

#### **4.7 Deputy G.P. Southern of the Chief Minister regarding meetings between the States Employment Board and employee representatives:**

Will the Chief Minister advise Members whether he, or any of the members of the States Employment Board with the authority to amend policy, intends to meet public sector employee representatives to engage in meaningful negotiations to avert potential industrial action, and, if not why not?

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

The question is shown on the Order Paper as addressed to the Chief Minister, but it is in his capacity, as I understand it, as Chairman of the States Employment Board. I was going to ask the Deputy Chairman therefore to reply.

##### **Senator B.I. Le Marquand:**

I was just advising to ensure that that happened. I defer to the greater knowledge of Deputy Green.

##### **Deputy A.K.F. Green of St. Helier (Deputy Chairman, States Employment Board - rapporteur):**

The States Employment Board has met regularly throughout the duration of the 2012/2014 pay negotiations after establishing the original mandate for its officials to follow. In doing so, it considered detailed reports on the progress of negotiations. I checked my diary recently, in fact this morning, some 18 meetings took place with our officials and the S.E.B. (States Employment Board) and we agreed amendments to the mandate as necessary and appropriate. It has approved settlements with some pay groups, and these have been arrived at through collective bargaining. The S.E.B. approved the implementation of the pay award for groups where, after protracted negotiations, it was clear that the gap between what the public service could afford and the sustainability of a fair award for its employees and the claims made by pay groups was unbridgeable. The board has moved some considerable way from its original opening position. Just to remind Members, our opening position was zero in 2012, zero for 2013 and 2.5 for 2014. The final award is 1 per cent non-consolidated in 2012, 1 per cent non-consolidated and 1 per cent consolidated for 2013 and 4 per cent award for 2014 in return for workforce modernisation. The board continues to have full confidence that its wishes and expectations are fully met by its officials who can conduct the negotiations, and it does not consider it necessary to change this approach. It is regrettable that industrial action is being mooted by some pay groups but the board considers that its award is equitable and prudent when considering the wider economic climate and the demands on the public purse at this time.

##### **4.7.1 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Deputy Chairman has not answered the question, in fact. Why does he consider it unnecessary for the politicians in charge of policy to meet face-to-face with employee representatives? Why does he hide behind the skirts of his civil servants?

##### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I am not hiding behind the skirts of my civil servants. My role, and the role of the S.E.B., is to set the policy and then allow our professional negotiators to go in and carry out that work. It is as simple as that.

##### **4.7.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

The Chairman described the award that the States Employment Board is offering as a fair one. Does he really consider that it is fair when public sector workers are something like 9 per cent worse off than they were in 2008?

##### **Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I do consider it fair. I do consider it fair, particularly when you put alongside the guarantee of no compulsory redundancy. Many other Islanders are seeing significant reductions in their pay and being made redundant. We are trying to be fair to our workforce, be good employers, and I do consider it to be very fair.

**4.7.3 Deputy M. Tadier:**

Of course, just for balance, many other Islanders are seeing huge increases in their pay, getting bonuses and have got lots of job security and that is always at the top end, is it not, Deputy Chairman? Would the Chairman take this one message back to the S.E.B. which we have been repeating again and again, which I think is unilateral from the unions that I have been speaking to, that if only the S.E.B. will start to separate terms and conditions, from the pay conditions, which are ongoing and which are of utmost importance to our employees who are facing difficult times with inflation far above increases in wages, if only the S.E.B. will listen to that message, settle on the pay negotiations, then the unions I have spoken to are more than happy to engage in modernisation discussions but they will not do it if a gun is being held to their heads. Will the Minister take that message back to the S.E.B.?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I will take the message back to the S.E.B. but some groups have already settled on the basis of the 4 per cent. I have to say to the Deputy that other groups, our officials can talk to them about what reform looks like, but I do not think you can separate one from the other.

**4.7.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:**

Given that it is politicians who are in charge of policy, and this is policy we are talking about here, does he not feel it appropriate that Ministers should talk face-to-face with employee representatives?

**Deputy A.K.F. Green:**

I think it is appropriate that we allow professional negotiators to do their job set within the parameters of the S.E.B.