I have committed myself to is to bring a proposition to the States at about this time next year, subject to the work we are going to be doing during that period, and part of that work - and an important part of that work - will be consulting with States Members at every stage of our deliberations, so that rather than bring a proposition which is simply the P.P.C.'s recommendations is that we recognise that we have some support, some consensus, from Members of the States.

3.1.3 Deputy A.D. Lewis of St. Helier:

So will the Connétable be considering another Mori-type poll to gauge public opinion? We have had a referendum and the people spoke, but we still ignored that result. Would he consider a full Mori-type poll again to gauge public opinion as it is today, rather than what it was when we reviewed it under Clothier?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

As the Deputy implied, we have had a referendum. We have had 2 referendums on reform. We ignored the result of one such referendum, and have not yet considered the result of the second. So at the end of the day whatever the public think and tell us the decision will be made by the people's elected representatives, that is the Members of the States.

[9:45]

Of course we will have to consider public opinion very strongly as well during the period of consultation, but at the end of the day we cannot hide from the fact that the decision will be made by Members of the States.

3.1.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

I will ask the Chairman, does he agree that we already know that the Parishes of St. Mary, St. John and St. Lawrence are over-represented and need to have one of their representatives removed, and that St. Helier and St. Clement are both under-represented and need additional representatives, if we are to achieve fair representation under the current system?

The Connétable of St. Clement:

Yes, that is absolutely true and that is why my committee is committed to improve voter equity and a fairer distribution of seats. What we have got to work on over the next 12 months is how that is going to be achieved.

The Deputy Bailiff:

That brings us on to the next question which is a question Deputy Tadier will ask of the Minister for External Relations.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you, but I do not think I can ask that question. The Minister for External Relations is not here and I only ask questions to the Ministers who have been elected for that particular role but I would like to know at which point did we know that the Minister for External Relations would not be present for question time, and if it was before questions were lodged on Thursday why were Members not informed of that to save a lot of wasted time and energy?

The Deputy Bailiff:

Well, Deputy, if I could interrupt you, because under the States of Jersey Law in the absence of the Minister for External Relations the Chief Minister is fulfilling his functions and the Chief Minister is therefore able under the law to answer the question.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I understand that, but I want the question to be asked of the Minister for External Relations otherwise it is a waste of time from my perspective, because it is to do with the Minister for External Relations' personal views and how they impinge, potentially, on his role, so I will have to forgo that.

The Deputy Bailiff:

It is a matter for you if you ask the question but if you do not want to ask the question we will move on to the next question.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Sir, could I seek direction, though, just as a point of housekeeping? It seems to me that if Ministers are going to be absent for States Assembly, and I completely accept that they have competing pressures externally, that we should at least be informed if they are aware of that before the

Thursday so we can make alternative arrangements and not put the Greffier through unnecessary wasted energy, and perhaps use our questions in a more directed way.

The Deputy Bailiff:

I think you have made your point. That brings us on to the second question the Connétable of St. Helier will ask of the Minister for Treasury and Resources.