

4. Oral Questions

4.1 Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade of the Minister for Home Affairs regarding the funding of the Jersey Community Relations Trust:

Given the important work of the Jersey Community Relations Trust, will the Minister advise whether he considers that responsibility for its funding should remain part of his portfolio and if so, will he consider increasing the funding of this body to enable it to meet its continuing work stream?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand (The Minister for Home Affairs):

The Minister for Home Affairs currently has responsibility in relation to the Jersey Community Relations Trust and provides an annual grant of £27,500 to help defray its operating costs. Interestingly, these functions were performed by the Chief Minister's Department until 2008 and a transfer then took place because the individual Minister at that time had an interest in this area, particularly in relation to discrimination. Now that the Chief Minister's Department has responsibility for social policy, it would be logical, in my view, for the element of oversight and responsibility to be returned to the Chief Minister's Department. However, such a proposal would plainly need discussion with the Chief Minister and with the appropriate Assistant Minister to the Chief Minister.

4.1.1 Deputy M. Tadier:

I thank the Minister for Home Affairs for his answer and I think in terms of whose portfolio it should fall under, we are singing from the same hymn sheet. Will the Minister for Home Affairs join me in congratulating all those who organised and took part in the J.C.R.T.'s (Jersey Community Relations Trust) event to promote women in politics and in public life and does he also agree that as a States body when it comes to legislation, we must do more very urgently to promote equality and it must be supported by legislation, not simply by good words?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes, it was a very good event. It was much wider than just women in public life. It went into other areas of equality and fairness and treatment of women and domestic violence and things of that nature. I thought it was, generally speaking, an excellent event. The responsibility in this area has now passed from me to the Minister for Social Security and I certainly hope, as a father of 2 professional daughters and the grandfather of 3 granddaughters, that progress will be made in this area.

[9:45]

4.1.2 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

When we set up the Jersey Community Relations Trust, the Assembly was told that the organisation would be self-funding. Why are we still funding it?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

I have absolutely no knowledge of that. All I know is that the responsibility was with my department when I arrived and that we have continued to provide £27,500. I have absolutely no knowledge of the States having agreed anything different when it was initially set out. If that is so, that is the first I have heard of that.

4.1.3 Senator S.C. Ferguson:

Should we be paying people to just come back and lobby us?

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Provided they do it in an appropriate manner and they have done some excellent research work in certain areas. The work that they have done and encouraged in the area of bullying has been

particularly valuable but there has been other useful research work. I do not always agree with the conclusions that they come to but nevertheless it is appropriate that this work be done.

The Bailiff:

Do you have a question, Deputy Tadier?

4.1.4 Deputy M. Tadier:

It is just to ask the Minister for Home Affairs whether he agrees that the £27,500 we give them is remarkably good value. I am sure he is aware, as I am that with this conference that was put on but also the work that the members put in by far exceeds the hours for which they are remunerated and I am sure the Minister will be happy to acknowledge that.

Senator B.I. Le Marquand:

Yes, I have been reminded that the trustees are unpaid in relation to this but I agree this is an organisation that, in terms of the money that is put into it, punches very much above its weight.