

## **5. Questions to Ministers without notice - The Chief Minister**

### **The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

Very well. That concludes the question period to the Minister and we now come to the second question period. I invite questions to the Chief Minister.

#### **5.1 Deputy T.M. Pitman:**

I am keen today. The Privileges and Procedures Committee Subgroup under, let me say, the towering, colossal intellect of the Deputy of St. Peter, has concluded that Ministerial government is not working. Now, I know first-hand that Scrutiny is not working because it has no teeth. The Executive is not working because it has no heart - some might suggest brains. But rather than just implement another costly and procrastinating review, will the Chief Minister consider putting the issue to the public in a referendum, i.e. Committee or Ministerial; efficiency versus elitist unaccountability?

#### **Senator T.A. Le Sueur (The Chief Minister):**

Referendums need to have simple questions. **[Laughter]** Deputy, I would suggest a simple question there. But more seriously, I think anyone recognising the magnitude of the change from the previous system of government to the new Ministerial system will accept the fact that there were likely to be imperfections, teething problems, and issues that needed resolving. That has proved to be the case for this system and I have no doubt that the present arrangements can be improved upon. I would like to work constructively with P.P.C. (Privileges and Procedures Committee) to see how that can be done. The report suggested there may need to be a review of some sort carried out. I would endorse that suggestion. I think it needs to be done in a measured way, but that is something we can discuss as a House generally.

#### **5.2 Senator J.L. Perchard:**

Did the Chief Minister notice during the Liberation Day celebrations that the hymn Island Home was introduced as the Jersey anthem? Will he explain why this was the case? Will he give an assurance that this does not happen again at any official function until such time the States have formally approved this anthem or any other anthem?

#### **Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

Sorry, I do not recall on what basis the anthem Island Home was introduced. It was composed as something that could be used in the future to give a unique indication of Jersey's position in culture. Clearly, there are different views about the quality or the volume or the appropriateness of that anthem. Certainly, I am prepared to discuss with the Minister for Education, Sport and Culture how it might best be promoted. I think certainly in terms of having any bar on future performances, that would be an unreasonable request. We want to encourage culture, we want to encourage the widespread use of music and let us have some diversity.

##### **5.2.1 Senator J.L. Perchard:**

I must press the Chief Minister. Will he give an assurance to this House that this hymn, the Island Home, will not be introduced as the Jersey anthem until such time the States have approved it?

#### **Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

I do not think it has been labelled as the Jersey anthem. If it was then maybe that would be a step too far. But it is certainly a piece of music that was commissioned and was judged to be the best of a number of pieces. It was judged by a selection panel as the preferred anthem; whether it is the Jersey anthem or the anthem for Jersey. I think we should be looking on the positive side of this and not simply knocking it.

#### **Senator J.L. Perchard:**

Will the Chief Minister please give an assurance that it will not be called the Jersey anthem?

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

Sorry, Senator Perchard, time is short; we must move on. The Deputy of St. John.

**5.3 The Deputy of St. John:**

When the Chief Officer moved into the former Chief Minister's office on being elected as Chief Minister, did he have the office redecorated or refurbished? [**Members: Oh!**] If so, will he tell Members what work and refurbishment was undertaken and at what cost?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

The offices that are occupied by myself and the Chief Executive are in the same decorative state as they were 3 or 4 years ago. The only change that there has been is that I have brought in a couple of my own pictures to hang on my walls [**Members: Oh!**] to replace those that were previously there.

[11:30]

**5.3.1 The Deputy of St. John:**

Possibly the decoration has not changed. Has the Minister had any refurbishment done at the cost of the taxpayer?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

If the Deputy is referring to the offices occupied by the Chief Executive or myself, the answer is no. If he is talking about the Chief Minister's Department generally then the answer is, yes, there have been some new desks and furniture put in there as a normal part of ongoing refurbishment.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

Can I just follow that up? Given that we ...

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

No, we must limit it because there are a lot of Members waiting.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

We cannot get to the depth of ... the idea of getting the questions out was to be able to get the Ministers to be accountable, Sir.

[12.00]

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

The Chief Minister has answered your question.

**The Deputy of St. John:**

He is not being accountable, Sir, that is the problem.

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

The Chief Minister has answered the question. The Deputy of Grouville?

**5.4 The Deputy of Grouville:**

Will the Chief Minister inform Members when the review he has commissioned into the reasons for the Police Chief Officer's suspension will be made available to Members?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

The reasons for the suspension? I can confirm a review is being carried out into the suspension process. It is being carried out by a Mr. Brian Napier Q.C. (Queen's Counsel) and that will be reported, hopefully, in the next month or so. I cannot comment on the contents of that review until it is presented to me. I have not yet seen it.

#### **5.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:**

It has been reported in the local paper that 60 public sector jobs are going to go at the cost of £6 million. Can the Chief Minister inform Members as to why, if we are looking to make people redundant, why we have got to constantly recruit people, particularly for a Health Improvement Officer for Tobacco at the cost of £45,000? Does the Minister not think really we ought to look to see what we need to employ before we start paying people to leave their jobs?

#### **Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

Yes, I certainly agree that we do need to keep recruitment and employment constantly under review and part of the comprehensive spending review will be to see ways in which some jobs may no longer be necessary. The one that the Deputy refers to is the replacement of a previous person so I think it is not a new post but certainly, if we are going to make significant savings in the future, we will have to consider different approaches and certain jobs which are presently being done, certain services currently being provided, such as the one he mentions, may well have to go. That will need to be done on a case by case basis as a result of the detailed reviews which are now underway, particularly in respect of departments like Health, and Education, Sport and Culture, and Home Affairs where there are significant numbers of people employed.

