

5.16 The Deputy of St. Martin of the Chief Minister regarding the establishment of anti-discrimination programmes.

Following his statement made at the States meeting on 17th May 2011 about racial intolerance in Jersey, what steps, if any, has the Chief Minister taken to raise public awareness by establishing anti-discrimination programmes in schools, public service departments and the wider community?

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

My statement on racial and religious intolerance was, in my view, the proper response to the abhorrent criticism of the Minister for Planning and Environment. However, this question allows me to stress some of the anti-discrimination work that exists within our primary and secondary school curricula, the equality and diversity policy that the States department has worked to, and most importantly, the role of the Jersey Community Relations Trust in combating discrimination in the wider community. One example of this is the survey they recently carried out in respect of the proposals for the discrimination law. The information about these programmes and policies is in the public domain and, while I would not wish to give the impression that discrimination is widespread in Jersey, the actions of a few individuals has to be challenged in this Island which recognises and thrives on the diversity of all individuals.

[11:30]

5.16.1 The Deputy of St. Martin:

Has the Chief Minister any knowledge of the number of States employees, if any, who have been reported for making racist remarks during the last 12 months and, if so, what action, if any, has been taken against those people?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I am not aware of any reports of such abuse; were that to be the case I would expect them to be disciplined by their line managers and further dealt with as appropriate.

5.16.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Does the Minister accept that age discrimination, in particular, is an issue and that one piece of legislation is backed up awaiting the promotion and the adoption of a discrimination law. When will he do so?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

The matter of timing for the discrimination law is in the hands of the Members of the House.

5.16.3 The Deputy of St. Mary:

When I last knew the budget of the Community Relations Trust was just £100,000 to deal with all these issues. Will the Chief Minister, first of all, commit to maintaining that budget and, secondly, will he think about increasing it, in view of the fact that as times change so the stresses in society will increase and the consequences do not bear thinking about if we get this wrong?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I am pleased that the Deputy of St. Mary agrees with me on the value of the work done by the Jersey Community Relations Trust. The ongoing funding of that, as

indeed all the aspects of States spending, will come under the microscope in September but I would certainly hope that that funding can be maintained and, if it is felt appropriate, increased, but that will depend on the business case to be put forward at that time.

5.16.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

Have any talks taken place between the Chief Minister and the Minister for Home Affairs to move this possible piece of legislation to the responsibility of the Chief Minister's Department and, if so, were those talks formal or informal?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

Yes. There have been talks at the moment on an informal basis; no doubt in the fullness of time they can be more formalised.

5.16.5 The Deputy of St. Martin:

In his answer the Chief Minister said he was not aware of any numbers of people that may well have been reported for racist remarks. As Chairman of the S.E.B. (States Employment Board), could I ask that he may ask around his department to see if, indeed, there are any people who have been found guilty or, indeed, have made these remarks, which gives some indication to other States Members whether, indeed, the remarks made against the former Minister for Planning were once in a lifetime remarks or, indeed, it is endemic in the Island that there is far more racism than people would like to believe?

Senator T.A. Le Sueur:

I am not sure that the time of members of the States Employment Board or, indeed, of the Human Resources Department is best served by trying to find among the 7,000 employees in the States whether anyone at any time makes improper remarks. If those remarks are made and overheard and cause distress then there is a duty on those staff to bring that to the attention of management and to the Human Resources Department and ultimately to S.E.B. I said in my response that I have no knowledge of any such occurrences and I would hope that that would continue.