

## **Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 10 October 2000**

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

### **Questions to the First Secretary**

#### **Assembly Review (Memoranda of Understanding)**

**Q10 Elin Jones:** Will the forthcoming Assembly review include memoranda of understanding in its remit? (OAQ7013)

**The First Secretary:** I am not officially accountable for the review. It is for the members of the review group collectively to agree the review's remit and direction.

#### **Better, Simpler Government**

**Q11 Janet Ryder:** What progress has been made towards fulfilling the commitments made towards better, simpler government as outlined in 'Betterwales.com'? (OAQ7012) *Withdrawn.*

#### **Visit to Brussels**

**Q12 Alun Cairns:** Will the First Secretary make a statement on his recent visit to Brussels? (OAQ7003)

**The First Secretary:** I visited Brussels on 19 and 20 September to participate in the official opening of the Assembly's new office in Brussels and the new Wales European Centre. I held a series of meetings with the UK Permanent Representation to the European Union, Welsh Members of the European Parliament and Commissioners Neil Kinnock and Chris Patten, as well as attending a board meeting of the Wales European Centre. In addition, I attended a gathering of European regional Government leaders organised by the Flemish Government and took part in various meetings on the Economic Development Committee study programme.

#### **Welsh Miners' Compensation Claims**

**Q13 Geraint Davies:** Has the First Secretary had any discussions with the Department of Trade and Industry regarding compensation claims by Welsh miners? (OAQ6797) *Withdrawn.*

#### **Promoting Debt Relief for Developing Countries**

**Q14 John Griffiths:** Has the First Secretary had an opportunity to discuss with the Secretary of State for Wales how the Assembly might promote debt relief for developing countries? (OAQ7017) *Withdrawn.*

#### **Promoting the Role of the Welsh Language**

**Q15 Gareth Jones:** How does the First Secretary intend to promote the role of the Welsh language over the next 12 months? (OAQ7005) *Withdrawn.*

#### **Introduction of Human Rights Act 1998**

**Q16 Kirsty Williams:** What preparations has the Assembly made for the introduction of the Human Rights Act 1998? (OAQ7011)

**The First Secretary:** We have carried out a review of the areas of the Assembly's business to assess the risk of challenge under the Human Rights Act 1998. All Assembly legislation is checked for compliance with human rights. Training and awareness raising events for staff have been held and guidance has been issued to public authorities in Wales. A major conference on the Act was held in Cardiff in May and another is being organised in north Wales in December.

### **Development of European Policy**

**Q17 Helen Mary Jones:** Will the First Secretary make a brief statement on his involvement with the development of Assembly European policy? (OAQ7006) *Withdrawn.*

### **Representation of Assembly in UK Government Bills**

**Q18 Janet Davies:** When the First Secretary last met the Secretary of State for Wales, did he discuss how the views of the National Assembly for Wales could be better represented in published UK Government Bills? (OAQ7004) *Withdrawn.*

### **Promoting Welsh and European Culture**

**Q19 Jenny Randerson:** What recent discussions has the First Secretary had regarding the role of Welsh centres of art in the promotion of Welsh and European culture? (OAQ6795)

**The First Secretary:** Decisions regarding the policy for display and promotion of its collections of Welsh art are a matter for the National Museum and Gallery. The National Museum and Gallery already houses a distinguished collection of paintings and sculpture by prominent Welsh and international artists and it is promoting collaborations, such as the project to reflect the links between Flanders and Wales and a project to tour contemporary art associated with Wales into Europe. I had an informal discussion with the president of the National Museums and Galleries of Wales recently about its forthcoming review of its exhibitions policy.

In addition, the Arts Council of Wales provides financial support to galleries and exhibition venues in Wales. The council is responsible for the distribution of arts funding in Wales and takes decisions on such funding independently of the Assembly.

### **Functions carried out by Other Government Departments**

**Q20 Rhodri Glyn Thomas:** What discussions has the First Secretary had with the Secretary of State for Wales about functions carried out in Wales by other Government departments? (OAQ7002) *Withdrawn.*

### **Assembly Review**

**Q21 Ieuan Wyn Jones:** Will the First Secretary make a brief statement on his plans for the Assembly review? (OAQ7014) *Withdrawn.*

### **Greater Accountability in Public Bodies**

**Q22 Richard Edwards:** What steps is the First Secretary taking to ensure greater accountability in all public bodies in Wales? (OAQ7010)

**The First Secretary:** Executive Assembly sponsored public bodies are required to observe the principles set out in their management statements and financial memoranda which have been redefined to take account of the new relationship between the Assembly and its sponsored public bodies. The senior official in each Assembly sponsored public body is designated as an accounting officer by the Assembly's

principal accounting officer. Health bodies are similarly required to follow the corporate and clinical governance frameworks established for health authorities and trusts.

The establishment of the Assembly brought with it a fundamental change in the way that all public bodies in Wales are held to account for their work. The scrutiny of matters by Subject Committees, the Audit Committee and debates in Plenary mean that all public bodies in Wales are not only accountable but are seen to be accountable to the Assembly and, through it, to the people of Wales.

The Finance Secretary announced on 10 May this year that an accelerated review of all the executive Assembly sponsored public bodies would be established. Under the arrangements for quinquennial reviews, the emphasis will be on accountability, strategic effectiveness and securing continuous improvement. They will look at performance and the quality of the body's work as well as its management of resources and success in improving efficiency. These arrangements will make a strong contribution to our drive for better, simpler government in Wales.

I am satisfied that these arrangements provide an adequate level of accountability.

### **Non-devolved Matters Affecting Wales**

**Q23 Phil Williams:** When did the First Secretary last meet the Secretary of State for Wales to discuss non-devolved matters affecting Wales? (OAQ7018) *Withdrawn.*

### **Concordat between the Assembly and the Home Office**

**Q24 Dafydd Wigley:** Will the First Secretary make a brief statement on the progress of the concordat between the Assembly and the Home Office? (OAQ7009) *Withdrawn.*

### **Lease for Extra Land for New Assembly Building**

**Q25 Glyn Davies:** Has the lease for the extra land needed for the new Assembly building been agreed and at what cost? (OAQ6796)

**The First Secretary:** Negotiations are still taking place to agree the lease for the new Assembly building. It is expected that these negotiations will be concluded shortly, as soon as agreement is reached on certain points of detail related to the exact boundary of the land required by the Assembly. This relates to the precise layout of the road. The land will still be made available to the Assembly for a peppercorn rent.