

3.3 Deputy S.Y. Mézec of the Chief Minister regarding whether the entire Council of Ministers supported the aim to implement all the recommendations of the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry: [1(449)]

Does the Chief Minister have the support of his entire Council of Ministers in his aim to implement all of the recommendations set out by the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry?

Senator I.J. Gorst (The Chief Minister):

I am committed, as I have said on a number of occasions, to delivering the recommendations of the Care Inquiry. Ministers have started discussions on the actions needed to implement those recommendations and will continue their work, together with States Members over the summer recess.

3.3.1 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

Was the Chief Minister listening to his Minister for External Relations who did an interview with BBC Radio Jersey a few days ago where he made it perfectly clear that he does not support all of the recommendations set out by the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry? The answer to my first question was no and what will he do, as Chief Minister, to make sure that there is a unified position from the Council of Ministers where they do support all of the recommendations and we can get on with it and see all of those implemented without Ministers appearing in the media and being deliberately obstructive to that aim?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I did not hear that interview. It will not surprise the questioner, and he knows, and I think that is probably why he is asking the question, that not all Ministers share the same view on any given issue, which is why we have started working together in a consensual way to think about the practical actions, which will be required, in order to deliver the recommendations. There is a recommendation around the review of Clothier and Carswell and I think this is perhaps at the heart of the question where one of my colleagues on a number of occasions and for a long time has held a view that the separation of the roles of the Bailiff was not appropriate, as have many Members of this Assembly, which is why I have made the point that I did, which is also I have been challenged on and that is that we need to build consensus in this Assembly. If we simply try to approach this one issue in the same way that we have approached it in the past, we will not deliver the change that I know he and I want to see delivered.

3.3.2 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Chief Minister has quite rightly given the highest or a very high degree of priority to implementing the recommendations. Given the fact that he has also expressed an interest to bring back Senator Ozouf into a ministerial position, would it not be simpler for him, in order to deliver on those recommendations, rather than creating a new ministry, simply to replace one of his Ministers with Senator Ozouf who is fully committed to the delivery of all the recommendations if there are other Ministers who are not able to?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

Is the Deputy offering 3 votes for that proposition?

3.3.3 Deputy M. Tadier:

A supplementary, Sir. It would be interesting to know whether or not the implementation of the recommendations are bound by collective responsibility. If it is such an important issue for the Chief Minister and we know that other votes are bound by collective responsibility, why is it that there are constantly carve-outs for one individual in this Council of Ministers who does

not want to toe the ministerial party line, especially on such an important issue such as the recommendations of the Care Inquiry?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

There is always a temptation to make important issues about personalities. I said at the last States sitting I was not prepared to do that and I do not think it is right that this Assembly does that. I am quite clear and do not be in any doubt, any Member of this Assembly, that thinks anything other than this. I am clear. I am committed to delivering these recommendations. I was soft and gentle at the last States sitting about delivering those recommendations, about taking Members with us on a journey to their delivery, about working in a consensual way. But I would say to Members who are thinking of putting the proverbial spanner in the works when it comes to delivering those recommendations, think very carefully.

[10:15]

I am not stepping aside. I want to see those delivered. Members will have different views about different recommendations and how they should rightly be delivered. We can consider those, we can debate those but we must make decisions that will deliver the recommendations. Let us not make it about personalities, we will not take everyone with us. We will not take everyone with us but I think Members know the right thing to do.

3.3.4 Senator P.F.C. Ozouf:

Without wanting in any way to comment on the issue that Deputy Tadier raised concerning myself, that is not the reason why I am rising to speak; but to ask a question. Concerning the issue of collective responsibility, it is in the States of Jersey Law, as the Chief Minister knows and as we are currently seeing in the U.K. there is, effectively, collective responsibility in being somewhat perhaps influenced by warm Prosecco. But in here in Jersey, does he not agree that the shenanigans of the last few weeks do show that there is a need to revisit the issue of collective responsibility? Because it is in the law and Ministers are expected to resign if they do not abide by collective responsibility, does he not agree that he needs to be clearer with his Council of Ministers and hold them to account or make clear where he is saying it no longer applies?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

As difficult as it will be, I do agree with Senator Ozouf. I said 3 weeks ago now I did not want us to return to the behaviour of some Members in the run up to the vote of no confidence. I was very grateful for Members' confidence in me. I do not take that lightly. I am not prepared to return to a situation where personality is put above all else. It is a trite phrase and it is one that has been perhaps disvalued, I am not sure that is a word, "devalued", sorry, by our friends across the Atlantic. But for us every single time it should be Jersey first and this Inquiry report quite clearly lays out what we need to do to put Jersey and her most vulnerable citizens first and I am prepared to stand and do that. If that means people, ultimately, during the course of this journey need to consider their positions, then that is what they should do.

3.3.5 Deputy G.P. Southern:

While I would agree that seeking consensus is one way forward, in addition, does the Chief Minister not accept that we also need and he needs to show leadership on this issue? Lead the way, Chief Minister.

The Bailiff:

Do you need to show leadership, Chief Minister?

Senator I.J. Gorst:

That is exactly what I am doing; exactly what I am doing. But some Members want to go off, want to follow the methodologies of yesterday that did not work, rather than coming together and finding a proper work-through solution. Members cannot have it both ways, they cannot have it both ways because if they want to, if they try to, we will fail and that, for me, is not an option. Those Members who are doing that know what they are talking about.

3.3.6 Deputy S.Y. Mézec:

It is bizarre to hear the Chief Minister speaking about other Members as if they are somehow the enemies to seeing these recommendations implemented, when they are the ones who support it wholeheartedly. The recommendations of the Care Inquiry have created a political situation where, among people who usually hold very different political points of views, there is staunch agreement that these recommendations need to be implemented. The question is not about personalities, it is about what the clear path is to getting these recommendations implemented. What I want to know from the Chief Minister is, where is the red line that shows where somebody is being more obstructive than they are being constructive, and in the interests of having a united government which will see these recommendations implemented, what is that point at which the Chief Minister will say: "When it is impossible to find consensus the point of the greater good for the people of Jersey to get these recommendations implemented is more important than one individual's place in Government." I would like to ask him: where is that red line and will we see him put some pressure and show leadership on his Council of Ministers to say: "This is government policy, it must be implemented and if you do not agree with it, stop being obstructive."

Senator I.J. Gorst:

I have already started doing that. It is not made any easier - I have got to say - by people coming forward with ideas on the back of a proverbial envelope without working to build and to ensure that we have got the votes in order to deliver change. I do not want to be in that position. I think that together - and the questionnaire is quite right - in the irony that we face I think that together he with his fellow party members, together with me and other Back-Benchers, if we really work together ... I do not mind if it is in their name, if we really work together we can deliver that change. It is not productive for us to spend time arguing across the floor of this Assembly when we can be making our case to the public, to Members of this Assembly, to deliver those changes. I say I am not going to be stopped - this Assembly of course can stop me any day they wish by voting me out of office - but short of that I am not going to stop in my commitment to deliver these changes.