#### **5.6 Deputy R.G. Le Hérissier:**

If, and indeed if not, there is an adverse report published today or revealed to Members re the procedure surrounding the suspension of the consultant, would the Chief Minister immediately institute an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the absence from work of the Magistrate?

#### **Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

The outcome of the review of the suspended consultant is embargoed until tomorrow so it would not be appropriate for me to comment on that at this stage. The employment of the Magistrate is not a matter for the States Employment Board. The Magistrate is appointed by the Crown.

#### **5.7 Deputy D.J. De Sousa:**

Would the Chief Minister not agree that the reason and the perception that Ministerial government is not working is because Clothier was cherry-picked and we were warned not to do that. Would he not consider that Deputy Trevor Pitman's idea of a public referendum is a good idea and that maybe should be considered?

#### **Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

I have a personal distaste for referenda generally. We are elected to govern; but in any case, that is a matter which the States would need to debate as a whole, not myself. Although Clothier has been cherry-picked, I do not think that the bits that were not picked would necessarily impact on the success or otherwise of Ministerial government. The bits that were not selected were matters like common election day and a single class of Member and so on. Whether they are in place or not would not affect, in my view, the nature of Ministerial government. What we need to do is to see how Ministerial government in its current form can be improved upon.

#### **5.8 Senator B.E. Shenton:**

Is the Chief Minister willing to give an undertaking that he will put a complete freeze on all new public sector posts until the comprehensive spending review has been completed?

#### **Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

No, life has to go on and there will be certain areas, particularly, I think, in Health, where we will need additional staff to deal with new standards, new requirements, in order to provide a proper service to the public. That has to be balanced against the additional costs and the pressures in other departments, but certainly a blanket undertaking would not be appropriate. I would certainly give an undertaking that any new additional posts should be very clearly and carefully evaluated before agreeing to them.

**5.8.1 Senator B.E. Shenton:**

Is it correct that you yourself have taken on a new post and taken on a new assistant?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

As far as I am aware, the staffing complement in my office has not changed. There has been some reorganisation and there used to be a person employed as a P.A. (personal assistant) to myself who is no longer working and has been replaced. Replacements will take place from time to time. I do not think that numbers have increased but I probably need to have further detail before I am categorical on that one.

**5.9 Deputy J.M. Maçon:**

Is the Minister satisfied that the H.R. (Human Resources) function is robust and that proper performance indicators exist and that the appraisal process is working properly and, if not, what improvements will be implemented?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

The appraisal process is certainly capable of improvement. It started from the top. We have a far better appraisal of the Chief Executive done on a 360-degree basis. That is being carried forward now through other Chief Officers in other departments and carried on further down the organisation. Performance review and appraisal is an important part of career development and making sure that staff are doing their jobs in the best possible way. There is always scope to improve that and we are anxious to keep on doing that.

**5.10 The Deputy of St. Mary:**

Can the Chief Minister say whether in the C.S.R. review process there is consideration being given to the cost of liability insurance for the different departments to cover when failings happen; failures, for instance, such as a pothole that throws someone into the path of a car. So for those sorts of liabilities across all departments, will the C.S.R. take that into account, the cost of insuring and the cost of dealing with claims like that?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

Yes, indeed. C.S.R. is meant to be a totally wide-ranging process and I am aware that the Minister for Treasury and Resources is looking at the implications of insurance as a whole and the extent to which the States might want to self-insure, might want to review its insurance policies, review the extent of its cover, recognising that one can always have a balance in trying to save money and, equally, go a step too far. In general, I simply say yes, that that is being considered as part of the C.S.R.

**5.11 Deputy T.A. Vallois:**

On the basis of the answer to Deputy Maçon, would the Chief Minister advise what support his department is providing to the H.R. Director who was appointed last year to do her job rather than fire-fighting the current problems within the department and also whether there will be an overhaul of training and development?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

I believe that the new Director of Human Resources is well supported but there is certainly scope for further support if that were feasible within the cost pressures that all departments are facing. As far as training and development are concerned, that has been scaled-down in previous years, I think perhaps mistakenly, and it needs to be strengthened. I think that can be done in conjunction, not just with the H.R. Department, but with bodies such as the Skills Executive working in a holistic way in order to provide training, not just for States employees, but for others seeking to improve their skills.

**5.11.1 Deputy T.A. Vallois:**

Could the Chief Minister just confirm where on his priority list H.R. departments stand at this precise moment in time?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

I try not to have a pecking order because otherwise it suggests that some departments are less important than others and can be downgraded. The key objective at the moment, not just for the Ministers, but for all of us, has to be to try to eliminate the current structural deficit of £50 million by 2013 in order that the States and the public can go forward in a meaningful way. Any other policies really have to fit into that overall requirement.

**5.11.2 Deputy T.A. Vallois:**

On the basis of the structural deficit, does the Minister not agree that H.R. Department is a very important and vital area to be looking at in this time?

**Senator T.A. Le Sueur:**

It is an important and vital area to be looking at in this time. The point I was trying to make is that there are other important vital areas as well which have to be balanced against that and I was not going to say that one was more important than another. We have to accept the fact that there are competing pressures all of which will appear to be necessary if not essential.

**The Greffier of the States (in the Chair):**

That concludes the 15 minutes allowed for the questions without notice.