

3.3 Deputy J.A. Martin of the Chief Minister regarding a breakdown of the latest population figure, including net inward migration:

Would the Chief Minister provide a breakdown of the latest population figure that includes net inward migration of 700 people to show the numbers of low skilled immigrants, permanent and time limited (j) category employees in the private and public sector and in their departments, please, and their dependants?

Senator F.H. Walker (The Chief Minister):

As reported by the Statistics Unit earlier this month, Jersey's estimated resident population at the end of 2006 was 89,300. The increase of about 900 on 2005 comprised net inward migration of some 700 people and natural growth of almost 200. Net increases in the number of (j) category and non-qualified employees, together with their dependants, rounded to the nearest 10, were 200 (j) category employees, 340 dependants of (j) category employees, 100 non-qualified employees and 60 dependants of non-qualified employees. Total numbers of non-qualified and (j) category employees were presented in the Labour Market Report published on 4th April and showed that at the end of 2006, there were 6,610 non-qualified employees as defined under the Regulation of Undertakings, 1,610 (j) category employees, of which 900 were in the private sector and 710 in the public sector. From the perspective of the Housing Regulations, as already stated in the Report Jersey Resident Population 2006, there were about 9,000 adults in Jersey who were not residentially qualified at the end of 2006.

3.3.1 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I thank the Minister for his detailed answer. In the letter to all States Members in the last paragraph, he tells us with the population figures that we are fully on-track with economic growth, that is that there should be no more than 500 jobs per year. Can he quantify that by telling us the... we may be on-track with economic growth but he has just told us we have now 440 dependants of the 700 people, so more dependents; about half working, and half who have brought dependents. So, how is this economic growth? Can he quantify his statement in his letter to us?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I am not entirely sure what the question is. When I said we were on-track with economic growth; that is a fact; we are. Of course, what we, the States, and in particular the Council of Ministers, and the Ministers responsible for the Economy and Population, have to balance is the need for economic growth and the tax receipts that we must have on the back of it, particularly in the wake of Zero/Ten; and that of inflation. Because if we have economic growth, and if we have no inward migration, as Jersey has shown over now a very, very long period, the inward migration is not new to Jersey; we have been experiencing it in big numbers ever since 1890. What we have to do is balance economic growth against the numbers of people and against inflation. That is exactly what we do do. I would point out, Sir, that the actual growth in the working population, which is what the figures stated by the Council of Ministers previously our ceiling to work to over the last 5 years, has been well under the one per cent figure. Well under the 500 figure per annum. We need to take these over more than one year. We need to look at these figures over a more extended period. Within that period we are well within target.

3.3.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Housing Minister is reported as saying that he is inundated with a number of (j) category requests which he is forced to turn down because we have not sufficient housing. Does the Chief Minister support his Housing Minister in the urgent need to build more housing?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Do I support the Housing Minister in the urgent need to build more housing? Yes, I do, but we are not talking here about urgent need caused by inward migration. We are talking here about an urgent need for locally residentially qualified people, and in particular those who need to move into

sheltered homes. That is the need, very clearly expressed by the Housing Minister, and fully supported by myself.

3.3.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Chief Minister avoided saying how many of the 200 (j) cats. were permanent (j) cats. and how many were temporary. Given that permanent(j) cats. are now the rule rather than the exception, does he not believe that they will sooner or later be making a demand on the housing market and will take-up some of that housing?

Senator F.H. Walker:

(j) category employees have always inevitably - because they come to live in Jersey - taken-up housing in Jersey. The fact is though that currently housing sales in Jersey, which are running at very high levels, are 92 per cent taken-up by local people.

3.3.4 Deputy J.J. Huet of St. Helier:

Of the 340 dependents of this 200-odd (j) categories, can we be told how many of these are children that will need educating at our schools, please?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I cannot give the Deputy the answer to that specific question this morning, but I will, of course, do so as soon as possible.

Deputy J.J. Huet:

Will the Minister get that information?

Senator F.H. Walker:

I think I just agreed to do that, yes.

3.3.5 Deputy J.A. Martin:

The Minister was just pointing out we are way below the one per cent of workers, because we could allow 500 workers, but what he has now told us is we have 300 workers across the skills, high and low paid jobs, who have brought in 400 dependents. As the Deputy before me has just pointed out, I would presume an amount of these would be children. But if on 300 workers we have 400 dependents, what happens when we reach our limit of 500 workers, will we have about 600 to 700 dependents? Now, my question is again, Sir, the P.25 was not an immigration control, but a monitoring policy. Would the Minister not accept this? We have no say; only over the jobs. We have 300 workers and 400 dependents across all skills. Could he not agree with this, please, Sir?

Senator F.H. Walker:

Well, Sir, I am not arguing with the figures, because they are the figures I supplied to the Deputy in my answer, so no way am I arguing with the figures. Can I predict precisely what the situation will be in the future? No, I cannot. Can we control the situation under existing migration policy? Yes, we can.

3.3.6 Deputy J.A. Martin:

I really must follow that up. He says: "Can we control?" Can the Minister accept they can control only allowing 500 extra jobs every year across all sectors? They cannot control after that, once the person is working in that job, the number of people that person brings to the Island as dependents. Now, maybe the Minister, Sir, could also revisit this number of the supposedly... well, we will never get to 500, but it would seem to me we have passed the 500, although only 300 of them are working.

Senator F.H. Walker:

I think I see absolutely now the point the Deputy is striving to make. It is a point that the Ministers responsible, and the Council of Ministers, do have to focus on and are focusing on. As I have informed the States on, I think, 3 separate occasions recently, we - being the Council of Ministers - will be producing a very major population report, and ultimately, after consultation, a report and composition later this year; I hope to debate early next year. So, Ministers are aware of all the issues and I think that will be abundantly clear when the population report is published.

The Bailiff:

A final supplementary, Deputy Southern.

3.3.7 Deputy G.P. Southern:

The Chief Minister referred to the impact of not allowing immigrants in on inflation. Does he also accept that the allowing of these sorts of numbers of immigrants in will also have an impact on inflation led by a rise in house price inflation?

Senator F.H. Walker:

As I have already said, 92 per cent of house sales currently are to local people. The impact of the very small number of non-local housing transactions will be small. There will be some impact, but it will be negligible and it will be far less than Jersey putting up the barriers and saying we cannot bring in any more labour to support our industries. Far, far less. Let me remind the Deputy and the House, Sir, that Jersey has relied on inward migration for at least the last 100 years to fuel its economy. This is not new. We are in exactly the same position as we have been in for at least 100 years. The figures are different. The figures are being monitored. The situation does need controlling, and that is exactly what the Council of Ministers is doing.