

23.12.11.

14. Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding donation of profits from plastic bags (OQ.251/2023)

In relation to the 70p charge imposed on the sale of reusable bags, will the Minister advise what consideration, if any, has been given to the profits made from the sale of such bags, and the option for those profits to be donated to environmental causes; and, if not, would the Minister say why not?

Deputy T. Binet (The Minister for Infrastructure):

Thank you to Deputy Porée for that question. I am reliably informed that paragraph (d) of P.64/2020 proposed all retailers would be required or should be required to give the profits of the sales of plastic bags to environmental charities. But after considerable discussion, it was decided that it really was not a feasible option because of the difficulties involved in identifying what was being sold, how did we get hold of the money, and it also was not deemed appropriate for the Government to be deciding upon which charitable environmental causes to give the money to. So it was rejected in 2020.

2.12.1 Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Forgive me for saying, but that in principle seems to be so wrong. Again, going back to the single use of plastic bags, the law came in to look at the impact on the environment these bags are making and by reducing them that would be the way forward. We are carrying on producing them, we are charging and the companies ...

The Bailiff:

Deputy, this does have to be a question.

Deputy B.B. de S.V.M. Porée:

Okay. Would the Minister be prepared to look at it again, because presently it looks like the companies and businesses are making money out of the environment?

Deputy T. Binet:

I agree with the sentiment of what Deputy Porée has to say. We are still confronted with the difficulties. We have had some questions early on about plastic bags and I have committed to looking at all of this. I think if the Deputy goes to her computer or her phone, she will find that there is already an invitation to meet me - I certainly hope there is - and we are going to get on and look at it.

2.12.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

Will the Minister say whether he supports the principle of the 70p charge for these bags?

[10:45]

Deputy T. Binet:

I certainly think it is sensible to try and prevent people from using plastic. It irritates me as much as it irritates other people.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I do not think he has answered the question, to be fair. I do not want to use the supplementary given the fact he is not answering.

Deputy T. Binet:

No. If the question is: do I support the principle? Yes, I thought I had made it clear but if the word “yes” is required, then, yes, it is.

2.12.3 Deputy M. Tadier

Can I drill down into that because I very much see this 70p charge is not for paying for a bag, but it is a fine that you pay, a social fine, for forgetting your bag for life? Given the fact that he does support a 70p charge for a bag, what other charges does he support for other single use plastics that come from shops? If he does not support them, will he explain his rationale?

Deputy T. Binet:

Well, I have been caught on the hop a little bit here. I am not quite sure what the Deputy is referring to. If the Deputy would like to be specific about what other types of plastic bag or plastic uses that has particularly caught his interest, I will try and give a specific answer. But I do not really consider that that question was sufficiently specific, for me to find an answer to.

The Bailiff:

I think the specificity of the question is probably a matter for me, Minister. I have to say that it does seem to me to be outside the purview of the original question, which is the 70p charge imposed on the sale of reusable bags and whether those profits should be returned to environmental causes. I think if we are going wider than that ...

Deputy M. Tadier:

It clearly flows on from the question so it is not a complete non-sequitur. I am asking about the rationale for the Minister’s support for this policy, which he says he does support. He did say in his answer that he supports the reduction of all plastics. I want to know where does his support for charging for single use plastics end? If he cannot answer that now, that is fine.

Deputy T. Binet:

I will try and say. Where does it end? It is a very, very broad subject. Not one that I think that can be the subject of questions with notice. I do not think it is appropriate. If Deputy Tadier would like to join Deputy Porée and I when we meet, I would be delighted to meet with him, too.

Deputy M. Tadier:

Thank you, but I will wait until he is better.

Deputy T. Binet:

Hopefully tomorrow.

2.12.4 Deputy G.P. Southern:

That was the most resigned tone I have heard for a while. “I suppose I have got to ask Deputy Southern to us to ask the question.”

The Bailiff:

I would not assume that it was a reference to you, Deputy Southern. The resignation of the tone could easily have been referring to something else.

Deputy G.P. Southern:

Absolutely, Sir. The question is: when the Minister says this idea was rejected, did he mean rejected by retailers or rejected by the Government?

Deputy T. Binet:

Rejected by the Government.